Contested Identities: Nationalism in the Republic of Vietnam (1954-1963)

By

Nu-Anh Tran

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Peter Zinoman, Chair
Professor Penny Edwards
Professor Kerwin Klein

Spring 2013

Contested Identities: Nationalism in the Republic of Vietnam (1954-1963)

Copyrighted 2013

by

Nu-Anh Tran

Abstract

Contested Identities: Nationalism in the Republic of Vietnam (1954-1963)

by

Nu-Anh Tran

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Peter Zinoman, Chair

This dissertation presents the first full-length study of anticommunist nationalism in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN, 1954-1975, or South Vietnam). Specifically, it focuses on state nationalism during the rule of Ngô Đình Diệm (1954-1963). Conventional research depicts the Vietnam War (1954-1975) as a conflict between foreign intervention and indigenous nationalism, but this interpretation conflates Vietnamese communism with Vietnamese nationalism and dismisses the possibility of nationalism in the southern Republic. Using archival and published sources from the RVN, this study demonstrates that the southern regime possessed a dynamic nationalist culture and argues that the war was part of a much longer struggle between communist and anticommunist nationalists. To emphasize the plural and factional character of nationalism in partitioned Vietnam, the study proposes the concept of *contested nationalism* as an alternative framework for understanding the war.

The dissertation examines four elements of nationalism in the Republic: anticommunism, anticolonialism, antifeudalism, and Vietnamese ethnic identity. The first chapter argues that the government and northern émigré intellectuals established anticommunism as the central tenet of Republican nationalism during the Denounce the Communists Campaign, launched in 1955. They popularized an anticommunist vocabulary, especially the term *Việt cộng,* and developed a historical narrative centered on the communist betrayal of the nationalists in northern Vietnam during the resistance war (1945-1954).

The second chapter examines anticolonialism and antifeudalism in relation to Ngô Đình Diệm's consolidation of power in 1954-1956. Ngô Đình Diệm sidelined groups and individuals that had dominated anticommunist politics during the previous decade in favor of his loyal followers. He shunted aside Bảo Đại, Francophile southern elites, and the sects, all of whom he dismissed as "feudalists." He also secured the withdrawal of French troops, whom he called "colonialists." Following his lead, propagandists attacked the legitimacy of these groups with accusations of feudal, colonial, and communist collusion. But few independent intellectuals showed much interest in anticolonialism and antifeudalism. The official discourse on the French and the so-called feudalists never developed a coherent narrative or a consistent political vocabulary, but it did marginalize the south's most prominent anticommunists.

Anticommunist nationalism also had an international dimension, and the third chapter examines the RVN's engagement with the world through the framework of the Cold War and the Third World. Anticommunists described themselves as contributing members of the Free World alliance and linked their war against Vietnamese communists to antigovernment movements in Hungary and Tibet. In the early 1960s, to justify the fight against the communist-led insurgency, government officials selectively appropriated aspects of dependency theory and modernization theory – both formulated to explain weak economic development in the Third World – to blame the growth of communism on the French and on economic and social conditions. Much of this international engagement was ultimately self-serving, as anticommunists used foreign recognition to bolster the regime's domestic legitimacy.

The last chapter examines how contested nationalism underpinned the government's embrace of Vietnamese ethnic identity. The cultural projects of the Ministry of Education presented the Saigon government as the sole legitimate inheritor and custodian of Vietnamese culture and history, and geography textbooks and the revision of toponyms south of the 17th parallel created the illusion of a single, national space untroubled by the partition or ethnic differences. Through regulations on foreign research institutions, state-sponsored research projects, and international exhibitions, cultural policies implicitly exalted the cultural superiority of the Vietnamese people and marginalized non-Vietnamese minorities, French colonial scholars, and Vietnamese communists.

The evidence presented in this dissertation shows that the politics of the RVN fell squarely within the historical development of Vietnamese nationalism. The development of anticommunist nationalism from the 1940s to the early RVN, the wartime competition between communist and anticommunist nationalists, and the postwar animosity between the communist government and diasporic Vietnamese all suggest a changing but continuous struggle within Vietnamese nationalism spanning the resistance war, the Vietnam War, and the postwar era. This ongoing conflict necessitates a new approach to the Vietnam War that accounts for internal Vietnamese struggles. At the same time, contested nationalism was not unique to Vietnam. Strong resemblances between divided Korea, China, Vietnam, and, to a lesser extent, Germany suggest the need for comparative analysis across partitioned states during the Cold War.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ii

List of Abbreviations v

Translations of Vietnamese Institutions, Organizations, and Meetings vii

Introduction 1

Chapter 1. Denouncing Communists: The Creation of an Anticommunist Narrative, 1954-1960 23

Chapter 2. Eliminate the Feudalists and Strike Down the Colonialists: The Eclipse of Southern Anticommunism, 1954-1960 52

Chapter 3. Anticommunist Internationalism and the Third World 91

Chapter 4. Ethnic Identity, State Power, and Cultural Policy 124

Conclusion 150

Bibliography 164

List of Maps

Map 1. Colonial Indochina 21

Map 2. Partitioned Vietnam 22

Map 3. Physical Map of Vietnam 148

Map 4. Transportation Map of Vietnam 149

Acknowledgements

Graduate studies and the completion of this dissertation took many, many years, and I have incurred countless debts in the process.

My adviser, Peter Zinoman, shepherded me through the graduate program at the University of California, Berkeley, with his savvy advice and critical feedback. His comments on earlier drafts helped me revise the overarching argument and reorganize the dissertation several times. I also thank my other committee members, Penny Edwards and Kerwin Klein, for their patient encouragement and helpful comments. Special thanks are due to Edward Miller. Although not a faculty member in my graduate program, he has been an informal mentor throughout my studies. He answered queries, sent relevant primary sources my way, and shared his deep knowledge of American foreign relations and Ngô Đình Diệm's First Republic

Many other professors, researchers, and colleagues have contributed to my training at Berkeley. Jeffrey Hadler's seminars deepened my understanding of Southeast Asia, and Nguyễn Nguyệt Cầm's class on the Vietnamese literature of the Vietnam War introduced me to entirely different dimensions of the conflict. Conversations and correspondences with Lawrence Rosenthal and Tuong Vu provided a broader perspective for contextualizing anticommunist nationalism in Vietnam. At the Institute for the Study of Social Issues (ISSI), where I spent one year as a fellow in the Graduate Training Program, Christine Trost, Deborah Lustig, David Minkus, and my cohort of fellows read multiple drafts of what is now chapter four. Conversations with them helped me formulate and clarify the concept of contested nationalism. The members of the Vietnam Studies Reading Group and the Center for the Study of Right Wing Movements also heroically waded through various rough drafts of the dissertation.

Colleagues away from Berkeley have been equally generous. Chapter three benefitted from a workshop at Harvard University with Hue-Tam Ho Tai, Edward Miller, Jessica Chapman, Geoff Stewart, and Matt Masur. Edward Miller and Martin Loicano introduced me to research facilities in Saigon, and Tuan Hoang offered his vast store of digitized primary sources from Cornell. Benedict Anderson and Keith Taylor generously discussed my ideas when I began researching at Cornell, and Lien-Hang Thi Nguyen was ever ready with professional support. I thank Truong Buu Khanh for sharing his knowledge of Việt Nam Thông Tấn Xã (Vietnam Press) from his days as the director of the agency. Peter Lavelle helped translate classical Sino-Vietnamese terms. Several other colleagues answered queries to specific questions and suggested helpful sources, and I credit them in the notes throughout the dissertation.

Historical research would be impossible without libraries and archives, and I thank the many librarians and archivists who enabled my work. At the General Sciences Library in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly the National Library of the Republic of Vietnam in Saigon), the cheerful staff diligently located and reproduced newspaper articles, magazines, rare books, and theses. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Nguyễn Thị Như Trang, Tô Thị Chí Trung, Bùi Thị Bích Thủy, Bùi Thị Hảo, and Lâm Thị Ngọc Thư. They claim that I hold the dubious honor of requesting more copies than any other researcher that has consulted their collections. If that is the case, then I thank them all the more for fulfilling my endless requests. At the National Archives Center II, Đặng Thị Vân, Cù Thị Dung, and Trần Thị Thùy Linh retrieved government documents that were critical to the project. At the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, Liên-Hương Fiedler guided my work in the Asian Division, and Rosemary Hanes located films and newsreels in the Motion Picture and Television Reading Room. The friendly, professional staff at the Cornell University Library made my time there one of the most productive and pleasant

library experiences I have ever had. I also thank my research assistants, Marika Lohmus, Ngô Hạnh, Nguyễn Ngân, and Võ Anh Tuấn. Their able assistance in Saigon, Ithaca, and Chittagong made continuing my research possible despite changing residences.

The intellectual camaraderie of the following friends and colleagues at Berkeley made graduate work stimulating and enjoyable: Sokhieng Au, Matt Berry, Trang Cao, Rebekah Collins, Va Cun, Cheong Soon Gan, Chi Ha, Alec Holcombe, Siti Keo, Kevin Li, Ian Loman, Trinh Luu, Jason Morris-Jung, Alfred Montoya, Navin Moul, Khai-Thu Nguyen, Marguerite Nguyen, Martina Nguyen, Jason Picard, Arjun Subrahmanyan, Rick Tran, Calvin Vu, and Linh Vu. During my research in Saigon and Ithaca, the warm friendship of Claudine Ang, Mitch Aso, Alex Cannon, Haydon Cherry, Erich Dewald, Hazel Hahn, Caroline Herbelin, Van Ly, Kelley McCarthy, Allen McCarthy, Phi Van Nguyen, Van Nguyen-Marhsall, John Duong Phan, Joe Pittayaporn, Paul Sager, Chris Schweidler, Ivan Small, Maria Stalford, Serene Tan, Isabelle Tracol, Allen Tran, Hoai Tran, Chuong-Dai Vo, Eileen Vo, and Cam Vu reminded me that there was a life outside of the library and archive. Hoang Ngo shared ideas with me in Seattle and offered to check out books for me when I was away from my home campus. In particular, Chi and Siti kept me sane through all the excitement, frustration, loneliness, and dislocations of life as a graduate student. Siti also handled the paperwork for submitting my dissertation as I finished writing in Seattle. In Saigon, my extended family welcomed me with hospitality and delicious meals. I credit my cousin and confidante, Hoàng Nga, for teaching me how to live as an independent adult in a city that seemed, by turns, bewilderingly foreign and instinctively familiar.

Research for this project would not have been possible without generous funding from the Mellon-CLIR Fellowship for Dissertation Research in Original Sources, the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Program, and the Center for the Study of Right Wing Movements at Berkeley. The Graduate Training Program at the ISSI and the History Department Dissertation Year Fellowship at Berkeley allowed me to write the dissertation uninhibited by financial anxieties. The Berkeley Fellowship for Graduate Studies and the Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship in Humanistic Studies funded the early portion of my graduate training.

Although my year of teaching at the Asian University for Women (AUW) in Chittagong, Bangladesh, temporarily took me away from the dissertation, it helped me become a much better teacher and scholar. Offering survey courses on Modern Asian history and Vietnamese history gave me the opportunity to experiment with pedagogical techniques and develop a broad interpretation of Asian and Vietnamese history beyond the specific topic of my research. The intelligent, hardworking and resilient students at AUW approached Asian history with a depth of experience and open-minded eagerness that renewed my own passion for studying history. I had the good fortune to work for a wonderful supervisor. Meghan Simpson, my department chair in the Asian Studies program, helped a nervous new professor navigate the complicated world of teaching overseas and sheltered me from administrative difficulties.

I began the journey into academia as a student at Seattle University, and it is with profound gratitude that I acknowledge my undergraduate professors: Theresa Earenfight, Hazel Hahn, David Madsen, Jacquelyn Miller, and William Kangas. Brilliant scholars and caring mentors, they introduced me to the excitement of research, explained the intricacies of graduate applications, and modeled what it means to be a responsible citizen in academia. The Sullivan Leadership Award merits special recognition for funding my undergraduate education, and Jerry Cobb, my scholarship adviser, advised me on more practical matters of college life. I especially want to thank Chris McQueen, my history teacher from high school, who taught me in the

International Baccalaureate program. He took me aside as a teenager and encouraged me to pursue graduate studies in history. Until then, I thought of historians as erudite but distant figures who magically produced textbooks, but I had no idea how an ordinary person could become a historian.

The friendship of many wonderful individuals outside of my discipline sustained me through high school, college, and graduate school: Kevin Grove, Rebecca Thalberg Khalil, Peter Khalil, Jasmine Marwaha, Meg Matthews, Emma Pagan, Evan Pham, and Aaron Van Dyke. They encouraged my ambitions and nurtured within me a love for the life of the mind.

Peter Lavelle started giving me cherry tomatoes from his garden when I began my fieldwork at Cornell, and lychees, avocadoes, guavas, star fruits, and kumquats have since followed. He has been a fellow traveler during the ups and downs of dissertation work, relocations to Bangladesh and throughout the US, and many adventures in Asia. I thank him for his unwavering love and support.

Prior to pursuing graduate studies, I volunteered extensively in Seattle's Vietnamese refugee and immigrant community, first as an ESL tutor at Helping Link, then as a volunteer in the naturalization department of Asian Counseling and Referral Services. My students and clients formed a cross-section of South Vietnamese society, including veterans, war widows and orphans, draft dodgers, farmers, shopkeepers, and boat people. Their stories of loss, defeat, survival, and exile have profoundly informed my understanding of Vietnamese history. Like many of them, I am also a refugee and an immigrant, and I am grateful to the numerous social workers, ESL teachers, volunteers, charities, social service agencies, and government programs that eased my family's resettlement in the US. In addition, I would like to recognize the efforts of all of the teachers that I have had from Head Start through graduate school. The collective effort of these individuals, institutions, and organizations to look after my welfare and education brings to mind the clichéd expression, "It takes a village to raise a child."

Lastly, I thank my loving and idiosyncratic family. My parents raised me to be bilingual and instructed me in Vietnamese history, geography, and literature parallel to my formal American schooling. My Vietnamese-language skills and familiarity with the popular and intellectual culture of the Republic of Vietnam are directly attributable to their efforts. Our family life was animated by conversations about my parents' favorite wartime writers, the songs of the comedic musician Trần Văn Trạch, and the politics of the Second Republic (1967-1975). My parents and my brother have patiently endured the inevitable bouts of stress and euphoria that punctuate dissertation writing and tolerated my absence during holidays due to research and other professional activities. Through it all, they have supported what my mother calls my "ten years of lamps and books" *(mười năm đèn sách),* a reference to the long years of preparation necessary for the mandarinal exams in premodern Vietnam. More broadly, my gratitude goes to the overseas Vietnamese community. I fondly remember the cultural celebrations, war commemorations, political rallies, trips to Little Saigon, and dinner parties that enriched my Vietnamese-American childhood. I dedicate this dissertation to my family and the overseas Vietnamese community, who are also my family. I hope they will find in it a part of their history.

List of Abbreviations

	English	Vietnamese
APACL	Asian People's Anti-Communist League	Liên Minh Các Dân Tộc Á Châu Chống Cộng
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam	Quân Đội Việt Nam Cộng Hòa
Cần Lao	Personalist Labor Party	Đảng Cần Lao Nhân Vị
CCP	Chinese Communist Party	
CDV	Civic Action	Công Dân Vụ
CĐCN	*The Path of the Righteous Cause*	*Con đường chính nghĩa*
Dân Xã	Democratic Socialist Party	Dân Chủ Xã Hội Đảng
ĐICH	Office of the President Collections, First Republic	Phong Phủ Tổng Thống, Đệ Nhất Cộng Hòa
ĐMH	Vietnamese Revolutionary League	Việt Nam Cách Mạng Đồng Minh Hội (Đông Mình Hội, or Việt Cách)
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam	Cộng Hòa Xã Hội Chủ Nghĩa Việt Nam
EFEO	French School of the Far East (École Française d'Extrème Orient)	Trường Viễn Đông Bác Cổ
FEC	French Expeditionary Corps	
FRUS	*Foreign Relations of the United States*	
GMD	Chinese Nationalist Party (Guomindang)	Trung Hoa Quốc Dân Đảng
ICC	International Control Commission	Ủy Hội Quốc Tế Kiểm Soát Đình Chiến
ICP	Indochinese Communist Party	Đảng Cộng Sản Đông Dương
MSUG	Michigan State University Group	
NIA	National Institute of Administration	Học Viện Quốc Gia Hành Chánh
NLF	National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (National Liberation Front)	Mặt Trận Giải Phóng Miền Nam Việt Nam (Mặt Trận Giải Phóng)

NRLCV	National Revolutionary League of Civil Servants	Liên Đoàn Công Chức Cách Mạng Quốc Gia
NRM	National Revolutionary Movement	Phong Trào Cách Mạng Quốc Gia
PCSC	People's Central Steering Committee for the Denounce the Communists Campaign	Hội Đồng Nhân Dân Chỉ Đạo Chiến Dịch Tố Cộng Trung Ương
Phục Quốc	League for the Restoration of Vietnam	Việt Nam Phục Quốc Đồng Minh Hội
PRC	People's Republic of China	
PTTVNCH	Office of the Prime Minister Collections, Republic of Vietnam	Phong Phủ Thủ Tướng Việt Nam Cộng Hòa
RVN	Republic of Vietnam	Việt Nam Cộng Hòa (VNCH)
SEATO	Southeast Asian Treaty Organization	
SVN	State of Vietnam	Quốc Gia Việt Nam
TTLTQGII	National Archives Center II	Trung Tâm Lưu Trử Quốc Gia II
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	
VHGDTN	Ministry of Culture, Education, and Youth Collections	Phong Bộ Văn Hóa Giáo Dục Và Thanh Niên
Việt Minh	Vietnamese Independence League	Việt Nam Độc Lập Đồng Minh Hội
VLP	Vietnamese Labor Party	Đảng Lao Động Việt Nam
VNA	Vietnamese National Army	Quân Đội Quốc Gia Việt Nam
VNQDĐ	Vietnam Nationalist Party	Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng (Việt Quốc)
VTX	Vietnam Press	Việt Nam Thông Tấn Xã (Việt Tấn Xã)
WSM	Women's Solidarity Movement	Phong Trào Liên Đới Phụ Nữ

Translations of Vietnamese Institutions, Organizations, and Meetings

Army of the National Alliance	Quân Đội Quốc Gia Liên Minh (Liên Minh, or Cao Đài Liên Minh)
Association for the Modernization of Vietnam	Việt Nam Duy Tân Hội
Civic Action	Công dân vụ
Conference on Linguistic Unity	Hội Nghị Thống Nhất Ngôn Ngữ
Denounce the Communists Campaign	Chiến Dịch Tố Cộng
Directorate of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of National Education	Nha Văn Hóa, Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục
General Directorate of Psychological Warfare	Tổng Nha Chiến Tranh Tâm Lý
Heaven and Earth Society	Thiên Địa Hội
Institute of History	Viện Khảo Cổ
League for the Restoration of Vietnam	Việt Nam Phục Quốc Đồng Minh Hội
National Conference of the Denounce the Communists Campaign	Đại Hội Tố Cộng Toàn Quốc
National Cultural Conference	Đại Hội Văn Hóa Toàn Quốc
National Resistance Movement	Phong Trào Quốc Gia Kháng Chiến
National Union Front	Mặt Trận Thống Nhất Quốc Giá
Office of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Information	Văn Hóa Vụ, Bộ Thông Tin
Provisional National Council	Hội Đồng Quốc Gia Lâm Thời
Republican Youth	Thanh Niên Cộng Hòa
Revolutionary Committee	Ủy Ban Cách Mạng
Society for the Restoration of Vietnam	Việt Nam Quang Phục Hội
United Front of National Forces	Mặt Trận Thống Nhất Toàn Lực Quốc Gia

Unity Congress	Đại Hội Đoàn Kết
Vietnam National Rally	Việt Nam Quốc Gia Liên Hiệp
Vietnamese Cultural Organization	Hội Văn Hóa Việt Nam
Vietnamese National General Student Association	Tổng Hội Sinh Viên Việt Nam Quốc Gia
Vietnamese People's League	Việt Nam Độc Lập Dân Chúng Liên Đoàn (alternately, Việt Nam Dân Chúng Liên Đoàn)

Introduction

The Vietnam War has generated a tremendous volume of research, but scholars have not given equal attention to the various sides of the conflict. The war featured four main belligerents: the communist Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV, or North Vietnam), the anticommunist Republic of Vietnam (RVN, or South Vietnam, 1954-1975), the southern guerilla movement known as the National Liberation Front (NLF), and the US. The bulk of the research has focused on the experiences of Americans and Vietnamese communists, but there is very limited work on Vietnamese anticommunists and the RVN. Based on this lopsided scholarship, the conventional interpretation of the war is a confrontation between foreign intervention and indigenous nationalism.[1] Yet this two-dimensional portrait doesn't adequately address one of the central dynamics of the struggle: the conflict among Vietnamese nationalists. Throughout the partition years, the DRV and RVN competed for nationalist legitimacy, and both accused the other of being a puppet of foreign powers. In 1960, the NLF emerged to oppose the Saigon government. The movement was directed by Hanoi but enjoyed substantial southern support, and insurgent leaders claimed to be more representative of Vietnamese nationalism than the RVN.[2] The appeals to patriotic sentiments from all sides suggest that the war within Vietnam was a contest over competing forms of Vietnamese nationalism.

Scholarly neglect of the RVN has hampered our understanding of the internal Vietnamese struggles. The southern regime formed the crux of the conflict as the adversary to both North

[1] For a concise review of the American perspective on the Vietnam War, see Robert Divine, "Vietnam Reconsidered," *Diplomatic History* 12: no. 1 (winter 1998): 79-93. For scholarship on American experiences of the war, see David Anderson, *Trapped by Success: The Eisenhower Administration and Vietnam, 1953-61* (New York City: Columbia University Press, 1991); Christian Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990); Larry Berman, *No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger, and Betrayal in Vietnam* (New York: Free Press, 2001); David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1972); David Kaiser, *American Tragedy: Kennedy, Johnson, and the Origins of the Vietnam War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000); Jeffrey Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998); Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999); Andrew Preston, *The War Council: McGeorge Bundy, the NSC, and Vietnam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006); Tom Wells, *The War Within: America's Battle Over Vietnam* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994); George Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002); Marilyn B. Young, *The Vietnam Wars, 1945-1990* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991). For research on Vietnamese communists, particularly northern Vietnamese, see William J. Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1996); William J. Duiker, *Sacred War: Nationalism and Revolution in a Divided Vietnam* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995); William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life* (New York City: Hyperion, 2000; Hy Van Luong, *Tradition, Revolution, and Market Economy in a North Vietnamese Village, 1925-2006* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010); Karen Turner-Gottschange and Phan Thanh Hảo, *Even the Women Must Fight: Memories of the War from North Vietnam* (New York: Wiley, 1998).

[2] Scholars have debated whether the southern insurgency was an autonomous movement indigenous to the south or an arm of the communist government in Hanoi. See David Elliott, *The Vietnamese War: Revolution and Social Change in the Mekong Delta, 1930-1975*, vol. 1-2 (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003); David Hunt, *Vietnam's Southern Revolution: From Peasant Insurrection to Total War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009); George Kahin and John Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam* (New York: Dial Press, 1967), 107-120; George Kahin, *Intervention: How America Became Involved in Vietnam* (New York City: Anchor Books, 1987), 105-121; Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1966); Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Carlyle Thayer, *War by Other Means: National Liberation and Revolution in Viet-Nam, 1954–60* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1989).

Vietnam and the NLF, but the exclusive focus on the communist belligerents reduces the diversity of Vietnamese perspectives. The tendency to privilege Vietnamese communists implicitly identifies the DRV and the southern insurgency as the true nationalists. The underlying assumption is that the outcome of the war can be explained by the weakness or nonexistence of nationalism in the RVN and its strength in the communist camp. However, this interpretation is based on western-language documents and communist Vietnamese sources rather than Vietnamese-language sources from the RVN, the very sources needed for studying the southern Republic. Ultimately, a multidimensional understanding of the war requires more serious research on the RVN and engagement with the regime's own archive.

The study of the southern state also promises to illuminate longer patterns in Vietnamese history. The wartime competition was part of a historical rivalry between communists and noncommunists that originated in the colonial-era nationalist movement. An important turning point was the *kháng chiến,* or "resistance war" (1945-1954), the Vietnamese name for the anticolonial struggle that took place between the August Revolution and the Geneva Agreement. At the end of WWII, the Japanese surrender left a power vacuum in Vietnam, which Vietnamese nationalists tried to exploit. The most organized nationalist party, the Việt Minh, seized power on 19 August 1945. Although the Việt Minh was led by communists, noncommunists throughout the country quickly allied with the movement to fight the returning French. Sadly, the coalition proved short lived, ruptured by internal differences and escalating violence. The experience transformed many noncommunists into fierce anticommunists.

Soon, French forces returned to reimpose colonialism onto Vietnam. The First Indochina War (1946-1954) began when fighting broke out between the Việt Minh and the French in late 1946. Caught between Vietnamese enemies and French colonialists, many noncommunists sided with the French and the State of Vietnam (SVN, 1949-1954), the French-supported regime that competed against the Việt Minh.[3] Hostilities concluded in 1954 with the Geneva Agreement, which temporarily divided the country into two zones separated at the 17th parallel (See Map 2). The Việt Minh withdrew to the north, and anticommunists flocked to the south, where the French and SVN regrouped. The Geneva Agreement mandated reunification elections within two years, but Ngô Đình Diệm, the new leader in the south, refused on the grounds that his government had not been a signatory to the agreement. The temporary division hardened into a permanent partition, and the outbreak of the Vietnam War transformed the old rivalry into a military conflict. During the war, all of the Vietnamese belligerents invoked the heritage of the nationalist movement to justify their aggression. In 1975, North Vietnam defeated the southern regime, and communism finally triumphed throughout the country. But the antagonism continued outside of Vietnam, and many diasporic Vietnamese maintained the tradition of anticommunist nationalism.[4] These longer historical developments help highlight the RVN's importance. Placed

[3] For a more detailed account of these conflicts, see François Guillemot, "Au coeur de la fracture vietnamienne: L'Élimination de l'opposition nationaliste et anticolonialiste dans le Nord du Vietnam (1945-1946)," in *Naissance d'un État-Parti: Le Viêt-Nam depuis 1945,* ed. Christopher Goscha and Benoît Tréglodé (Paris: Les Indes savants, 2004), 175-216; François Guillemot, "Autopsy of a Massacre on a Political Purge in the Early Days of the Indochina War (Nam Bo 1947)," *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 9, no. 2 (2010): 225-265; François Guillemot, *Dai Viêt, independence et révolution au Viêt-Nam: L'échec de la troisième voie, 1938-1955* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2012).

[4] For more on anticommunism among diasporic Vietnamese after 1975, see Gisèle L. Bousquet, *Behind the Bamboo Hedge: The Impact of Homeland Politics in the Parisian Vietnamese Community* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991); Nhu-Ngọc T. Ông and David S. Meyer, "Protest and Political Incorporation: Vietnamese American Protests in Orange County, California, 1975-2001," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 3, no. 1 (winter 2008);

within the evolving rivalry, the Republic was the single most sustained challenge to communist hegemony and the only independent, anticommunist state in modern Vietnamese history.

This dissertation attempts to return the RVN to its rightful historical significance by making the Republic the main topic of inquiry. Specifically, the study examines state nationalism during the rule of Ngô Đình Diệm (1954-1963), a period known as the First Republic.[5] These early years were the most formative period in the development of Republican nationalism, and many of the ideas first instituted under Ngô Đình Diệm's leadership influenced nationalist discourse for the remainder of the RVN's existence. The dissertation departs from the conventional scholarship in two important ways. First, it examines the RVN as a distinct political unit and is one of the first studies to employ archival and published materials from the Republic as the main source base. Although the Republic relied on American economic and military assistance, sources produced within the RVN demonstrate that the southern state possessed a dynamic nationalist culture. Republican nationalism reflected indigenous Vietnamese experiences, and many of its citizens identified themselves as part of a national community. Second, the dissertation suggests an alternative framework for approaching the Vietnam War. While acknowledging the significance of American intervention, it proposes the concept of contested nationalism to understand the competition between the Vietnamese belligerents. The concept draws upon the theoretical literature on nationalism and partitioned states to describe the multiplicity of nationalism in divided countries. This approach is a corrective to the communist-centric scholarship and recognizes that all of the Vietnamese belligerents were nationalist. If the RVN's alleged lack of nationalism does not account for the outcome of the war, then perhaps the specific characteristic of anticommunist nationalism may help explain the Republic's defeat. The focus on nationalism reincorporates the RVN into the longer history of Vietnamese nationalism and the internal conflicts of the Vietnam War.

The RVN in Vietnamese Studies

The existing historiography has yet to provide a satisfactory framework for studying the RVN. Research on the Republic can be divided into three schools: the conventional scholarship, the revisionist school, and the New Vietnam War scholarship. The defining characteristic of the conventional scholarship is the impulse to locate the RVN outside of Vietnamese history while privileging the perspectives of the other belligerents.

The conventional scholarship can be found in two larger bodies of research, Vietnamese studies and Vietnam War scholarship. In the field of Vietnamese studies, which examines domestic developments within Vietnam, most scholars focus on the communist movement as the dominant trend in modern Vietnamese history.[6] Particularly influential is the communist-centric research on the colonial period. David G. Marr's *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925,* and its

---

78-107; Thuy Vo-Dang, "The Cultural Work of Anticommunism in the San Diego Vietnamese American Community," *Amerasia Journal* 32, no. 2 (2005): 65-86.

[5] For the sake of simplicity, the Republic of Vietnam will refer to the regime based in Saigon from 7 July 1954 to 30 April 1975, and the State of Vietnam will refer to the French-sponsored state under Bảo Đại from 1949 to 7 Jul 1954, except where otherwise stated. The SVN formally existed until 20 October 1955, when Ngô Đình Diệm established the Republic of Vietnam. Ngô Đình Diệm's official title prior to 20 October 1955 was prime minister of the State of Vietnam. Similarly, the First Republic will refer to Ngô Đình Diệm's rule from 7 July 1954 to 1 November 1963.

[6] This is not to suggest that academic debates have been absent from the field. For a discussion of changing interpretations of the Vietnamese nation, see Tuong Vu, "Vietnamese Political Studies and Debates on Vietnamese Nationalism," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 2, no. 2 (summer 2007): 175–230.

sequel, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945,* argue that the traditionalist anticolonial movement of the late 19th century led directly to the modern communist struggle.[7] In *Vietnamese Communism, 1925-1945,* Huỳnh Kim Khánh traces the grafting of communism onto native patriotism to explain the success of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP).[8] Greg Lockhart even identifies Marxism-Leninism as the ideological ingredient that transformed traditionalist political thought into modern nationalism.[9] But these scholars conflate specifically communist nationalism with Vietnamese nationalism and minimize the contribution of noncommunists. In *Vietnamese Anticolonialism,* Marr selects Hồ Chí Minh as the primary example of modern nationalism rather contemporary noncommunists who were more prominent.[10] In *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial,* he foregrounds Marxist reformulations of tradition as the ultimate outcome of the colonial-era intellectual discourse instead of noncommunist critiques of the past.[11] Although Huỳnh Kim Khánh does discuss the noncommunist Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng (Vietnam Nationalist Party, VNQDĐ), he depicts it as a short-lived movement whose demise opened the way for the ICP. Curiously, he neglects to mention that the VNQDĐ survived to become one of the ICP's most hated rivals.[12] Read against the backdrop of the Vietnam War, their research endorses the DRV as the exclusive outcome of the anticolonial project and marginalizes the RVN as a deviation from modern Vietnamese history.[13]

Historians have challenged the notion of a singular communist nationalism through two main avenues of research, but neither critique revises the assumption of Republican exceptionalism. First, some historians have complicated scholarly conceptions of communist

---

[7] David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

[8] Huỳnh Kim Khánh, *Vietnamese Communism, 1925-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).

[9] Lockhart asserts that the ideas of the Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng, a noncommunist party, belonged to the same framework as nationalist ideas from the early 20th century, but his brief discussion of their political thought is insufficient to demonstrate this claim. See Greg Lockhart, *Nation in Arms: The Origins of the People's Army of Vietnam* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989), 41-73.

[10] Marr argues that the 1920s witnessed the emergence of modern nationalism, as distinct from traditionalist anticolonialism, but his coverage of the period is highly selective. He identifies Hồ Chí Minh and the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) with modern nationalism, but the ICP wasn't necessarily the most prominent revolutionary party at the time. Marr also touches upon the southern thinker Nguyễn An Ninh but doesn't explore the leader's life in detail as he does for Hồ Chí Minh. Particularly conspicuous is Marr's decision to mention the noncommunist Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng (Vietnam Nationalist Party, VNQDĐ) only in passing. The VNQDĐ was Vietnam's first revolutionary party and likely more well-known to the public in the 1920s and early 1930s than the ICP, particularly after the failed uprising of Yên Bái in 1930. See Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism,* 249-277.

[11] Marr does discuss noncommunist ideas but only as a halfway point between traditional culture and communism rather than an enduring intellectual tradition in its own right. For example, his chapter on women includes a subsection entitled, "The Moderate Legacy," about noncommunist attitudes towards women. Over half of the subsection examines how the moderate discourse led women to embrace Marxism, but Marr doesn't explore the persistence of the moderate discourse or its more conservative turn. See Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial,* 228-235.

[12] Huỳnh Kim Khánh, *Vietnamese Communism,* 90-99.

[13] In fact, Huỳnh Kim Khánh accuses the RVN of being a collaborationist government, criticizes noncommunist nationalism as insignificant and illegitimate, and refers to the Vietnam War as the "United States intervention": "While demonstrating the ineffectiveness, not to say irrelevance, of noncommunist nationalism and revealing the true character of profiteering collaborationism, this intervention confirmed the Communists' claim to be the legitimate representatives of Vietnamese nationalist interests." See Huỳnh Kim Khánh, *Vietnamese Communism,* 19-20.

nationalism by examining mythmaking and competing ideas within the communist movement.[14] Second, other scholars have focused on noncommunists or included them in general histories of the nationalist movement. Hue-Tam Ho Tai's research on the Hòa Hảo, Jayne Werner's study of the Cao Đài, Trần Mỹ-Vân's work on pro-Japanese nationalism, Vũ Ngự Chiêu's article on the Japanese-sponsored Empire of Vietnam of 1945, and François Guillemot's recent work on the Đại Việt parties all examine noncommunists that competed with the ICP for popular allegiance.[15] Alternatively, Tai and William J. Duiker have written broader histories of colonial-era nationalism that include both communists and noncommunists.[16] Although these studies have demonstrated that nationalism was multiple and contested in the colonial era, scholars have not extended their research to examine noncommunists during the Vietnam War period. In fact, no account has critically explored the colonial origins of Republican nationalism as Marr and others have done for the DRV. As a result, the trope of communist nationalism remains the dominant framework for understanding post-independence Vietnam.

Accounts of the Vietnam War written from within Vietnamese studies are equally communist-centric. Most researchers are more interested in the communists and discuss the Republic only as a foil to the DRV and NLF. Rarely mentioned is the topic of Republican nationalism.[17] Duiker's *Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, a communist-centric survey of

[14] For example, Christopher Goscha's *Vietnam or Indochina?* finds that the communists entertained competing spatial definitions of the nation as late as the 1930s. Patricia Pelley's *Postcolonial Vietnam*, Christoph Giebel's *Imagined Ancestries of Vietnamese Communism*, and Benoît de Tréglodé's *Heroes and Revolution in Vietnam* all examine the construction of communist historiography. See Christoph Giebel, *Imagined Ancestries of Vietnamese Communism: Ton Duc Thang and the Politics of History and Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004); Christopher Goscha, *Vietnam or Indochina? Contesting Concepts of Space in Vietnamese Nationalism, 1887-1954* (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 1995); Benoît de Tréglodé, *Heroes and Revolution in Vietnam* (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2012); Patricia Pelley, *Postcolonial Vietnam: New Histories of the National Past* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

[15] See François Guillemot, *Dai Viêt, independence et révolution au Viêt-Nam*; François Guillemot, "Au coeur de la fracture vietnamienne," 175-216; François Guillemot, "Autopsy of a Massacre," 225-265; François Guillemot, "La tentation 'fasciste' des luttes anticoloniales Dai Viet: Nationalisme et anticommunisme dans le Viêt-Nam des années 1932-1945," *Vingtième siècle* 4, no. 104 (Sep 2009): 45-66; Hue-Tam Ho Tai, *Millenarianism and Peasant Politics in Vietnam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983); Trần Mỹ-Vân, "Japan and Vietnam's Caodaists: A Wartime Relationship, 1939-45," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27, no. 1 (Mar 1996): 179-193; Trần Mỹ-Vân, "Beneath the Japanese Umbrella: Vietnam's Hòa Hảo During and After the Pacific War," *Crossroads* 17, no.1 (2003): 60-107; Trần Mỹ-Vân, *A Vietnamese Royal Exile in Japan: Prince Cường Để, 1882-1951* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Vũ Ngự Chiêu, "The Other Side of the 1945 Vietnamese Revolution: The Empire of Viet-Nam (March-August 1945)," *Journal of Asian Studies* 45, no. 2 (February 1986): 293-328; Jayne Werner, *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism: Peasant and Priest in the Cao Dai in Vietnam* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies, 1981).

[16] For example, Duiker's *Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, depicts the communists as one nationalist group among many. Alternately, Tai's *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution* locates the origin of modern nationalism in non-ideological radicalism and traces its divergence into three distinct trends: communism, Trotskyism, and noncommunist progressivism. See William J. Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976); Hue-Tam Ho Tai, *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992.

[17] A handful of accounts do specifically examine the Saigon regime, but most have not been particularly influential in Vietnamese studies. See John Donnell, "Personalism in Vietnam," in *Problems of Freedom: South Vietnam Since Independence*, ed. Wesley Fishel (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), 29-67; Allan Goodman, *The Bases of Political Community in South Vietnam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973); Charles Joiner, *The Politics of Massacre: Political Processes in South Vietnam* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974). Other studies have examined rural life in South Vietnam but rarely discuss the political identity of the southern state. See

modern Vietnamese history, examines the DRV in far greater depth than the RVN, in contrast to the more inclusive treatment of noncommunists in his earlier *Rise of Nationalism.* In the *Communist Road to Power in Vietnam,* Duiker explicitly advances the argument that the communists won the war because they were more convincingly nationalist but adroitly avoids serious discussion of Republican nationalism. Recounting the end of the war, he explains that one of the most important factors was the "Party's successful effort to persuade millions of Vietnamese in both North and South that it was the sole legitimate representative of Vietnamese nationalism and national independence."[18] Yet when he turns to the RVN, he avoids the word "nationalism" and couches his discussion in terms of an ideological community. He partially attributes the defeat of the RVN to "the pervasive sense of malaise throughout South Vietnamese society, itself the legacy of a generation of failure by successive governments to build the foundations of a viable non-Communist society."[19] But Duiker's study does not provide a detailed analysis of anticommunism as an ideology or the evolution of popular sentiments towards the Saigon government. Just as Marr argues that the communists dominated anticolonial nationalism, Duiker considers the DRV the primary representative of wartime nationalism.

Neither does the topic of Republican nationalism appear in any of the major research monographs on the southern insurgency, from classic accounts such as Carlyle Thayer's *War By Other Means* to the more recently published *The Vietnamese War,* by David Elliott, and *Peasant Insurrection,* by David Hunt. Only Jeffrey Race's *War Comes to Long An* even mentions Republican nationalism and will be examined in greater detail below. Partly, the absence reflects the authors' interest in social transformation rather than nationalism. When they do discuss Vietnamese nationalism, it is primarily in relation to the communists. Thayer argues that the Vietnam War was part of a larger historical process led primarily by Vietnamese communists: in the 1930s, "the strands of anti-colonialism, Vietnamese nationalism, revolutionary modernization, and Marxism-Leninism were combined in one organisation, the Communist Party, which now assumed centre stage."[20] But Thayer doesn't explain how North Vietnam or the NLF contributed more to modernization and nationalism than the RVN.[21] As might be expected, these studies rely primarily on communist Vietnamese documents.[22]

James Hendry, *The Small World of Khanh Hau* (Chicago: Aldine, 1964); Gerald Hickey, *Village in Vietnam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964).

[18] Duiker, *Communist Road to Power,* 350.

[19] Duiker, *Communist Road to Power,* 350.

[20] Thayer, *War by Other Means,* xx.

[21] For Thayer, the larger historical process consists of modernization and political development (or, alternately, the search for a political community). He doesn't fully define any of those terms, but they apparently refer to attempts by different Vietnamese to modernize social institutions and establish a centralized political state. Strangely, even though Thayer argues that the communists were the primary leaders of these changes, he acknowledges that both the DRV and RVN were part of the same process. His analysis of the policies of the DRV and RVN appear to be implicit examples of this larger transformation, but he explores the communist belligerents in greater depth than the Saigon government, and only one of nine chapters is devoted primarily to the RVN. See Thayer, *War by Other Means,* xvii-xxvi, 112-129.

[22] Many studies on the NLF rely on RAND interviews, which are difficult to categorize as communist, noncommunist, Vietnamese, or American. The interviews were conducted in Vietnamese but administered by an American corporation that often employed Vietnamese from the RVN as interviewers. Interviewees were defectors or captured personnel from the NLF. However, scholars have employed the interviews to analyze the communist-led NLF, not the RVN. For discussions of the interviews, see Elliott, *Vietnamese War,* 7; Hunt, *Vietnam's Southern Revolution,* 225-234.

The RVN in the Vietnam War Scholarship

Just as Vietnam scholars consider the RVN an aberration, Vietnam War historians place the RVN within the history of American foreign policy. In fact, Vietnam War scholarship has largely been the domain of American diplomatic historians more interested in American than Vietnamese history. Two lines of critique dominate discussions of the RVN within this field. The first is the assertion that the RVN was merely the instrument of foreign imperialism and, therefore, not authentically nationalist. Proponents of this claim depict the Republic as wholly dependent on the US and devoid of indigenous origins. Especially harsh is Gabriel Kolko's sweeping survey, *Anatomy of a War*, which classifies the Republic as one of many Third World countries that were "dependent on foreign aid or created in a vacuum to perform a comprador role for a foreign imperialism."[23] Similarly, George Kahin's *Intervention,* a study of the early years of American involvement, castigates American attempts to "create an artificial, externally sustained state that lacked any substantial indigenous foundation."[24] Less strident is David Anderson's *Trapped By Success,* a monograph on the Eisenhower years, which describes the establishment of the RVN as an American decision: "the United States assumed the stupendous task of not only aiding but in fact creating a sovereign state in South Vietnam."[25] Oddly, Anderson demonstrates substantial participation by several Vietnamese leaders, but his characterization of the event privileges American actions.[26] Many writers even employ the parent-child metaphor to stress the RVN's foreign lineage and immaturity. In *America's Longest War,* George Herring introduces the RVN in a chapter entitled, "Our Offspring," and Marilyn B. Young's *The Vietnam Wars* brands both Ngô Đình Diệm and the Republic as "America's baby."[27] Stanley Karnow's journalistic survey, *Vietnam: A History,* offers what is perhaps the most extreme example of the metaphor. Karnow likens Vietnamese leaders of the mid-1960s to unruly teenagers when he compares their disputes with American officials to "quarrels between an adolescent and a parent."[28]

---

[23] Gabriel Kolko, *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States, and the Modern Historical Experience* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 208-209.

[24] Kahin, *Intervention,* 33.

[25] Anderson, *Trapped By Success,* 4.

[26] Recent accounts continue to employ the trope of creation. Seth Jacobs draws upon American sources to claim, "From the beginning, Diem's government was an American creation." Perhaps the most extreme version of the accusation is James Carter's assertion that the RVN never existed as a country but was only an American fabrication, or, as he calls it, an "invention." In *Inventing Vietnam,* a study of the Michigan State University Group, Carter claims: "American planners, policy makers, and experts understood that they were building something that did not exist." See James Carter, *Inventing Vietnam: The United States and State Building, 1954-1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 18; Seth Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, Religion, Race, and the US Intervention in Southeast Asia, 1950-1957* (Duke University Press, 2005), 26.

[27] The phrase "America's Offspring" originates in a speech given by then senator John F. Kennedy to the American Friends of Vietnam in 1956. Interestingly, Seth Jacobs argues that American officials were conditioned by racist stereotypes to view their Vietnamese allies and all nonwhites as unreliable, childlike natives. Thus, the persistent usage of the parent-child metaphor in the historiography is in keeping with outdated American perceptions of Asians. For various examples of the metaphor, see George Herring, "Our Offspring: Nation Building in South Vietnam, 1954-1961," ch. 2 in *America's Longest War,* 53-88; Seth Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man,* 8-9, 98-101; Marilyn B. Young, *The Vietnam Wars,* 58-59; Robert McMahon, *The Limits of Empire: The United States and Southeast Asia Since WWII* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 77-78. For Kennedy's speech, see John F. Kennedy, "America's Stake in Vietnam: The Cornerstone of the Free World in Southeast Asia, Jun 1 1956," in *Landmark Speeches on the Vietnam War,* ed. Gregory Allen Olson (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 19-28.

[28] Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History,* 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Penguin, 1997), 459.

An alternative but related critique claims that the RVN was too venal, incompetent, and factional to be nationalist. Kolko analyzes the RVN's social structure to characterize the military rulers of the RVN as "dependent, obsequious arriviste generals whose only loyalty in serving comprador roles was ultimately to their own, personal welfare."[29] The regime's strongest supporters were not Vietnamese patriots but war profiteers whose economic interests foreclosed the possibility of nationalism, according to Kolko.[30] Likewise, Karnow bluntly declares that the Vietnamese leaders of the mid-1960s were "[w]ithout an ideology or even a positive purpose to inspire loyalty."[31] A similar accusation is found in William Turley's *Second Indochina War,* which condemns the regime's elites for their venality, ineptness, and disunity: "Outside of its own very restricted membership, the elite had little legitimacy; what little it had was squandered through incompetence, corruption, and short-sightedness."[32] Worse still, the elites had "no background of common effort, sacrifice, or doctrine to lend cohesion," Turley claims.[33] Turning to the wider population of South Vietnam, Seth Jacobs' *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam,* a study of American support for Ngô Đình Diệm, skeptically describes southern Vietnam in 1954 as a fragmented society incapable of forming a cohesive nation: "Little more than a piece of real estate south of the 17th parallel, the Republic of Vietnam lacked almost totally the sense of 'imagined community' that Benedict Anderson deems essential to nationhood."[34]

Yet these interpretations are basely solely on western-language sources, sources that may reflect European or American perspectives but are inadequate for analyzing how Vietnamese people felt and thought about nationalism. Certainly, factionalism and corruption did plague the Saigon government, especially after 1965, but it is questionable whether western documents can support such bold assertions about the nature of Vietnamese society, the origins and character of a Vietnamese regime, and the motivation of Vietnamese actors. For example, Kolko's arguments about the absence of nationalist legitimacy in the RVN rely purely on an economic analysis of southern society, but social structure alone does not determine political affiliations. Even Turley, the lone scholar mentioned above to employ Vietnamese-language sources, cites only communist documents that do little to illuminate noncommunist perspectives.[35] The underutilization of noncommunist sources accounts for much of the superficial treatment of Republican nationalism. Some Vietnam War historians acknowledge Ngô Đình Diệm's nationalist credentials, but they rarely analyze his ideas or the broader nationalist culture of the RVN. Herring mentions that the RVN's first president was a nationalist but dismissively asserts, "He [Ngô Đình Diệm] had no blueprint for building a modern nation or mobilizing his people."[36] David Anderson acknowledges the Vietnamese leader's nationalist reputation, and Jacobs concedes that Ngô Đình

[29] Kolko, *Anatomy of a War,* 222.
[30] Kolko describes the supporters of the RVN thus: "[B]eing wholly dependent on American money and support for the very existence of the RVN, the new profiteers had no nationalist or cultural legitimacy for their politics, a fact they could not alter." George Kahin makes a similar argument in his analysis of the Commodity Import Program. See Kolko, *Anatomy of a War,* 222; Kahin, *Intervention,* 84-88.
[31] Karnow, *Vietnam,* 456.
[32] William Turley, *The Second Indochina War: A Short Political and Military History, 1954-1975* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1986), 192. For a more recent repetition of the charge of corruption and incompetence, see Logevall, *Choosing War,* xviii.
[33] Turley, *Second Indochina War,* 192.
[34] Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man,* 175.
[35] It should be noted that Turley's *Second Indochina War* was one of the earliest survey accounts to incorporate Vietnamese sources. A recent survey to incorporate Vietnamese-language sources from all sides is Mark Philip Bradley, *Vietnam at War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[36] Herring, *America's Longest War,* 59.

Diệm was "among Vietnam's staunchest nationalists," but neither examines the official nationalism cultivated under his rule.[37] Thus, the Vietnam War scholarship shares the weaknesses of Vietnamese studies. Scholars in both fields suggest that Republican nationalism was weak or insignificant, but their assumptions are based on inadequate sources.[38]

A notable exception is Jeffrey Race's *War Comes to Long An*, a wartime study of the conflict between the NLF and the RVN in Long An province. Unlike most scholars, Race incorporates noncommunist sources, including numerous interviews from government officials. Surprisingly, he finds that peasants sided with the NLF for its social programs, and it was actually the RVN that promoted nationalism more forcefully. Nationalism was only a "legitimizing theme" for the insurgents but central to the Republic's mobilization efforts: "the Saigon government's approach in its quest for 'control' of the rural population may be summarized in the word 'nationalism': the attempt to create direct bonds of loyalty between individuals and the central government."[39] In a different vein, Kahin considers the Buddhist movement of the mid-1960s to be an expression of popular nationalism that opposed the non-nationalist government: "Providing as it did the only effective nongovernment outlet of expression in the areas of the South still controlled by Saigon, the Buddhists' organization inevitably constituted the main channel for nationalist expression there."[40] But Kahin's and Race's discussion of nationalism is unfortunately brief. Race considers Republican nationalism only in relationship to peasant motivation, and he defines it narrowly as political support for a centralized government instead of a broader study of ethnic affiliation and political ideas. Kahin mentions the immediate objectives of the Buddhist movement but doesn't examine Buddhist nationalism as a system of thought. Furthermore, he does not consider the possibility that both the movement and the government might have represented different forms of nationalism. Nonetheless, their insights point to the very real existence of noncommunist nationalism during the Vietnam War.

Challenges to the Conventional Scholarship

Contradicting the conventional scholarship is the revisionist school, a relatively uninfluential body of research that champions the RVN as the most nationalist Vietnamese belligerent. The only revisionist study to generate significant academic interest is Mark Moyar's recent *Triumph Forsaken*, a study of American involvement through 1965.[41] Moyar defines the revisionist school by its political stance: revisionists hold that the war was a "noble but

---

[37] Anderson, *Trapped by Success*, 47; Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man,* 26. More recent surveys also limit the discussion of Republican nationalism to a brief acknowledgement of Ngô Đình Diệm's nationalist credentials. See Bradley, *Vietnam at War*, 81; Mark Atwood Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 56.

[38] It should be noted that the reasons for the underutilization of Republican sources are complex. Although archival documents for the RVN did not become available until the last ten or fifteen, significant holdings of Vietnamese-language publications from the RVN have been available in American libraries since the mid-1960s. However, most Vietnam War scholars have lacked either language training in Vietnamese or interest in Republican sources.

[39] Race, *War Comes to Long An*, 180. Hunt has reached a similar conclusion. See Hunt, *Vietnam's Southern Revolution*, 60-67.

[40] Kahin, *Intervention*, 79, 268.

[41] Mark Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For the academic reception of *Triumph Forsaken*, see Thomas Maddux, ed., review of *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965*, by Mark Moyar, *H-Diplo Roundtable Review* 8, no. 7 (2 July 2007): http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/TriumphForsaken-Roundtable.pdf; Andrew Wiest and Michael J. Doidge, ed., *Triumph Revisited: Historians Battle for the Vietnam War* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

improperly executed enterprise."[42] Unlike many Vietnam scholars, Moyar devotes substantial attention to the RVN and suggests that the southern Republic was more nationalist than the DRV. His claim rests chiefly on a comparison between the early leaders of the regimes, Ngô Đình Diệm and Hồ Chí Minh. According to Moyar, Ngô Đình Diệm was less deferential to the Americans than Hồ Chí Minh was to the Chinese, and the revisionist scholar even insists that Hồ Chí Minh was more devoted to international communism than Vietnam.[43] But his treatment of Republican nationalism is as shallow as it is favorable. He declares, "Diem attempted, with some success, to create a modern Vietnam that preserved Vietnamese traditions, an objective that resonated with his countrymen and with other Asian nationalists," but Moyar doesn't explain how Diem revitalized tradition or promoted modern nationalism.[44] In fact, *Triumph Forsaken* shares many of the same weaknesses as the conventional scholarship. It makes bold claims about the ideas of Vietnamese actors without consulting Vietnamese-language sources. The study also assumes that there is only one Vietnamese nation, which can be represented by either the anticommunists or the communists but not both. At the most fundamental level, the debate between the revisionists and the more orthodox scholars is a disagreement about whether American policies were justified: if the RVN was nationalist, then American intervention was legitimate; if the DRV or NLF had a better claim, then US policies were not.

Recently, a trend known as the New Vietnam War scholarship has offered a more vigorous challenge to the conventional interpretation. The new scholarship is still in its incipient stage, but some distinguishing features include the rejection of a singular Vietnamese nationalism and a shift away from communist-centered and American-centered approaches. Instead, the new research recognizes multiple Vietnamese perspectives and includes critical reassessments of communist as well as noncommunist participants.[45] Most relevant to our discussion are the recent studies related to the RVN, which can be divided into two categories. The first group consists of military histories that reexamine the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). The studies rely primarily on oral interviews with former Republican soldiers and challenge the dominant portrayal of them as cowardly, corrupt, and incompetent. The second, and arguably more vibrant, body of research reinterprets Vietnamese-American relations during the First Republic. The latter group of scholars has pioneered the usage of archival and published materials from the RVN. They analyze the Republic as a distinct political entity rather than an American invention. Although none of the studies focus specifically on national identity, they confirm the significance of nationalism and open the way for further research.

The first group of studies argues that the ARVN was genuinely patriotic but ill-served by an ineffective government. Robert Brigham's *ARVN: Life and Death in the South Vietnamese Army,* a social history of enlisted men, finds that Republican soldiers were capable, anticommunist, and willing to serve their country, but they never felt connected to a nationalist

[42] Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken,* xi.
[43] Moyar does not appear to provide any evidence for his assertion that Hồ Chí Minh "firmly adhered to the Leninist principle that Communist nations should subordinate their interests to those of the international Communist movement." See Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken,* reference to 4, citation on 9.
[44] Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken,* xiv.
[45] For discussion of the trend, see Edward Miller and Tuong Vu, "The Vietnam War as a Vietnamese War: Agency and Society in the Study of the Second Indochina War," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 4, no. 3 (fall 2009): 1-16; Nu-Anh Tran, review of the *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 4, no. 3 (fall 2009), special issue on the New Vietnam War Scholarship, *H-Diplo Roundtable Review* 11, no. 12 (2010): 23-31.

cause due to inadequate political training.[46] Similarly, Andrew Wiest believes that the problem lay in Saigon's failure to tap into a latent popular nationalism. In *Vietnam's Forgotten Army,* he explains, "His [Ngô Đình Diệm's] regime and his military did too little to call upon the power of their own people; did too little to take the mantle of nationalism away from the communists."[47] Nonetheless, Wiest claims that a potential for nationalism existed in the population: "there existed a true reservoir of support for Southern nationalism—a reservoir that both the United States and South Vietnam failed to cultivate sufficiently."[48] The idea that nationalism in the RVN was an unrealized potential is intriguing, but neither study sufficiently develops the argument.[49] They do not examine the meaning of patriotism for ARVN soldiers or specific attempts by the government to inculcate nationalism. In effect, they label rather than analyze Republican patriotism.

The second body of research offers a more innovative approach to studying the southern regime. Scholars in this group approach the RVN as a distinct member within an unequal alliance rather than an extension of the US. They argue that Republican leaders pursued their own ideas and agendas and highlight the differences between Vietnamese and Americans policies.[50] Significantly, their work draws upon Vietnamese-language documents produced by the Republic in addition to the more conventional sources. The most prominent monograph is Philip Catton's *Diem's Final Failure,* an examination of the strategic hamlet program. Catton argues that Ngô Đình Diệm possessed a modern vision of nation-building based on a cultural synthesis of Asian and western ideas and that his program sought to address the chronic concerns of Vietnamese nationalists, including the search for social unity and the modernization of the country.[51] According to Catton, Ngô Đình Diệm and his brother and political adviser Ngô Đình Nhu "clearly presented their own vision of a postcolonial state, giving expression to a noncommunist strain of modern Vietnamese nationalism that had stood in opposition to that of the communists since the 1920s."[52] Similarly, Edward Miller contends in his dissertation that, rather than a patron-client relationship, the alliance was an "unsuccessful attempt to reconcile

[46] According to Brigham, "The lack of proper political conditioning meant that the idea of nationhood remained an abstract thought to most common soldiers." See Robert Brigham, *ARVN: Life and Death in the South Vietnamese Army* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 121-122.
[47] Andrew Wiest, *Vietnam's Forgotten Army: Heroism and Betrayal in the ARVN* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2008), 26.
[48] Wiest, *Vietnam's Forgotten Army,* 75.
[49] Wiest's evidence for southern nationalism is somewhat unusual. He profiles two mid-level officers to demonstrate that their support for the RVN was based on complex factors that could not be reduced to economic interests. The factors Wiest analyzes include kinship ties, class background, a family tradition of military service, and personal experiences with communist and French atrocities. See Wiest, *Vietnam's Forgotten Army,* 12-19.
[50] An important work that would be difficult to classify as part of the New Vietnam War scholarship is Edmund Wherle's *Between a River and a Mountain*, a study of the AFL-CIO during the Vietnam War and its relationship to the Tổng Liên Đoàn Lao Công Việt Nam (Confederation of Vietnamese Labor, CVT), the largest labor union in the RVN. Wherle treats noncommunist nationalism seriously even though he barely consults any Vietnamese-language sources and focuses primarily on the American side of the story. His framework for understanding Vietnamese-American relations differs from the emphasis on differences found in the studies of the First Republic. Instead, Wherle highlights the parallelism in the relationship of both unions to their respective governments. See Edmund Wherle, *Between a River and a Mountain: The AFL-CIO and the Vietnam War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).
[51] Philip Catton, *Diem's Final Failure* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 25-50.
[52] Catton, *Diem's Final Failure,* 210.

two distinct visions of nation building."[53] Miller examines Ngô Đình Diệm's early career to find that the leader won the appointment to the premiership through his own efforts and that of his Vietnamese followers, not American support.[54] The reinterpretation of Ngô Đình Diệm as a dynamic actor in Vietnamese politics challenges the simplistic assumption that the RVN was created by foreigners.

Matthew Masur and Jessica Chapman have more directly treated Republican nationalism. Masur's dissertation examines Vietnamese and Americans cultural programs to increase public support for the RVN, including Saigon's attempt to promote a sense of Vietnamese national identity.[55] In Chapman's study of the international struggle for power in South Vietnam during the mid-1950s, she finds that the Ministry of Information and a compliant press transformed Ngô Đình Diệm's campaigns against noncommunist enemies into a "national mythology."[56] Yet these studies continue to locate the RVN in relation to the US and international politics. They discuss Vietnamese ideas and policies in contrast to American concerns, and fully half of their analysis is reserved for international actors.[57] Although their analysis gives greater weight to Vietnamese actors compared to the conventional scholarship, scholars have yet to integrate Republican nationalism into Vietnamese history and the war's internal conflicts.

Contested Nationalism

Moving beyond the existing scholarship, my research attempts what might be considered a "new Vietnamese studies" approach. The decision to make the RVN the primary subject is inspired by scholarship on colonial-era noncommunists. Just as Vietnam scholars have recognized the importance of noncommunist nationalists during the colonial period, this dissertation extends their work to the Vietnam War, when anticommunist nationalism enjoyed the support of a fully mobilized state. Drawing on Tai's and Duiker's inclusive histories, the study considers the RVN a distinct participant in a wider competition among multiple nationalist factions. It examines state nationalism with special attention to how Ngô Đình Diệm marginalized communists and rival anticommunists. The competition and factionalism makes the RVN not so much an anomaly but part of a longer historical pattern of contentious Vietnamese nationalism. My work also builds upon the New Vietnam War scholarship by focusing specifically on nationalism. The study widens the scope of Masur's and Chapman's work to examine the formation of state nationalism in greater detail. It also analyzes official formulations of nationalism that are often distinct from visions of nation-building studied by Catton and Miller.

---

[53] Edward Miller, "Grand Designs: Vision, Power, and Nation-Building in America's Alliance with Ngo Dinh Diem, 1954-1960" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2004), 11.

[54] Edward Miller, "Vision, Power and Agency: The Ascent of Ngo Dinh Diem, 1945-54," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 35, no. 3 (Oct 2004): 433-458.

[55] Matthew Masur, "Hearts and Minds: Cultural Nation-Building in South Vietnam, 1954-1963" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2004).

[56] Jessica Chapman, "Debating the Will of Heaven: South Vietnamese Politics and Nationalism in the International Perspective, 1954-1956" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2006), 165-203.

[57] Geoffrey Stewart's research on the Công Dân Vụ (Civic Action) appears to be an exception to this approach. Unlike Chapman and Masur, Stewart examines Civic Action as an instrument to cultivate a sense of nationalism among rural residents rather than a study of nationalist ideas, but he does not employ the comparison model used in other studies of the First Republic. See Geoffrey Stewart, "Hearts, Minds and Công Dân Vụ: The Special Commissariat for Civic Action and Nation-Building in Ngô Đình Diệm's Vietnam, 1955–1957," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 6, no. 3 (fall 2011): 44-100.

The dissertation proposes the concept of *contested nationalism* to describe nationalism in partitioned Vietnam and other divided countries. The concept draws upon the literature on partitioned states and theories of nationalism. The idea of a partitioned country is theoretically useful because it allows scholars to consider the possibility of multiple nationalist states.[58] In *Warpaths: The Politics of Partition,* Robert Schaeffer defines partition as the "division of countries into separate states."[59] Schaeffer identifies two categories of partitions: British-style partitions based on ethnic and religious differences and Cold War partitions, which were demarcated along ideological lines under the aegis of the US and USSR. Vietnam is classified as a Cold War partition that resulted in the creation of two "sibling states," similar to Korea, Germany, and China and Taiwan. Schaeffer does not define "sibling states," but the term appears to describe ideologically distinct but ethnically identical states created during the Cold War. The idea of a sibling relationship accurately expresses the fraternal rivalry that animated the DRV and RVN.[60] Unfortunately, Schaeffer's definition of partition describes a completed action instead of a continual process. More fully theorized is Smita Tewari Jassal and Eyal Ben-Ari's concept of partition in *The Partition Motif in Contemporary Conflicts.* They understand partition as "a violent territorial and political separation of groups" that results in the "creation of distinct political entities."[61] For them, partition "forms the basis for long-term practices such as identity, work, memory, and inspiration, and the very bases on which different societies are organized."[62] Jassal and Ben-Ari understand partition as a process of ongoing practices rather than a single event. Particularly useful is their observation that partitions affect group identities. In Vietnam, the partition influenced nationalism in North and South Vietnam long after the Geneva Agreement, and each belligerent claimed Vietnamese ethnic identity while rejecting similar arguments from the other.

The concept of partition becomes particularly useful when read in combination with the theoretical literature on nationalism. Ernest Gellner defines nationalism as a theory of political legitimacy in which ethnic and political boundaries are identical: "Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent."[63] Stated differently, Gellner explains that nationalists desire a unity of culture and power.[64] In

---

[58] Similarly, Neil Jamieson has argued that the partition polarized competing versions of Vietnamese culture, but his argument is highly idiosyncratic. Jamieson draws upon cybernetic theory, classical Vietnamese cosmology, and traditional Vietnamese communalism to depict the war as a competition between the *yang* DRV, the *yin* RVN, and the supervillage of the NLF. Jamieson's recognition of the Vietnam War as a conflict within Vietnamese culture and society is insightful, but a cosmological model is hardly appropriate for historical analysis. See Neil Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 232-233.

[59] Robert Schaeffer, *Warpaths: The Politics of Partition* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 3.

[60] Especially insightful is Schaeffer's recognition that sibling states often compete over territory, sovereignty, and diplomatic recognition. He cites the constitutions of the two Vietnams to argue, "The constitutions of many of the divided states, for example, claimed territories not assigned to them and derogated the sovereignty of sibling states, which resulted in the derogation of sovereignty for both." See Schaeffer, *Warpaths,* 191.

[61] Smita Jassal and Eyal Ben-Ari, "The Partition Motif: Concepts, Comparisons, and Considerations," in *The Partition Motif in Contemporary Conflicts,* ed. Smita Jassal and Eyal Ben-Ari (Thousand Oaks, Cal.: Sage Publications, 2007), 19-51, citation from 21.

[62] Jassal and Ben-Ari, "The Partition Motif," 21.

[63] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism: New Perspectives on the Past* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1.

[64] The relationship between ethnicity and culture is complex in Gellner's thought. In brief, Gellner argues that modern nationalism is a linkage between a centralized culture based on a particular ethnic language and a centralized state. See Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism,* 19-38, 53-62.

contrast, Anderson argues that nations are "imagined political communities."[65] He describes a nation as a sovereign state with limited group membership and in which individuals profess affiliation with the collective group.[66] At their core, both of these definitions are about the legitimacy of state power. Gellner claims that nationalists recognize legitimacy based on ethnic identity, while Anderson suggests that legitimacy rests on a sense of community, which has been created by specific historical circumstances and is not necessarily ethnic. In the case of partitioned states, Gellner's interest in ethnicity and boundaries is more suitable because it highlights the uniqueness of sibling states as ethnic populations that are politically separated. However, Anderson's discussion of imagination explains how sibling states continue to imagine the nation to include more territory and population than their governments actually control. In partitioned Vietnam, the DRV and RVN tried to transcend their political boundaries by imagining an ethnic community that reached beyond their border at the 17th parallel.

The concept of contested nationalism highlights the unique characteristics of nationalism in partitioned Vietnam and other divided countries. The noun "nationalism" recognizes that nationalism in partitioned countries is indeed genuine. Following Gellner, nationalism is understood as the intended alignment of ethnic identity with state power. Nationalists in partitioned countries desire to establish and live under a nation-state, that is, a single sovereign state that encompasses an entire ethnic group, is ruled by group members, and excludes foreign ethnicities. Applied to Vietnam, the concept of contested nationalism recognizes that the DRV and RVN were both nationalist because they aspired to become nation-states. The other half of the term, the adjective "contested," highlights the aspirational and competitive character of nationalism in divided nation-states. Partitioned countries fall short of the nationalist ideal, especially Gellner's definition of congruent political and ethnic boundaries. Of course, most states are unable to draw perfectly congruent boundaries, but the case of partitioned countries represents a particularly egregious violation of nationalism. The coexistence of sibling states claiming the same ethnicity contradicts the principle that each ethnic group is ruled by only one state, and contested nationalism as used here refers specifically to partitioned countries. The discrepancy between the ideal and actual boundaries meant that neither the DRV nor the RVN could be considered the "real" nation. After all, leaders on both sides knew that a large population of ethnic Vietnamese belonged to a rival government.

As a concept, the idea of contested nationalism has three theoretical advantages for understanding the Vietnam War. First, it acknowledges that Vietnamese nationalism was competitive and plural, an important corrective to the dominant interpretation. It accommodates the multiplicity of nationalism in wartime Vietnam and recognizes that all sibling states may be nationalist. It also justifies the study of nationalism in any of the belligerents without rejecting the possibility of nationalism in its siblings. Second, the concept draws attention to the contradictory quality of nationhood unique to partitioned countries. In a rivalry between ethnically distinct countries, both countries are likely to highlight their differences. In contrast, nationalism in sibling states is often characterized by opposing impulses of identity and difference, and a belligerent state that wages war against its sibling must try to overcome this tension. Although the RVN recognized the DRV's population as compatriots and appealed to the same history, it condemned the communist regime as the servant of international communism. Third, the concept conveys the mutually constitutive character of nationalism in divided nations.

[65] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 6.
[66] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 6-7.

An alternative term for the phenomenon might be parallel nationalism, but the adjective "parallel" suggests two independent trajectories rather than an interactive competition. Nationalism during the Vietnam War was mutually constitutive, and both regimes built their legitimacy partly by denigrating the other's sovereignty.

The importance of the partition should not obscure the significance of the NLF and other struggles that took place within South Vietnam. The southern insurgency and rivalry between anticommunists were integral aspects of the Vietnam War and cannot be reduced to the competition between Hanoi and Saigon. It is also beyond the scope of this study to examine whether insurgent nationalism should be considered distinct from or an extension of North Vietnamese nationalism. Nevertheless, the dissertation prioritizes the competition between the anticommunist RVN and the communist DRV because it so deeply shaped Republican politics. The Saigon regime subsumed the struggle against the NLF and political rivals under a framework of anticommunist nationalism. Republican leaders dismissed the southern insurgency as a puppet of Hanoi and indiscriminately derided both belligerents as *Việt cộng,* a derogatory term meaning Vietnamese communist. When Ngô Đình Diệm faced challenges from fellow anticommunists, he accused them of colluding with the DRV to discredit them. Thus, the concept of contested nationalism is useful not only for understanding the overarching conflict but also the ways in which the belligerents deployed the conflict to strengthen their political power.

State Nationalism and the Southern Republic

The dissertation focuses on state nationalism because it played a critical role during the war. In contested nationalism, the state is conceptually important because allegiance to a particular government distinguishes the competing national identities. In the case of wartime Vietnam, all of the belligerent governments dominated nationalist discourse in the areas that they controlled, though to different degrees. An especially useful approach for understanding state nationalism is Rogers Brubaker's concept of a nationalizing state, that is, post-independence states who engage extensively in nationalizing politics. According to Brubaker, nationalizing politics are based on the idea that the state legitimately belongs to a core nation whose welfare and interests should be promoted by the government.[67] Nationalizing leaders understand the core nation as a particular ethnic or cultural group that is distinct from the population as whole. Furthermore, they believe this group is not flourishing as much as it deserves and is in need of special policies to remedy the situation. Brubaker developed the concept of a core nation to analyze ethnically-defined states, but Cold War partitions encourage nationalists to express their identity in both ethnic and political terms. Thus, the RVN's core nation was both ethnically Vietnamese and politically anticommunist, and the Saigon regime persecuted Vietnamese communists more than it did ethnic minorities. The idea of a nationalizing state accurately conveys the interventionist and often discriminatory character of the Republic. The government celebrated northern émigrés as the victimized nationalists, sidelined southern anticommunists, and vilified communist nationalists.

Crucial to development of the RVN's nationalizing policies was the role played by intellectual elites. Some intellectuals held government positions while others did not, but they helped develop and disseminate ideas introduced by official policies. They were elites in the sense that they were mostly urban, educated, middle and upper class men, whereas most Vietnamese were poor, rural, and unschooled, but these elites did not necessarily wield political

[67] Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 83.

power. In *Nation Work: Asian Elites and National Identities*, Timothy Brook and Andre Schmid argue that elites played a crucial role in the formation of nationalism in Asia: "Asian nations have gained their particular modern forms in the context of the world system but only to the extent and in the way that Asian elites interested and able to affect national policy and identity have worked to make this happen."[68] Brook and Schmid define "nation work" as the efforts of elites to form identities and mobilize resources to transform their societies into modern nations. Brook and Schmid do not explain what they mean by elites, but the collected essays analyze a variety of political leaders, policymakers, public health officials, scholars, journalists, artists, and intellectuals. In the First Republic, a similarly diverse group of intellectuals engaged in "nation work," but the state always remained central in shaping nationalism.

I define state nationalism as a state-centered project directed by the highest circles of government but reliant on the participation of elites, including those who worked outside of government structures. Curiously, the government of the RVN never produced a single, official statement of its political ideology, though Ngô Đình Diệm and his administration consistently enunciated what they considered the core principles of Republican nationalism. In formal speeches and government publications, leaders of the First Republic insisted that Vietnamese nationalism was based on antifeudalism, anticolonialism, anticommunism, and Vietnamese ethnic identity. Officials usually often linked the first three elements into a slogan, "Antifedual, anticolonial, and anticommunist" *(Bài phong, đã thực, và diệt cộng).* The triple enemy formula referred to, respectively, Bảo Đại and the sects, the French, and the communists, all of whom threatened Ngô Đình Diệm's power during his earliest years. The Ministry of Information disseminated the slogan through propaganda, jingles, theatrical performances, government publications, and mandatory political indoctrination courses for civil servants. Also important was Ngô Đình Diệm's secret political party, the Đảng Cần Lao Nhân Vị (Personalist Labor Party, or Cần Lao), headed by Ngô Đình Nhu. The Cần Lao controlled many legally recognized organizations, including the Phong Trào Cách Mạng Quốc Gia (National Revolutionary Movement, or NRM), Ngô Đình Diệm's official political party, and the Liên đoàn Công chức Cách mạng Quốc gia (National Revolutionary League of Civil Servants, NRLCV), a union that all civil servants were obligated to join. The NRM and NRLCV provided organizational support for anticommunist rallies, and the NRM's daily newspaper, *Cách mạng Quốc gia (National Revolution),* justified the government's persecution of the supposed national enemies.

Beyond the propaganda – which consisted of little more than crude, simplistic slogans – elites provided the "nation work" to transform them into meaningful, nationalizing narratives. The most prominent example of nation work was the enthusiastic response of northern émigré intellectuals to the Chiến dịch Tố Cộng (Denounce the Communists Campaign) in the mid-1950s. Northern émigrés were northern Vietnamese who had migrated south after the Geneva Agreement, and they responded to the campaign by producing an outpour of anticommunist writing that accused the communists of betraying the true nationalists. Their collective contribution transformed anticommunism from an abstract catchphrase into a widely recognized sentiment. In the late-1950s, the Saigon government condemned the communist suppression of the Hungarian Revolution, the Quỳnh Lưu uprising in North Vietnam, and the Tibetan Revolution. Once again, intellectuals responded warmly by celebrating an imagined anticommunist solidarity with the rebellious Hungarians, Northern Vietnamese, and Tibetans. The combination of official guidance and voluntary collaboration created a closed system of

[68] Timothy Brook and Andre Schmid, ed., "Introduction: Nation and Identities in Asia," in *Nation Work: Asian Elites and National Identities* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 1-16, citation from 3.

discourse, in which ideas instituted by the state were often augmented and disseminated by popular organs.

The celebration of Vietnamese ethnic identity represented another area of elite contribution to state nationalism. The Ministry of National Education enacted curricular reforms in 1956 that established nationalism as one of the core principles of Vietnamese education and increased the hours of instruction on the Vietnamese language.[69] In addition, the ministry organized conferences, established cultural institutions, and sponsored scholarly programs to promote the language, culture, and history of ethnic Vietnamese. An underlying subtext to these programs was the linkage of Vietnamese ethnic identity with the Saigon regime and the exclusion of the DRV. Numerous musicians, dancers, artists, historians, and literature scholars worked for the ministry on commission or participated in official events, and others staffed the schools and offices as teachers, professors, librarians, and researchers. These intellectuals likely appreciated government patronage of art and scholarship, and their work provided scholarly depth and artistic professionalism for the state's nationalist project. Unlike the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of National Education did not produce stridently political rhetoric. Of course, the differences between the two ministries should not be drawn too sharply. Anticommunism crept into textbooks, the Ministry of Information dabbled in cultural activities, and both ministries organized international art exhibitions in the early 1960s.

In contrast, antifeudalism and anticolonialism attracted little enthusiasm from intellectuals. Whereas anticommunism was based on the very real experiences of northern anticommunist nationalists, Ngô Đình Diệm's rhetorical war against feudalism and colonialism contradicted the history of anticommunist nationalism in the south. Instead, antifeudal, anticolonial denunciations served to justify his own consolidation of power. He applied the term "feudalist" to a wide variety of political figures and forces that had dominated southern Vietnam prior to his appointment, ranging from the collaborationist leaders of the State of Vietnam to popular anticolonial movements. He further accused the so-called feudalists of colluding with the French and the communists. A small handful of propagandists promoted antifeudalism and anticolonialism, but there was no outpouring of publications similar to the support for anticommunism. Nonetheless, Saigon created a hostile atmosphere that effectively silenced southern, anticommunist perspectives.

Overtly oppressive measures also shaped nationalist discourse. Within the Ministry of Information, an office known as the Directorate of Information and Journalism regulated publishing licenses, enforced censorship, and sometimes pressured journals to cover particular events. The Cần Lao infiltrated many government agencies and independent organizations to monitor their activities. These authoritarian methods prevented writers and civic leaders from promoting communist nationalism, but there is no evidence that government officials forced authors to pen anticommunist tracts or pressured historians to falsify their data. Rather, the government established the parameters of nationalist discourse, and intellectuals enjoyed considerable freedom within those boundaries. Intellectuals could freely select elements of state nationalism to develop or even propose alternative expressions of nationalism, as long as writers did not criticize the regime or express support for Ngô Đình Diệm's enemies.[70] Significantly, the

[69] "Dự án cải tổ chương trình trung học," undated, file 1692, Phong Bộ Văn hóa Giáo dục và Thanh niên, Trung tâm Lưu trữ Quốc gia II (Ministry of Culture, Education, and Youth Collections, National Archives Center II, hereafter VHGDTN).

[70] In this respect, the relationship between the state and intellectuals in the RVN was starkly different from the DRV, as depicted by Kim Ninh in *A World Transformed.* Ninh depicts a government that intervened in artistic endeavors

ideas that intellectuals ignored – antifeudalism and anticolonialism – quickly faded from memory, while the concepts that they championed – anticommunism and Vietnamese ethnicity – continued to be the defining traits of Republican nationalism until the RVN collapsed. But the strength of anticommunist Vietnamese nationalism did not translate into long-term political support for Ngô Đình Diệm, and elite collaboration with the regime declined precipitously from its height in the mid-1950s. Students and intellectuals resented the rigged elections and the suppression of free speech, and most supported the overthrow of Ngô Đình Diệm in 1963. Of course, state nationalism did not encompass all forms of Republican nationalism. My analysis will gesture towards public reception but does not explore more popular expressions of nationalism.

The Americans appear to have played a limited role in state nationalism. They most likely did not participate in the genesis of the triple enemy formula and did not play a decisive role in eliciting the participation of the Vietnamese intellectuals. But particular American agencies did provide some training and assistance to anticommunist groups and government cadres. American intelligence and diplomatic officials cultivated contacts among anticommunist circle, and some Vietnamese turned to the US and other foreign countries as a source of ideas and political solidarity. Perhaps most importantly, the American decision to withhold support from Ngô Đình Diệm's sectarian rivals in the mid-1950s contributed to his ability to sideline other anticommunists. Yet it was still the RVN's government ministries, internal Vietnamese politics, and the Vietnamese intellectuals that most deeply shaped the ideas within Republican nationalism.

Chapter Breakdown

This dissertation is presented in four chapters. Chapter 1 explores the institutionalization and dissemination of anticommunism in the RVN with particular attention to the relationship between the government and northern, anticommunist nationalists. Ngô Đình Diệm and the Ministry of Information fostered an official historical memory of the resistance war as a communist betrayal of the nationalist movement, and they received enthusiastic support by émigré intellectuals. Yet Ngô Đình Diệm suppressed the very nationalist parties whose legacy he appropriated and used tales of communist oppression in the North to justify his own persecution of communist and communist-led nationalists in the south.

Chapter 2 links Ngô Đình Diệm's relationship with the French and southern anticommunists, on the one hand, to the official rhetoric of anticolonialism and antifeudalism, on the other. He accused the French, Bảo Đại, political elites from the SVN period, and the southern sects of colluding with each other and the communists. But the term "feudal" obscured the differences between the populist, anticolonial sects and the procolonial political establishment. Ngô Đình Diệm's decision to suppress the sects, including loyal sect elements, inadvertently marginalized southern, anticommunist nationalism and deprived him of a popular, anticommunist base in the countryside.

---

far deeper than the Saigon regime. North Vietnamese writers and artists were pressured to renounce their former compositions and adhere to an approved socialist approach to art and literature. According to Ninh, the study of cultural politics in the DRV requires an expanded definition of civil society; in contrast, a more conventional understanding of civil society suffices for the study of state nationalism in the RVN. See Kim Ninh, *A World Transformed: The Politics of Culture in Revolutionary Vietnam, 1945-1965* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.

Chapter 3 examines the RVN's engagement with the international world through the framework of the Cold War and the Third World. The government presented itself as a contributing member of the Free World alliance, and anticommunists linked their war against Vietnamese communists with the Hungarian and Tibetan Revolutions. Propagandists drew upon dependency theory and modernization theory, both associated with the Third World, to justify the fight against the NLF. Much of this international engagement was ultimately self-serving, as anticommunists used foreign recognition to bolster the regime's domestic legitimacy.

Lastly, Chapter 4 analyzes the RVN's cultural policy and the construction of Vietnamese ethnic identity by the Ministry of National Education and other agencies. The study of geography and history created nationalist conceptions of place and time, and new cultural institutions implicitly championed the sovereignty of the Saigon regime over the totality of Vietnamese culture. In the early 1960s, international art exhibitions in Saigon presented the RVN as the exclusive representative of Vietnamese ethnicity and cultural heritage. Through a variety of programs and activities, the government fostered a sense of a politically-empowered Vietnamese ethnicity while marginalizing ethnic minorities, French colonialists, and Vietnamese communists.

A Note on Sources

One of the greatest challenges to researching the RVN is the problem of sources. Archival documents produced by the RVN are kept at the Trung Tâm Lưu Trữ Quốc Gia II (National Archives Center II, TTLTQGII) in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. This dissertation makes heavy use of documents such as meeting minutes, study materials for political indoctrination, reports by Vietnam Press, government pamphlets and publications, internal correspondences, petitions, and resolutions. At the time of research, only two major collections were available to researchers, the Office of the President and the Office of the Prime Minister Collections. The collections provide valuable insight into the ideas and operation at the highest level of the Saigon government, but they are less helpful for understanding the internal working of the other ministries, including the Ministries of Information and National Education. Therefore, the dissertation relies on publications produced by government agencies to supplement archival documents, including *Văn hóa Nguyệt san (Cultural Monthly),* published by the Directorate of Cultural Affairs in the Ministry of National Education, *Văn hữu (Literary Friends),* produced by the Office of Cultural Affairs in the Ministry of Information, the *Khảo cổ tập san (Journal of the Institute of History),* and *Xây dựng (Constructive),* a newsletter for information cadres by the Ministry of Information.

Anticommunism and the RVN remain politically sensitive topics in contemporary Vietnam, and the NACII routinely denies access to files explicitly labeled as pertaining to anticommunism. Until these restrictions are eased, it is impossible to establish a paper trail for events such as the rallies in response to the Hungarian Revolution or the decision to launch the Denounce the Communists Campaign. The study draws upon newspapers and other publications to compensate for archival censorship. Although it is sometimes difficult to identify which government official directed a specific anticommunist activity, newspapers provide ample information on how anticommunist demonstrations and meetings unfolded.

Beyond the archives, the dissertation relies on a wide diversity of published sources found at the Cornell University Library and the General Sciences Library (GSL) in Ho Chi Minh City. The GSL was formerly the National Library of the RVN. Published sources include speeches, textbooks, curriculum guides, newspapers, mainstream and academic periodicals,

influential literary and scholarly works, movies, and memoirs. Some of these sources will be familiar to students of the Vietnam War, such as the compilation of Ngô Đình Diệm's speeches, *Con đường chính nghĩa (The Path of the Righteous Cause).* Others have rarely been used by scholars, such as the geography textbooks cited extensively in Chapter 4. As a whole, popular and scholarly publications from the RVN have remained untouched by scholars, and the study of such materials promises a richer understanding of political, intellectual, and cultural life in the RVN.

A Note on Terminology

There is often confusion between the terms Republic of Vietnam and South Vietnam. Following Carlyle Thayer, South Vietnam will refer to the geographical area below the 17th parallel, whereas the RVN and the Republic will denote the Saigon-based government.[71] The distinction acknowledges the existence of the NLF as an integral part of South Vietnamese politics. This usage also extends to adjectives, thus Republican for the RVN, insurgent for the NLF, and South Vietnamese for the territory. Another possible source of confusion is the partition of the country in 1954 into two zones and the traditional division of Vietnam into three cultural and geographical regions. The tripartite division dated back to the administrative organization of the country during the Nguyễn dynasty and the French colonial period (See Map 1). This dissertation refers to the tripartite division in lower case – that is, north, central region, and south – and the partitioned halves in upper case, North and South (See Map 2).

Vietnamese personal and place names are another potential source of confusion. All place names will be rendered with diacritical marks except for familiar toponyms like Hanoi and Saigon. The names of historical figures will appear with diacritical marks and written in full with the surname placed first, in accordance with Vietnamese conventions. A handful of common surnames account for the majority of the Vietnamese-speaking population, and the practice of using full names prevents confusion. Thus, I refer to Nguyễn Mạnh Côn, Nguyễn Vạn An, and Nguyễn Thiệu by their full names at all times. For scholars with Vietnamese names, I use their chosen professional name in the main text. While some scholars have chosen to follow Vietnamese conventions and place their surnames first, others have chosen to accord with American conventions and place their surnames last, and still others have chosen different variations. Also, some scholars have chosen to publish with the diacritical marks in their names while others have not. Thus, Huỳnh Kim Khánh and Vũ Ngự Chiêu, but Tuong Vu and Lien-Hang Thi Nguyen, and also Jade Ngọc Quanh Huỳnh and Dương Văn Mai Elliott. I refer to scholars with conventional Vietnamese names by their full names at all times but shorten the names of those who choose to follow American conventions to their surnames in discussion of their work.

[71] Thayer uses "North Vietnam" and "South Vietnam" to refer to geographical areas and DRV and RVN to denote the warring regimes. See Thayer, *War By Other Means,* xxvi-xxx.

Map 1. **Colonial Indochina.**

By Bearsmalaysia (Own work) [CC-BY-SA-3.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0)], via Wikimedia Commons, accessed 7 Apr 2013, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AFrench_Indochina_subdivisions.svg.

Map 2. **Partitioned Vietnam.**

"Indochina Administrative Divisions." In *Indochina Atlas.* ([Washington, DC?]: CIA, 1970); Perry-Castañeda Library, accessed 7 Apr 2013, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/indochina_atlas/txu-oclc-1092889-78343-8-70.jpg.

Chapter 1

Denouncing Communists: The Creation of an Anticommunist Narrative, 1954-1960

What are the origins of anticommunism in the RVN and how did it become pervasive in the regime's politics and nationalism? The paucity of scholarship on Vietnamese anticommunism hampers attempts to address this question. The few accounts that touch upon the issue identify anticommunism almost exclusively with Catholicism but ignore non-Catholic varieties of anticommunism. In *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, David Marr suggests that Vietnamese anticommunism originated in an anticommunist crusade carried out by the ultraconservative Vietnamese Catholic church in the 1920s.[1] Similarly, historians of the Vietnam War attribute wartime anticommunism to Ngô Đình Diệm's Catholic background and northern Catholics migrants. In *America's Longest War,* George Herring implies that Catholicism led Ngô Đình Diệm to anticommunism: "A devout Catholic, he became a staunch opponent of communism before he became a nationalist."[2] Seth Jacobs asserts in *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam* that Catholicism was the "religion that made Diem anticommunist."[3] Stanley Karnow's popular *Vietnam: A History* explains that northern Catholic migrants "furnished Diem with a fiercely anti-Communist constituency in the south,"[4] and Bernard Fall's classic *The Two Viet-Nams* argues that the "Catholic exodus" removed "a vast reservoir of potential anti-Communist subversive elements" from North Vietnam.[5] The implied argument is that only a small religious minority outside of mainstream Vietnamese society espoused anticommunism.

Other researchers portray anticommunism as a state project that the Saigon regime imposed upon an uninterested population. These scholars cite the Denounce the Communists Campaign (Chiến Dịch Tố Cộng), a government initiative in the latter half of the 1950s that combined security, mass mobilization, and propaganda, of which security has attracted the most academic interest. In *The Vietnamese War*, David Elliott finds that the mass arrests of suspected communists in the countryside devastated the communist party but helped the movement reconstitute by pushing former activists and nominal supporters back into the fold.[6] In the *Communist Road to Power,* William J. Duiker similarly highlights the importance of security: "In rural areas, Diem launched a 'Denounce the Communists' *(To Cong)* campaign, with an emphasis on those areas where the Vietminh organization had traditionally been strong."[7] Duiker adds that Ngô Đình Diệm declared an "ideological war on communism," but he doesn't discuss anticommunist ideas or their relationship to the denunciations.[8] By analyzing the measure as a security operation carried out by the government, scholars overlook an equally fundamental aspect of the campaign: the willing participation of Vietnamese intellectuals and the anticommunist ideas they developed.

---

[1] Marr also claims that the colonial government borrowed from Catholic morality instruction when it produced anticommunist propaganda to counter the Nghệ Tĩnh Soviet uprisings in 1930-1931, but the connection between the two is tenuous. See Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial,* 82-88.
[2] Herring, *America's Longest War,* 58-59.
[3] Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam,* 87.
[4] Karnow, *Vietnam,* 238.
[5] Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams,* 154.
[6] Elliott, *The Vietnamese War,* 98-110.
[7] Duiker, *Communist Road to Power,* 184.
[8] Duiker, *Communist Road to Power,* 184.

Recent research demonstrates that anticommunism has been part of mainstream Vietnamese political and intellectual discourse since the late colonial period and that educated intellectuals played a leading role in its creation. Peter Zinoman finds that many of Vietnam's most prominent intellectuals in the 1930s harshly criticized the Indochinese Communist Party and the Soviet Union. Their complaints about communist authoritarianism, duplicity, and restrictive cultural policies foreshadowed much of the RVN's anticommunist discourse.[9] In Tuan Hoang's study of anticommunism in the early RVN, he argues that northern émigré intellectuals developed a coherent critique of Vietnamese communism based on their experience of the Việt Minh. They denounced revolutionary violence, class warfare, and communist thought control. Many of the texts he analyzes were produced during the Denounce the Communists Campaign, but Hoang does not consider the role of the government in nurturing and guiding anticommunist sentiments.[10] Zinoman and Hoang acknowledge that the ideas of anticommunist intellectuals represent one of many strains of anticommunism during, respectively, the 1930s and late 1950s, but their findings confirm that anticommunism was not exclusive to Vietnamese Catholics.

This chapter argues that the Saigon government and allied intellectuals established anticommunism as the central tenet of Republican nationalism during the Denounce the Communists Campaign. Participants in the campaign presented the new nationalism as arising out of the political schism between communist and anticommunist nationalists in northern Vietnam in the 1940s. Based on their experience of this conflict, northern émigré intellectuals created a historical narrative that depicted the DRV as a traitor to the anticolonial resistance, a servant of international communism, and an oppressive regime. A new political vocabulary separating communists from nationalists provided the conceptual foundation for the narrative. Contrary to the prevailing argument, Catholicism played a relatively minor part in nationalist discourse. Instead, anticommunism reflected a secular northern Vietnamese perspective and, to a lesser extent, secular international influence. The proponents of the campaign hoped to convince the entire population to reject communism, but the mass arrests and detentions undermined their efforts. Moreover, Ngô Đình Diệm sidelined many of the anticommunist nationalists whose legacy he claimed to represent.

The chapter begins with an overview of the Denounce the Communist Campaign. Three additional sections analyze the anticommunist terminology and history of the DRV that the campaign produced. First, Republican thinkers created a dichotomy between Vietnamese communists and nationalists and constructed an official memory of the resistance as a communist betrayal of nationalism. The second section explores the anticommunist notion that communism was a new form of imperialism. Partially influenced by the Cold War, the government and intellectuals vilified the Geneva Agreement and accused the DRV of submitting to Chinese rule. The last part of the chapter examines the idea of freedom as a rejection of communist oppression. It focuses on the RVN's interpretation of the migration of 1954-1955 and the suppression of free speech during the Nhân văn – Giai phẩm Affair in the late 1950s. Most of the sources analyzed in the first and second sections were produced during the Denounce the Communists Campaign, but the RVN's reaction to the affair appears to have been distinct from the campaign itself.

[9] Peter Zinoman, "Vietnamese Urban Intellectuals and Anti-Communism in the 1930s" (paper, Annual Conference of the Association of Asian Studies, Honolulu, HI, 20 Mar 2011).
[10] Tuan Hoang, "The Early South Vietnamese Critique of Communism," in *Dynamics of the Cold War in Asia,* ed. Tuong Vu and Wasana Wongsurawat (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 17-32.

The Denounce the Communists Campaign

The Denounce the Communists Campaign was the centerpiece of Ngô Đình Diệm's political program in the mid-1950s. Launched on 20 July 1955, the measure was guided by the invective, "Eliminate the Feudalists, Strike down the Colonialists, and Annihilate the Communists" *(Bài Phong, Đả Thực, và Diệt Cộng),* as Minister of Information Trần Chánh Thành explained at the National Conference of the Denounce the Communists Campaign in the spring of 1956.[11] According to the minister, Ngô Đình Diệm issued the "precepts" *(phương châm)* to combat three enemies of the nation: communists *(cộng sản)*, colonialists *(thực dân)*, and feudalists *(phong kiến).* The third group included former emperor Bảo Đại, political elites of the State of Vietnam (SVN), and the sects. The communists were the primary target enemy, however, because the other forces were already crumbling, the minister explained, "[T]he Denounce the Communists Campaign aims to annihilate the Communists as the main enemy and will naturally crush the forces that collude with the Communists, the Colonialists and Feudalists."[12] The campaign played a critical role in establishing the precepts as the official position of the government and as integral components of state nationalism. Even when the ideological emphasis of the campaign began to wane in the late 1950s, antifeudalism, anticolonialism, and anticommunism continued to dominate state nationalism for the rest of the decade.

The campaign included a variety of unrelated initiatives based on the three precepts and did not constitute a single coherent program. Various measures aimed to create and disseminate propaganda, mobilize the population against the three enemies, and consolidate Ngô Đình Diệm's power. What little is known of its inner workings suggests that propaganda received special attention during the first two years. At its inception, the campaign's highest leadership was drawn not from the military or police but the Ministry of Information, whose primary function was to provide propaganda, gather information, and regulate the press. Trần Chánh Thành chaired the campaign's directing body, the People's Central Steering Committee of the Denounce the Communists Campaign (PCSC), and the ministry's Chief of Cabinet, Lê Khải Trạch, headed the central committee of the PCSC.[13] The PCSC stood at the apex of an unusually powerful apparatus.[14] Instead of a distinctive government agency, it consisted of a hierarchy of steering committees drawn from within the government, and every office and mass organization was obligated to form a committee.[15] This curious structure likely facilitated the coordination of activities across administrative boundaries and allowed the PCSC to police the ideological orientation of the entire government bureaucracy. That the Ministry of Information was granted

[11] *Thành tích Tố Cộng Giai đoạn I: Tổng kết thành tích Tố Cộng trong 3 đợt của giai đoạn I và mở đầu giai đoạn II của chiến dịch* (Saigon: Hội đồng Nhân dân Chỉ đạo Chiến dịch Tố Cộng, 1956), 20.

[12] "Chiến dịch Tố Cộng nhằm tiêu diệt Cộng Sản là kẻ thù chính, tất nhiên sẽ triệt hạ luôn những lực lượng cấu kết với Cộng sản là Thực Dân và Phong kiến": *Thành tích Tố Cộng,* 20. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

[13] The relationship between the PCSC and the central committee is unclear. See *Thành tích Tố Cộng,* 16, 25.

[14] The PCSC was likely drawn from, modeled after, or identical with the National Revolutionary Movement or the Cần Lao, both of which was under the control of Ngô Đình Nhu. Like the PCSC, the NRM and Cần Lao consisted of loyal supporters drawn from all levels of government. I would like to thank Edward Miller for his suggestion concerning the relationship between the PCSC and the Cần Lao.

[15] Form letter from the Lê Khải Trạch on establishing a Steering Committee of the Denounce the Communists Campaign in every local unit, office, and organization, correspondence no. 1600-BTT/VP, 17 Aug 1955, file 29164, Phong Phủ Thủ tướng Việt Nam Cộng Hòa, Trung tâm Lưu trữ Quốc gia II (Office of the Prime Minister Collections, National Archives Center II, hereafter, PThTVNCH).

control of the campaign's apparatus demonstrates the degree to which the activities of the two bodies overlapped.

Nineteen-fifty-five and 1956 marked the campaign's most intense period of propaganda. Information cadres in the Ministry of Information produced numerous anticommunist jingles, poems, and plays, and the state-owned radio station aired politically-themed folk songs and traditional operas.[16] The Office of Cultural Affairs, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Information, sponsored a series of anticommunist literary and artistic contests.[17] The competition itself attracted mostly amateur writers, but it helped inspire a prolific production of anticommunist literature that continued until the end of the decade.[18] Writers flooded the reading market with memoirs, research monographs, political tracts, philosophical treatises, and novels. The timing of the publications suggests that the contests played a critical role in encouraging authors to publish. Even a cursory survey demonstrates that the number of publications surged sharply in 1956, the year the competition ended.

In the countryside, the campaign linked popular mobilization to security. Ngô Đình Diệm hoped to consolidate his power at the local level by destroying the underground organization that the Việt Minh had left behind. Following the military reoccupation of former Việt Minh areas, the Ministry of Information sent cadres to the countryside to agitate the population against communism. Cadres warned peasants against the evils of communism, encouraged communists to defect, and pressured villagers to denounce their neighbors. In some rural areas, Civic Action teams carried out the campaign. Civic Action teams were small teams of government cadres whose task it was to win the loyalty of the peasantry through community development projects.[19] Particularly dramatic were the public denunciations in which communist agents renounced their allegiance and described communist atrocities.[20] Local officials carried out security measures in tandem with these propaganda efforts. The police arrested, detained, and interrogated suspected communists, and security committees composed of provincial officials determined the guilt or

---

[16] For works by information cadres, see Thanh Sơn, "Ca dao Tố Cộng," *Xây dựng* 3 (15 Jan 1956), 35; Thế Hoài, "Trở về," *Xây dựng* 13 (16 Jun 1956): 11-13; Hoàng Minh, "Đằng nào cũng chết," *Xây dựng* 29 (1 Apr 1957): 19-22, 30-33; Ban Văn nghệ Trường di chuyển Khánh Hội, "Ca dao mới," *Xây dựng* 16 (1 Aug 1956): 58. For music, see Bửu Thọ to the Chief of Cabinet, Ministry at the President's Office, correspondence no. 1290-VTV/SVT, 9 May 1958, file 16603, Phong Phủ Tổng thống Đệ Nhất Cộng Hòa, Trung tâm Lưu trữ Quốc gia II (Office of the President Collections for the First Republic, hereafter, ĐICH). See also various songs composed in the classical style of the central region, 9 May 1958, file 16603, ĐICH; "Chương trình cổ nhạc Bắc Việt," 4 Feb 1958, file 16603, ĐICH.

[17] *Thành tích Tố Cộng,* 80-1; "Thông cáo của Hội đồng Nhân dân Chỉ đạo Chiến dịch Tố Cộng: Cuộc thi văn nghệ Tố Cộng toàn quốc," *Xây dựng* 7 (15 Mar 1956): 22, 26.

[18] I have only been able to locate two prize-winning works, *Thanh niên quốc gia dưới ách cộng sản (Nationalist Youth Under the Việt Cộng Yoke)* by Nhị Hùng and *Mặt trận Tổ Quốc: Một chiến thuật sảo quyệt của Việt Minh Cộng Sản (The Fatherland Front: A Devious Strategy by the Communist Việt Minh)* by Trần Ích Quốc. The former is listed among winners in a report by Việt Nam Thông Tấn Xã (Việt Tấn Xã, Vietnam Press, or VTX), the RVN's official news agency, and Trần Ích Quốc advertises his book as a prize winner, though I have been unable to verify his claim. It is possible that the two authors entered different contests. See Nhị Hùng, *Thanh niên quốc gia dưới ách cộng sản* (Saigon: privately published, 1956); Trần Ích Quốc, *Mặt trận Tổ Quốc: Một chiến thuật sảo quyệt của Việt Minh Cộng Sản* (Saigon: privately published, 1957); "Lễ khánh thành Phòng Liên lạc của Đại hội Văn hoá toàn quốc," *Bản tin VTX* 2088 (18 Nov 1956, afternoon): IV-VII, reference to VII, file 16035, ĐICH.

[19] Both Jeffery Race's study of Long An province and David Elliott's study of Định Tường province note the central role of Civic Action teams in in the Denounce the Communists Campaign. See Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An*, 25-27; David Elliott, *The Vietnamese War: Revolution and Social Change in the Mekong Delta, 1930-1975,* concise ed. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), 98-99.

[20] Robert Scigliano, *South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), 167; Elliott, *The Vietnamese War,* concise ed., 101.

innocence of suspects.[21] Months of detention and government indoctrination awaited those who were deemed guilty.[22] By 1957, the emphasis on propaganda was waning, and it is unclear when the campaign ended[23] and whether the Ministry of Information continued to direct it.[24] Regardless, the search for underground communists continued well into the late 1950s. Estimates for the total number of arrests and executions vary considerably, ranging from 1000 to 5000 executions and between 25,000 to 184,000 arrests from 1954 to the end of the decade.[25]

Northern émigré intellectuals were especially receptive to the aggressive anticommunism. In 1954, the Geneva Agreement specified that civilians would be allowed a period of 300 days to migrate to their preferred zone, and over 800,000 Northerners left for South Vietnam, where they became known as *Bắc di cư,* or, "northern émigrés." Virtually all of the writers who contributed to the new anticommunist literature were émigrés, and a decidedly northern perspective characterized the new anticommunism. Even authors who did not identify themselves as émigrés often set their novels in northern Vietnam or focused their research on historical events that took place in the North. Surprisingly, very few authors described themselves as Catholic or even discussed their religious affiliation, despite the fact that northern émigrés as a population were predominantly Catholic.[26] Instead, authors emphasized their political identity as anticommunist nationalists. Most had come of age during the resistance,[27] and a significant number described themselves as former resistance fighters. As Tuan Hoang argues, "What bound anticommunist writers together were similar experiences of the Viet Minh, and not religious commonalities except for an opposition to communist suppression of religious practices and organizations."[28] The literary and academic merit of their work was mostly mediocre, the accusations made against the communists were exaggerated, and their tone bordered on hysterical. But what made the accounts so compelling was that their authors wrote with the passion of historical witnesses. They offered vivid descriptions of communist prison camps, recounted personal experiences of purges and land reform trials, and mourned the tragic fate of fallen comrades.

---

[21] There is very limited research on the Denounce the Communists Campaign at the village level and virtually no information on which government entity directed the arrests and detentions. Anecdotal accounts suggest that local officials and the local police arrested and prosecuted suspects, and it is unclear to what extent the PCSC was involved. See Race, *War Comes to Long An,* 27, 37-38, 43. For the process of judging suspects, see Race, *War Comes to Long An,* 27 n22.

[22] Punishment appears to have varied widely. For a description of different forms of punishment and lengths of sentences, see Thayer, *War By Other Means,* 115; Elliott, *Vietnamese War,* 97.

[23] Scholars disagree on the end date of the campaign. Elliot describes a campaign lasting from 1955 to 1958, but Thayer's figures regarding arrests and detention suggest that it extended into early 1959 or 1960, at least. See Elliott, *The Vietnamese War,* 102; Thayer, *War By Other Means,* 116-117.

[24] The power of Trần Chánh Thành and the Ministry of Information weakened considerably in the late 1950s. In 1960, the ministry lost its status as an independent department, and Ngô Đình Diệm sent Trần Chánh Thành to Africa as the RVN's ambassador to Tunisia. See Scigliano, *South Vietnam,* 168.

[25] On the low end, Duiker suggests that there were 25,000 arrests, over 1000 executions, and over 4200 injuries for the 1954-1960 period based on communist documents. Thayer collates alternative communist sources to suggest about 184,000 arrests, almost 5000 executions, and over 10,000 injuries through early 1959 as an upper limit. In contrast, Kahin provides the figure of over 48,000 detentions based on the RVN's Ministry of Information. See Duiker, *Communist Road to Power in Vietnam,* 184; Kahin, *Intervention,* 96; Thayer, *War By Other Means,* 116-117.

[26] Tuan Hoang has also made this observation. See Hoang, "The Early South Vietnamese Critique of Communism," 19.

[27] Võ Phiến, *Hai mươi nam văn học miền Nam, 1954-1975* (Westminster, Calif.: Nghệ, 1986), 105.

[28] Hoang, "The Early South Vietnamese Critique of Communism," 19.

A convergence of private sentiments and official encouragement likely drove the outpouring of anticommunist literature. An analysis of the authors and publishers of anticommunist texts from this period demonstrate varying degrees of state involvement. At one end of the spectrum were political tracts published by the Ministry of Information and written by professional propagandists, such as *Những mặt trận bịp bợm của Cộng sản (The Deceitful Front Organizations of the Communists).*[29] At the other end of the spectrum were works by private citizens and published privately or with commercial publishing houses, such as Lê Phong's *Người quân nhân dưới chế độ Việt Cộng (Soldiers under the Việt Cộng Regime),* a memoir of Việt Minh military life.[30] Still others were written by ordinary refugees but received official endorsement. The privately published *Truyện người vượt tuyến (Tale of a Meridian Crosser),* an account of contemporary conditions in the DRV, was written by refugee-turned-author Nguyễn Ngọc Thanh, but the volume boasted an introduction by Nguyễn Thiệu, the National Assembly deputy from Cần Thơ.[31] The joint efforts of the state and intellectuals served to legitimize both parties. Émigré intellectuals portrayed themselves as victims who longed to warn their countrymen about the horrors of communist rule.[32] This desire coincided with the stated objectives of the campaign's literary contests, which according to the PCSC, was to "fulfill the wishes of compatriots who have been the victims of the Communist regime" and educate the rest of the population about communist crimes.[33] Émigré accounts provided the emotional authenticity behind state propaganda, and the government transformed émigré experiences into an official historical memory.

The Americans did not contribute significantly to the development of anticommunist nationalism. Recently declassified histories of the CIA indicate that the agency probably did not play a part in the creation of the Denounce the Communists Campaign. The regular CIA station was not involved in the anticommunist measures and actually disapproved of Trần Chánh Thành's "Leninist" tendencies.[34] But Edward Lansdale, the CIA agent assigned to the military mission in Saigon, had contacts among northern émigré intellectuals, especially those belonging to anticommunist political parties.[35] When Ngô Đình Diệm sidelined rival anticommunists, they

---

[29] *Những mặt trận bịp bợm của Cộng sản* ([Saigon?]: Bộ Thông tin và Thanh niên, 1956), 57.

[30] I have labeled the book a memoir because Lê Phong uses to the first person at the beginning of the narrative and suggests that the volume is based on his personal experience, but the remainder of the book is written in the third person. Although neither Lê Phong nor his publisher appeared to have any relationship with the government, he appears to have composed the memoir specifically for the Denounce the Communists Campaign. He signed the foreword, "Saigon, giữa một mùa Tố-Cộng" ("Saigon, in a time of Anticommunist Denunciations"). See Lê Phong, *Người quân nhân dưới chế độ Việt Cộng* ([Saigon?]: Hoàng Ba, [1956?]), 1.

[31] Nguyễn Ngọc Thanh, *Truyện người vượt tuyến* ([Saigon?]: privately published, 1959).

[32] Tuan Hoang and Võ Phiến have made similar observations about the motivation of émigré authors. See Hoang, "The Early South Vietnamese Critique of Communism," 20; Võ Phiến, *Văn học miền Nam tổng quan,* 108.

[33] "theo ý muốn của đồng bào nạn nhân của chế-độ Cộng-Sản": "Thông cáo của Hội đồng Nhân dân Chỉ đạo Chiến dịch Tố Cộng," 22. This is the official announcement of the PCSC regarding the anticommunist literary and artistic contests.

[34] It is unclear whether Lansdale was involved in the campaign. Lansdale does not mention it in his memoir though he does refer obliquely to the repression of political dissent by the Cần Lao party. See Thomas Ahern, Jr., *The CIA and the House of Ngo: Covert Action in South Vietnam 1954-63* (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 2000), 95; Edward Lansdale, *In the Midst of War: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1991), 344; Cecil Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American* (Washington: Brassey's, 1998), 181-184.

[35] Robert Shaplen, *The Lost Revolution: The US in Vietnam, 1946-1966* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1966),102.

often turned to Lansdale for funding and to intervene with the government on their behalf, a point that will be explored later.[36]

Việt Cộng and Vietnamese Nationalists

A fundamental concept developed during the campaign was that Vietnamese communism and Vietnamese nationalism were mutually exclusive. The very language that participants in the campaign used to describe their enemies and themselves embodied this opposition: the pejorative *Việt cộng,* meaning "Vietnamese communists," and, *quốc gia,* meaning "nationalist" or "nation-state," which was used only for noncommunists. The dichotomy denied the very possibility of communist nationalism. Although the binary of communism and nationalism was a fundamental framework of mid-century American anticommunist discourse, the existing evidence suggests that Vietnamese anticommunists coined the terms in Vietnam during the resistance and that the Denounce the Communists Campaign popularized them.

Little is known about the origin of the term *Việt cộng*. It was apparently unknown in the South prior to the mid-1950s. A political training manual published in 1956 for military personnel explains that the term was a contraction of *Việt Minh cộng sản,* or "Communist Việt Minh."[37] The manual did not date the origins of the term, but it claimed that the contracted form was introduced when the communist character of the Việt Minh became evident during the resistance period. In 1941, the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP, 1930-1945) established the Việt Minh, whose full name was Việt Nam Độc Lập Đồng Minh Hội (Vietnamese Independence League), as a front organization. When the communists took control of the country in the August Revolution, they introduced their movement publicly as the Việt Minh and dissolved the ICP a few months later. Throughout the remainder of the decade, they covertly led the Việt Minh while cultivating a multi-class alliance against the French. Only after 1949 did the Việt Minh introduce more social revolutionary policies, and the communist party reemerged under the new name of the Vietnamese Labor Party (VLP, 1951-1976) in 1951. Thus, the manual implies that the opponents of the Việt Minh invented the term "Communist Việt Minh" during the resistance to unmask the movement's true character.[38] In the RVN, anticommunists adopted the pejorative as

---

[36] Rufus Phillips, *Why Vietnam Matters* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2008), 16, 22-23.

[37] I am indebted to Edward Miller and Hue-Tam Ho Tai for the suggestion that *Việt cộng* was a contraction of *Việt Minh cộng sản*. See Edward Miller, email correspondence with author, 2 July 2009. For the explanation in the political training manual, see *Quân đội học tập chính trị* (Saigon: 1956?), 148.

[38] Two additional factors support this line of argument. First, a number of works published during the latter half of the 1950s continued to use the full, four-word phrase, *Việt Minh cộng sản,* and the abbreviation *VMCS.* This usage suggests that the campaign marked a transition period during which usage shifted from the full, explanatory phrase to the slogan-like contracted form. Second, *Việt cộng* resembled other political epithets popularized during the resistance war. Similar contracted forms for the various nationalist parties included: *Việt Quốc,* for the noncommunist Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng (Vietnam Nationalist Party); *Việt Cách,* an abbreviation for the coalition party, Việt Nam Cách Mạng Đồng Minh Hội (Vietnamese Revolutionary League); and even *Việt Minh.* Also, the Việt Minh used the pejorative *Việt gian,* or "traitorous Vietnamese," to refer to Vietnamese collaborators. But until the Denounce the Communists Campaign, only politically active circles were probably familiar with the term *Việt cộng*. After all, the need to educate Republican soldiers about the term implies that it was still unfamiliar to most of the population in 1956. For usage of *Việt minh cộng sản* in official pronouncements and government publications, see Ngô Đình Diệm, "Thủ-tướng Ngô-Đình-Diệm tuyên-bố sau phiên nhóm chót ở Genève," *Tiếng chuông* 994 (24 Jul 1954): 1; "Phát động chiến dịch Tố Cộng," *Xây dựng* 12 (31 May 1956): 11-12, reference to 12; Nguyễn Phú Hải and the Saigon Municipal Council to Quách Tòng Đức, correspondence no. 118-PĐTS, 3 Apr 1957, file 16269, ĐICH; "Thành tích tổng quát đệ nhị châu niên của chánh Phủ Cộng hòa Việt Nam," Mục tài liệu, *Bản tin VTX* 1976 (29 Jul 1956, noon edition), X-XVI, file 13, ĐICH; Ngô Đình Diệm, "Thông điệp Ngô Tổng Thống gởi Quốc dân nhân dịp Tết Bính Thân (12 tháng 2 năm 1956)," in *CĐCN* (Saigon: Sở Báo chí Thông tin, Phủ Tổng thống, 1956),

the term for all Vietnamese adherents of communism, including the ICP of the 1930s, the Việt Minh during the resistance war, the VLP of the early 1950s, the contemporary DRV, and the NLF.[39]

The campaign pitted *Việt cộng* against *quốc gia,* an unspecific term that referred to noncommunist nationalists of all persuasions. The term was an ordinary word that referred to the general phenomenon of nationalism, but most authors associated *quốc gia* with two specific groups: noncommunist nationalist parties and disillusioned resistance fighters who joined the Việt Minh but later left or were forced to leave.[40] The wartime State of Vietnam (SVN) likely inspired the usage of *quốc gia* to denote noncommunist nationalists. The SVN was a French-sponsored Vietnamese state created in 1949, halfway through the First Indochina War. Agreements between the French and emperor Bảo Đại established the SVN as a nominally independent Vietnamese government within the French Union, but economic, military, and diplomatic affairs remained in French hands. Headed by Bảo Đại, the regime enjoyed little popular support, but the sects and some branches of the Đại Việt parties rallied to the SVN, partly out of their opposition to communism.[41] The Vietnamese name for the State of Vietnam can also be translated as the Nation of Vietnam (Quốc gia Việt Nam), and its military was known as the Vietnamese National Army (VNA, Quân đội Quốc gia Việt Nam). Thus, the fighting during the later years of the First Indochina War pitted the so-called "Communist Việt Minh" against a self-anointed *Nation* of Vietnam.[42] While the evidence is insufficient, circumstances suggest that the Saigon regime and Republican intellectuals appropriated a preexisting, loosely defined cluster of terms and reshaped it into a sharp binary. Repeated usage by the government and the independent press popularized the terminology among the general population.

2:20-24, reference to 21; *Thành tích Tố cộng*, 66. For examples in the popular press, see Trần Ích Quốc, *Mặt trận Tổ Quốc: Một chiến thuật sảo quyệt của Việt Minh Cộng Sản;* "Việt-Minh Cộng-sản âm mưu với Trung-Cộng đã phá hoại nền thống-nhất của Tổ-quốc," *Tiếng chuông* 994 (24 Jul 1954): 1; Kỳ Văn Nguyên, *Tìm Về Sinh Lộ* (Saigon: Lê Thanh Thư Xã, 1957; USA: privately published, 1996), 197-201; Nguyễn Trân, *Chế độ Cộng sản* (Saigon: Đông Nam Á, 1958), 62-63; Mạc Sơn, review of *Đem tâm tình viết lịch sử,* by Nguyễn Mạnh Côn, in *Sáng tạo* 22 (Jul 1958): 76-77; Associated Press, "Dân chúng miền Bắc nỗi [*sic*] loạn chống lại Việt Minh cộng sản," *Tiếng chuông* 1702 (19 Nov 1956): 1, 4; *Cuộc di cư lịch sử tại Việt Nam* ([Saigon?]: Phủ Tổng ủy Di cư Tị nạn, [1958?]), 59. For usage of the abbreviation, *VMCS*, see Nguyễn Trân, *Chế độ Cộng Sản* (Saigon: Đông Nam Á, 1958), 63. All references to Kỳ Văn Nguyên's *Tìm về sinh lộ* refer to the 1996 edition.

[39] For the employment of *Việt cộng* to refer to the ICP and the VLP, see Tô Văn [Trần Đức Lai], *Sách lược ba giai đoạn của Cộng-sản* ([Saigon?]: Chống cộng, 1956). For the Việt Minh, see Hoàng Đạt [Phạm Văn Thanh], *Tôi sang chiếm đất Thượng Lào với bộ đội Việt Cộng* ([Saigon?]: Dân tộc, 1956); Lê Phong, *Người quân nhân dưới chế độ Việt cộng.* For the employment of *Việt cộng* to refer to the DRV, see VTX, "Việt Cộng tra tấn dã man những người muốn di cư," *Tiếng chuông* 1235 (16 May 1955): 1, 4; Lê Tuê, "Chiến lược mới của Việt-Cộng liên kết với thực dân và phong kiến đè bẹp phong trào Quốc-gia có Hoa-kỳ ủng hộ," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 3 (19 Jul 1955): 1, 4. For the employment of *Việt cộng* to refer to the NLF, see *Những tội ác của Việt Cộng tại miền Nam Việt Nam* (Saigon: [1962?]).

[40] For the employment of *quốc gia* to refer to noncommunist nationalist parties, specifically the Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng (Vietnam Nationalist Party, or VNQDĐ) and the Đại Việt Quốc Gia Liên Minh (Great Việt National Alliance), see the phrase "the Nationalist Side" *(Phe Quốc gia)* in Thanh Lâm, *Những vụ án lịch sử* ([Saigon?]: 1957), 12. For the employment of *quốc gia* to refer to middle class resistance fighters who were disillusioned or purged, see the usage of the phrase "true nationalist partisans" *(các phần tử Quốc gia)* in Kỳ Văn Nguyên, *Tìm về sinh lộ*, 198.

[41] The northern, mandarinal branch of the Đại Việt cooperated with the Bảo Đại government, though not continuously. For a discussion of Đại Việt support for Bảo Đại, see Ellen J. Hammer, *Struggle for Indochina, 1940-1955* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955), 275-277; Guillemot, *Dai Viêt*, 449-450, 512-530.

[42] It should be noted that Ngô Đình Diệm condemned the SVN as feudal, but his government still bore the name of the State of Vietnam when he launched the campaign.

Remembering the Resistance: The Communist Betrayal of the Nationalist Parties

In trying to claim the mantle of Vietnamese nationalism, Republican nationalists faced a conundrum: while the communists had actively fought against the French, the origins of the Republic lay in the French-sponsored SVN. Participants in the Denounce the Communists Campaign resolved the problem by applying the binary of *Việt cộng* and *quốc gia* to the history of the resistance. They interpreted the resistance as a moral struggle in which villainous communists deceived their genuinely nationalist allies. Authors described actual historical events but employed tropes such as betrayal, usurpation, fratricide, and exploitation. This combination of historical specificity and ethical outrage endowed their writing with a sense of authenticity. They often made inaccurate accusations against the communists, although perhaps not intentionally so. The history of the resistance remained poorly understood during the First Republic, as evidenced by the lack of consensus among anticommunists on how to interpret major events. Another significant characteristic of the official narrative was that it formed very rapidly. Virtually all of the resistance accounts analyzed below were published in the three year window between 1955 and 1957, and the simultaneity of individual accounts must have strengthened the effect of the new narrative.

The accusation of communist betrayal centered on the three moments during the resistance: the August Revolution, the dissolution of the Việt Minh coalition in 1946, and the radicalization of the Việt Minh after 1949. The first two marked the ascent of the communists at the expense of the noncommunist parties in northern Vietnam. During the August Revolution in 1945, the Việt Minh outmaneuvered rival parties to seize Hanoi before being forced to share power by the Guomindang (GMD).[43] The GMD, or Chinese Nationalists, was the Chinese nationalist movement led by Chiang Kai Shek and distinct from the Chinese communists that would later assume an advisory role to the DRV. The Allies sent the GMD into northern Vietnam at the end of WWII to disarm the Japanese, and the Chinese forces pressured the Việt Minh to cooperate with Vietnamese noncommunists then under GMD patronage. As a result, the Việt Minh formed a coalition government in January 1946 that was composed of multiple nationalist parties, including the VNQDĐ and the Đại Việt, but intrigue and disagreements quickly caused relations to deteriorate.[44] In the spring and summer of 1946, after the departure of the GMD and the signing of an agreement with France on 6 March, the communists launched an assassination campaign against the noncommunists and attacked their strongholds throughout the northern countryside.[45] By the time the First Indochina War began, the alliance between communists and noncommunists had effectively collapsed.

Participants in the Denounce the Communists Campaign interpreted these events as communist treachery against the nationalist parties and argued that the August Revolution was a communist usurpation. Hồ Chí Minh and the Việt Minh abandoned their nationalist allies and seized power exclusively for themselves as part of a premeditated strategy known as the united front, Republican authors claimed. In *Mặt trận Tổ quốc: Một chiến thuật sảo quyệt của Việt Minh Cộng sản (The Fatherland Front: A Devious Strategy of the Communist Việt Minh),* author Trần Ích Quốc claims that the Việt Minh comprised a genuine alliance until the August

[43] For more on the GMD's involvement, see King Chen, *Vietnam and China, 1938-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 115-132; Duiker, *Communist Road to Power,* 117.
[44] Chen, *Vietnam and China,* 131.
[45] Chen, *Vietnam and China,* 148, 150-153; Duiker, *Communist Road to Power,* 111-126; Guillemot, "Au coeur de la fracture vietnamienne," 175-216.

Revolution, when "[t]he Communists became traitorous and took advantage of the opportune moment. They hung their red flag with the yellow star at the top of the Opera House, where the other parties were holding rallies with civil servants and the people, and the communists seized power."[46] According to the Trần Ích Quốc, the sidelining of noncommunist allies typified the strategy of the united front, in which "communists put forth an organization that has the appearance of patriotism and unity," but whose true purpose was to "win over the people, annihilate the nationalists, and establish a communist government."[47] Tô Văn, a Hanoi journalist who emigrated south, advanced a similar argument in *Sách lược bai giai đoạn của Cộng sản (The Three-Stage Strategy of the Communists).* According to the journalist, Hồ Chí Minh pretended to serve a genuinely patriotic party, the Việt Nam Cách Mạng Đồng Minh Hội (Vietnamese Revolutionary League, or ĐMH), but stole the abbreviation "Việt Minh" from the ĐMH and claimed the August Revolution for Hồ Chí Minh's Việt Minh. The creation of the falsely nationalist Việt Minh constituted the first of three stages in Maoist strategy, Tô Văn asserted.[48]

The famous military journalist and fiction writer Nguyễn Mạnh Côn also claimed that Hồ Chí Minh had turned against the ĐMH. A prominent émigré intellectual, Nguyễn Mạnh Côn had participated in the resistance and was imprisoned by the Việt Minh.[49] His epistolary novel *Đem tâm tình viết lịch sử (Writing History With Personal Sentiments)* recounted the resistance through the letters of an anticommunist nationalist. The narrator argues that the ĐMH had accepted Hồ Chí Minh as a member and sponsored his release from jail, but after the August Revolution, the communist leader proved an ingrate and "absolutely forgot about the Đồng Minh Hội."[50] To make matters worse, Hồ Chí Minh's organization immediately began attacking its former allies: "[A]lthough the pledge to share the responsibilities of government still seemed very fresh to the nationalist parties, they [the communists] started to hunt down and liquidate their opponents, from the night of 19 August."[51] The narrator lists several massacres and assassinations against the VNQDĐ, the Đại Việt parties, and his own party, the Phục Quốc Quân (National Restoration Army).[52] The reasons for the success of the Việt Minh were more complex than any of the authors depicted, but the writers rightfully recognized that the Việt Minh was a front

---

[46] "Cộng-sản đã phản-bội, và lợi-dụng thời cơ, chúng đã đem cờ đỏ sao vàng của chúng treo lên nhà Hát Lớn ngày 19-8-45 trong khi các đảng-phái khác cùng với công-chức và dân-chúng họp mít-tinh ở đó và cướp lấy chính-quyền": Trần Ích Quốc, *Mặt trận Tổ quốc,* 104. The description actually matches the events in front of the Hanoi Opera House on the afternoon of 17 August as well as the morning of 19 August 1945. See Duiker, *Communist Road to Power,* 97-98; David G. Marr, *Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 385-387, 395-398.

[47] "Cộng-sản đưa ra một tổ-chức, bề ngoài có tính cách ái-quốc và đoàn kết"; "để tranh thủ nhân-dân, tiêu diệt phe quốc-gia và thiết lập chánh quyền Cộng-sàn": Trần Ích Quốc, *Mặt trận Tổ quốc,* 69.

[48] Tô Văn, *Sách lược ba giai đọan của Cộng sản,* 28.

[49] It is unclear which party or parties Nguyễn Mạnh Côn joined during the resistance. He is rumored to have belonged to the Phục Quốc Quân based on his semi-autobiographical fiction, but even his communist critics were hesitant to pronounce on his political affiliation with certainty. See Thạch Phương, "Nguyễn Mạnh Côn," in *Những tên biệt kích của chủ nghĩa thực dân mới,* by Vũ Hạnh, et. al. (Hanoi: Nhà xuất bản Văn hóa, 1980), 43-76, reference to 54; Nguyễn Mạnh Côn [Nguyễn Kiên Trung, pseud.], *Đem tâm tình viết lịch sử* (Saigon: Nguyễn Đình Vượng, 1958), 57-63; Nguyễn Mạnh Côn, "Tâm sự của tác giả," *Tin sách* 2, no. 8-9 (Aug-Sep 1961): 25-33, reference to 28.

[50] "họ Hồ tuyệt đối không biết đến Đồng-minh-hội": Nguyễn Mạnh Côn, *Đem tâm tình viết lịch sử,* 60.

[51] "mặc cho lời giao ước chia xẻ trách nhiệm chính quyền còn nóng hổi với các lãnh tụ đảng phái quốc gia, họ đã bắt đầu lùng bắt và thủ tiêu những người đối lập với họ, ngay từ buổi tối ngày 19-8": Nguyễn Mạnh Côn, *Đem tâm tình viết lịch sử,* 61.

[52] Nguyễn Mạnh Côn, *Đem tâm tình viết lịch sử,* 64.

organization and even demonstrated familiarity with communist ideas, though they did not cite any communist texts. More importantly, these accounts point to a shared memory of a communist betrayal among anticommunist nationalists. Their varied explanations also suggest the presence of uncertainty surrounding the early resistance, a situation that facilitated the circulation of rumors and the creation of new historical narratives.

The dissolution of the Việt Minh coalition in the spring and summer of 1946 constituted the second betrayal, which anticommunists depicted as a communist instigation of fratricidal warfare. One propaganda pamphlet, *The Deceitful Front Organizations of the Communists,* a study of the united front strategy, emphasized the internecine character of the Việt Minh attacks: "[I]n the provinces from Vĩnh Yên to Lào Cai, along the railroads which the Nationalists used as their bases, the Communists started a fratricidal war, murdering countless Nationalist warriors."[53] The original Vietnamese for "fratricide" is the literary phrase *cốt nhục tương tàn,* meaning the "mutual destruction of flesh and bone." Thus, the communist consolidation of power was interpreted as the severing of the national body. In *Những vụ án lịch sử (Putting History on Trial),* Thanh Lâm offered a more sensational description: "Throughout several months, the foam on the Lô and Thao rivers was muddy red, and hundreds of decapitated and disemboweled human corpses were fished out of the water every day. Who were these people, if not the victims of the disputes between the Việt Minh and the VNQDĐ?"[54] The provinces of Vĩnh Yên and Lào Cai and the Lô and Thao Rivers are located in areas that the VNQDĐ controlled prior to the attacks.[55] Thanh Lâm castigated Hồ Chí Minh for "crushing the power of the Nationalists in the beginning in order to kill them later, without mercy, not caring that they were his flesh and blood."[56] Phạm Văn Sơn, a military officer and a historian known for his sweeping surveys of Vietnamese history, abandoned his habitually moderate tone to denounce the fratricidal violence of the communists.[57] In *Vĩ tuyến 17 (The Seventeenth Parallel),* a history of the resistance war, he cited the lyrics of the official anthem of the Việt Minh and snidely observed: "This [the attacks] is true to the words in 'The Advancing Army Song': *Vow to quarter the enemy's corpses and drink their blood,* but it is unfortunate in that the enemy in this case were actually compatriots."[58]

---

[53] "suốt các tỉnh từ Vĩnh-Yên lên Lao-Kay, dọc đường xe hỏa vì ở đó các đảng phái Quốc-Gia dùng làm căn cứ địa nên Cộng-sản đã gây ra cảnh cốt nhục tương tàn, sát hại không biết bao nhiêu chiến-sĩ Quốc-Gia": *Những mặt trận bịp bợm của cộng sản,* 57.

[54] "Luôn trong mấy tháng trên dòng sông Lô, sông Thao, nước bọt đỏ ngầu [,] người ta mỗi ngày với được hàng trăm xác người bị cụt đầu hay lòi ruột. Những người này là ai? Nếu chẳng phải là nạn nhân của cuộc tranh chấp giữa hai phe Việt-Minh Việt-quốc": Thanh Lâm, *Những vụ án lịch sử,* 16. The book's unusual title reflects Thanh Lâm's stated desire to help the reader adjudicate guilt for historical crimes. See Thanh Lâm, *Những vụ án lịch sử,* 5.

[55] Bernard Fall, *The Việt Minh Regime: Government and Administration in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1956), 7, map 2.

[56] "Ông đã đánh tan được áp lực của phe Quốc gia lúc đầu; để rồi đánh giết họ về sau một cách thẳng tay chẳng kể đến họ là máu mủ ruột thịt với ông": Thanh Lâm, *Những vụ án lịch sử,* 20.

[57] Phạm Văn Sơn fought for the SVN and the French during the First Indochina War, but his research from that period portrayed the Việt Minh in a surprisingly favorable light. The first edition of his *Việt Nam Tranh Đấu Sử* includes a flattering portrait of Hồ Chí Minh, accompanied by a biographical sketch. His portrayal of Vietnamese communists shifted noticeably in subsequent editions. When he revised the work for republication in 1959, he accused the communists of inviting Chinese and Soviet domination in North Vietnam. See Phạm Văn Sơn, *Việt Nam Tranh Đấu Sử,* 1st ed. (Hanoi: 1949), 185-196, 235-254; Phạm Văn Sơn, *Việt Nam Tranh Đấu Sử,* 5th ed. (Saigon: Việt Cường, 1959), 371-378.

[58] "Thật đúng như câu trong Tiến quân ca: THỀ PHANH THÂY UỐNG MÁU QUÂN THÙ chỉ tiếc quân thù đây lại là đồng chủng": Phạm Văn Sơn [Dương Châu, pseud.], *Vĩ tuyến 17* (Saigon: privately published, 1955), 42-43.

What made the conflict so heinous was that the Việt Minh intentionally made peace with France in order to murder their nationalist brethren, and many authors linked the timing of the attacks to the 6 March Agreement. *Chủ nghĩa Cộng sản đối với dân tộc Việt Nam (Communism and the Vietnamese People),* a propaganda booklet issued by a local government office in the central region, claimed that the communists signed the agreement "in order to have a free hand to annihilate the genuine Nationalist partisans."[59] This interpretation became standard in history textbooks and research monographs. *Việt sử lớp đệ nhất (Vietnamese History for the First Form),* a secondary school textbook published in the early 1960s, employed similar language to *Communism and the Vietnamese People.* The subheading for the discussion of the Franco-Việt Minh negotiations read, "The Việt Minh made concessions to the French to have a free hand to eliminate the nationalists and manage the difficult conditions in the country."[60] The independently authored *Người Cộng sản có yêu nước không? (Do Communists Love Their Country?)* reached the same conclusion. Author Uyên Châu explained, "They only knew that shaking hands with France at that moment was advantageous for the Communist consolidation of power and the suppression of nationalist parties."[61] Recent research suggests that anticommunists rightfully blamed the communists for systematic violence against the nationalist parties. In François Guillemot's study of the Đại Việt parties, he argues that the Việt Minh were the first to employ full scale violence against its rivals, who were initially reluctant to take up arms against fellow nationalists. However, what precipitated the assassination campaigns was not the agreement with France but the discovery of a plot to overthrow the Việt Minh government. Minister of Interior Võ Nguyên Giáp (and later commander of the North Vietnamese military) used the plot as justification for eliminating all opposition parties, including those not involved in the conspiracy.[62]

The translation of "The Advancing Army Song" is taken from Jason Gibbs, "The Music of the State: Vietnam's Quest for a National Anthem," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 2, no. 2 (summer 2007): 129-174, citation from 144.

[59] "để rảnh tay tiêu diệt những phần tử Quốc gia chân chính": *Chủ nghĩa Cộng sản đối với dân tộc Việt Nam* (Huế: Phòng Nghiêm huấn Nha Thông tin Trung Việt, 1955), 5.

[60] "Việt-Minh nhượng-bộ Pháp để rảnh tay loại trừ các đảng đối-lập và để đối-phó với tình-hình khó-khăn ở trong nước": Tăng Xuân An and Nguyễn Thị Hợp [bà Tăng Xuân An, pseud.], *Việt sử lớp đệ nhất* ([Saigon?]: Tao Đàn, 1961-1962), 251. For another example of the same historical interpretation in secondary school textbooks, see also Nguyễn Văn Mùi and Vũ Ngọc Ánh, *Việt sử và thế giới sử lớp đệ tứ* (Saigon: Thăng Long, 1959), 160-161. I am indebted to Nguyễn Nguyệt Cầm for identifying Nguyễn Thị Hợp's real name, as the author usually signed as "Mrs. Tăng Xuân An."

[61] "Chúng chỉ biết rằng, bắt tay với Pháp là một điều thuận lợi cho sự củng cố chính-quyền Cộng-sản để đàn áp các đảng phái quốc-gia trong giai đoạn đó": Uyên Châu, *Người cộng sản có yêu nước không?* ([Saigon?]: 1957), 37-38.

[62] The conflict between communist and noncommunist nationalists in 1945-1946 remains poorly understood. François Guillemot offers the most thorough and convincing explanation to date. He suggests that the spring and summer of 1946 marked the culmination of an increasingly violent conflict. During the August Revolution, the communists attacked the VNQDĐ for refusing to submit to the authority of the Việt Minh. In early September, Minister of Interior Võ Nguyên Giáp issued a number of directives banning the nationalist parties, specifically two of the Đại Việt parties, but the temporary presence of GMD strengthened the noncommunist position. The noncommunists became increasingly frustrated with the communists, and a coalition known as the Mặt Trận Quốc Dân Đảng (Nationalist Front) consisting of two Đại Việt parties and the VNQDĐ conspired to overthrow the Việt Minh. The communists discovered and stopped the plot. In short, Guillemot finds that the communists began the violence, but the noncommunists eventually decided to employ violence, though they never had the opportunity to carry out their plans. Alternatively, Sophie Quinn-Judge suggests that the conflict was a "mutual struggle for power" and that the VNQDĐ initiated the violence, but she provides no evidence for this claim. Other scholars imply that the Việt Minh eliminated the noncommunist nationalists because the communist leaders felt vulnerable. William J. Duiker explains that the Việt Minh feared the possibility of a dual threat from a French invasion and opposition from nationalist rivals. King Chen argues that communists actually faced a "three-front battle" against the Chinese

Remembering the Resistance: The Radicalization of the Việt Minh

The radicalization of the Việt Minh after 1949 constituted the third episode in the RVN's narrative of betrayal. The Việt Minh initially welcomed nationalist elements from all class backgrounds and political leanings, and, hence, most rank-and-file members were unaware that it was a communist front organization.[63] But the communists introduced new class-based policies in the late 1940s and early 1950s,[64] especially after the Chinese Revolution of 1949 and the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The victory of the Chinese communists secured the Việt Minh's northern flank and increased the flow of ideas, advisers, and material support from China into northern Vietnam.[65] Between 1949 and 1953, the Việt Minh purged middle and upper class members, subjected its members to a form of political indoctrination, and launched a punitive land reform program in the countryside of the north and central region.[66] Little is known regarding regional variations within the Việt Minh, but limited research suggests that the south experienced a distinctively moderate version of communist rule.[67] There, the Việt Minh redistributed land taken from absentee landlords and remove wealthier peasants from the local revolutionary leadership but generally refrained from more radical measures, such as imprisoning and executing landlords for owning property.[68] The class-based policies alienated many middle class activists, and they abandoned the resistance or were purged. "In 1949-50 a country-wide hemorrhage of the urban middle class from the ranks of the Viet Minh happened," David Elliott argues, "at the same time as much of the rural middle class was being pushed out of the revolution."[69] These former resistance fighters, especially northern émigrés, became leading critics of communism in the RVN. Numerous authors identified themselves as once belonging to the Việt Minh, and even Minister of Information Trần Chánh Thành was himself an émigré that had once served the resistance.[70]

Anticommunists depicted the radicalization of the Việt Minh as a power play in which Vietnamese communists displaced earnest nationalists to make way for communist party

---

nationalists, the French, and the noncommunist parties. Regarding the 6 March agreement, it is incorrect to consider the agreement the work of the Việt Minh alone. As some anticommunists pointed out, the VNQDĐ leader, Vũ Hồng Khanh, also signed the document. For more on situation of the Việt Minh and other political parties in 1945-1946, see Guillemot, *Dai Viêt*, 268-269, 271-272, 280, 334-344; Chen, *Vietnam and China*, 145; Duiker, *Communist Road to Power*, 112; Sophie Quinn-Judge, "Through a Glass Darkly," in *Making Sense of the Vietnam Wars: Local, National, and Transnational Perspectives*, ed. Mark Bradley and Marilyn B. Young (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 111-170, reference to 120. For more on the 6 March Agreement see Nguyễn Mạnh Côn, *Đem tâm tình viết lịch sử,* 73; Guillemot, *Dai Viêt*, 322-323.

[63] For a concise discussion of the strategy behind the Việt Minh, see Duiker, *Communist Road to Power*, 71-75.

[64] Duiker, *Communist Road to Power*, 160; Elliott, *The Vietnamese War*, 67.

[65] For more on CCP influence on the Vietnamese communists, see Chen, *Vietnam and China*, 155-278; Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 10-64; Chen Jian, "China and the First Indo-China War, 1950-1954," *China Quarterly* 133 (Mar 1993): 85-110.

[66] The Việt Minh term for the indoctrination campaign was *chỉnh huấn,* or "rectification." For purges and political indoctrination, see Kim Ninh, *A World Transformed*, 83-117; Chen, *Vietnam and China*, 258; Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 35. For more on the land reform in northern Vietnam, see Edwin Moise, *Land Reform in China and North Vietnam: Consolidating the Revolution at the Village Level* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).

[67] A number of writers have observed that the southerners did not experience the harsher aspects of Việt Minh rule. See Võ Phiến, *Văn học miền Nam tổng quan,* 168; Robert Scigliano, *South Vietnam*, 54.

[68] Elliott, *The Vietnamese War*, 67-69.

[69] Elliott, *The Vietnamese War*, 76. See also Hy Van Luong, *Tradition, Revolution, and Market Economy*, 151-152.

[70] I have been unable to establish Trần Chánh Thành's family background with certainty, but he appears to have been a northerner that grew up in the central region.

members. Tuấn Giang, a former resistance fighter, complains in his memoir, *Vượt đường biên giới (Crossing the Border),* that the class-based policies "aimed to give all of the essential positions to the dictatorial Communist clique."[71] The communists wanted to remove noncommunist nationalists because the latter would oppose a Soviet takeover: "[I]t is essential to eliminate the social classes that espouse patriotism because only such a purge would make communization and enslavement to the Soviet empire possible."[72] Perhaps the bluntest critique came from *Communism and the Vietnamese People.* It claimed that all of Vietnamese society had contributed to the resistance until the communists seized authority: "In 1945, everyone – young, old, men, women – rose up to fight the French and chase away the Japanese, but afterwards, they [the communists] divided people into different classes and elements to slowly push them out of councils and committees, so communist party members could truly hold complete power."[73] The anonymous propagandist asked rhetorically, "Who fought for independence on their behalf that they could usurp the political and economic power of others like that?"[74] Author and former resistance fighter Lê Phong remembered the indoctrination campaign of 1953 as the turning point when many resistance fighters finally realized that the leadership of the Việt Minh was covertly communist. In *Soldiers under the Việt Cộng Regime,* the soldiers are torn between their determination to fight for Vietnamese independence and their hatred of the sudden purges and indoctrination sessions. They had sworn to fight until the death for their country, but, now, they also "knew that the gang of Chinese advisers had interfered and encroached upon all areas of authority in Uncle's [Ho Chi Minh] Government, which they [the soldiers] served, but they were all in the same boat, with no way out."[75]

A number of authors argued that the decision to introduce communist policies midway through the struggle was a form of deception and exploitation. In Kỳ Văn Nguyên's novel, *Tìm về sinh lộ (Seeking the Path to Life),* Trần Vũ is unjustly convicted of being a reactionary after years of service. He ruefully tells his lover that the communists have deceived him: "A few years ago, when I first started learning about politics, I couldn't recognize their trickery… I mistakenly thought that the dictatorship of the proletariat leads to the Nation and the People."[76] Looking back, he realizes that nationalism was not the driving force of the Việt Minh: "I didn't realize that the resistance was just a means, but it was the end that was important, and that was a different matter."[77] Kỳ Văn Nguyên was not a former Việt Minh but had been captured by them

[71] "không ngoài mục đích giao tất cả vai trò trọng yếu cho bọn Cộng-Sản độc tài mà thôi": Tuấn Giang [Hồ Bá Cao], *Vượt đường biên giới: hồi ký kháng chiến* ([Saigon?]: Quốc Khánh, 1961; repr., Công đàn, 1963), 50. Citations refer to the 1963 edition. It should be noted that author specified that he completed the work in 1955.

[72] "loại trừ những thành phần có tư-tưởng yêu nước là cốt yếu, vì có thanh trừng như vậy mới mong cộng sản hóa, để làm tôi mọi cho Nga-Sô đế quốc một cách dễ dàng": Tuấn Giang, *Vượt đường biên giới,* 50.

[73] "Năm 1945, tất cả già trẻ trai gái ai nấy đều đứng dậy đánh Pháp đuổi Nhật, thế mà về sau họ phân ra thành phần nầy, giai cấp nọ để loại lần ra khỏi uỷ ban, khỏi hội đồng, để cho những đảng viên Cộng-sản chính cống độc quyền": *Chủ nghĩa cộng sản đối với dân tộc Việt Nam*, 5.

[74] "Thử hỏi ai giành Độc-lập cho họ mà sau nầy họ lại truất uy thế chính-trị, kinh-tế của người ta": *Chủ nghĩa cộng sản đối vơi dân tộc Việt Nam,* 5.

[75] "Họ cũng thừa biết rằng bọn cố-vấn Tàu đã sen [*sic*] vào lấn át hết mọi quyền-hành bên trong cái Chính-phủ của Bác mà họ theo đuổi phụng-sự, nhưng họ đều như nhau, chưa có một con đường nào thoát hơn": Lê Phong, *Người quân nhân dưới chế độ Việt Cộng*, 70.

[76] "Mấy năm về trước, mới bắt đầu tìm hiểu chính trị, tôi nào đã phân biệt nổi mọi mánh khóe của nó… Tôi đã lầm lẫn vô sản chuyên chế là đưa đến Quốc Gia Dân Tộc": Kỳ Văn Nguyên, *Tìm về sinh lộ,* 69.

[77] "Tôi không nhận ra rằng kháng chiến chỉ là một phương tiện, còn mục đích là một chuyện khác và mới là điều quan trọng hơn": Kỳ Văn Nguyên, *Tìm về sinh lộ,* 70.

in 1946 and escaped to fight for the SVN and later RVN.[78] In a somewhat similar vein, Vũ Thược charged in *Giai đoạn suy tàn của cộng sản Việt Nam (Decline of Vietnamese Communism)* that the Việt Minh took advantage of their middle class followers before casting them aside: "The reason for the purges was that the *Việt cộng* applied the Leninist policy of 'juicing an orange' [and throwing away the rind]."[79]

The most dramatic indictment of the Việt Minh came from the movie *We Want to Live (Chúng tôi muốn sống),* directed and written by Vĩnh Noãn and released in 1956. Although Vĩnh Noãn was not an émigré, he based the screenplay on interviews with actual émigrés, and almost all of the actors and extras were northern refugees.[80] In the film, a patriotic company commander in the resistance named Vinh is arrested in 1953 and condemned to forced labor, while his parents are publicly denounced and executed as landowners. During his parents' trial, the presiding cadre tries to prevent Vinh from defending his parents, but he defiantly responds, "I have fought on the battlefield for the liberation of the homeland, side by side with other warriors. Don't I have the right to speak up?"[81] Although the radicalization of the Việt Minh could not be attributed to Chinese encroachment, Leninist exploitation, or a planned Soviet invasion, the new class-based policies did discriminate against members of the resistance from middle and upper class backgrounds. In spite of the melodramatic accusations, these accounts represented a serious attempt to understand confusing political and social transformations. The authors, including the novelists, took pains to correctly date the radicalization, and their passionate indignation reflected the very real sense of victimization and disenchantment that many northern resistance fighters experienced.

Communist Imperialism: The Geneva Agreement and the Return to Chinese Rule

The complaints about Leninist doctrine and Maoist strategy point to a suspicion of foreign communism that pervaded anticommunist discourse. Wary of the international communist movement, many intellectuals charged that communism was a form of colonialism and that the DRV was a communist colony. The association between communism and colonialism reinforced the dichotomy between Vietnamese communism and Vietnamese nationalism: as a foreign communist colony, the DRV was antithetical to Vietnamese nationalism. Unlike the memory of the resistance, the concept of communist imperialism formed gradually in response to contemporary events and reflected both foreign and indigenous influences. The outrage centered around two issues: the partition of the country by the Geneva Agreement and the influence of the PRC in North Vietnamese affairs.

Communist imperialism refers to the Republican idea that the relationship between the communist superpowers and the DRV (as well as other communist countries) resembled colonial

[78] Hoàng Trúc Tâm explains that Kỳ Văn Nguyên was arrested during the fighting between the Việt Minh and noncommunist parties but does not clearly state whether Kỳ Văn Nguyên was a member of a noncommunist party. See Hoàng Trúc Tâm, "Tiểu sử và Sự Nghiệp," in *Tìm về sinh lộ,* by Kỳ Văn Nguyên (USA: privately published, 1996), 321-334, reference to 321.

[79] Vũ Thược describes this policy as "vắt cam," a shorthand for "vắt cam bỏ vỏ," or "juicing an orange and discarding the rind." "Sở dĩ có cuộc thanh trừng này là vì Việt-Cộng áp-dụng chính-sách 'vắt cam' của học-thuyết Lénine": Vũ Thược, *Giai đoạn suy tàn của cộng sản Việt Nam* (Saigon: Hoa Mai, 1956), 22.

[80] See Bùi Diễm, *Gọng kìm lịch sử: Hồi ký chính trị* (Paris: Cơ sở xuất bản Phạm Quang Khải, 2000), 156-159; Võ Văn Tùng, "Tưởng nhớ cố đạo diễn Vĩnh Noãn: Đôi lời về một người anh," *Việt Báo online* (10 November 2003): http://www.vietbao.com/D_1-2_2-282_4-61965/, accessed 10 Jun 2011.

[81] "Tôi đã từng cùng các chiến sĩ chiến đấu trên các mặt trận để giải phóng đất nước mà lại không có quyền nói à?": Vĩnh Noãn, *Chúng tôi muốn sống* (Saigon: Tân Việt, 1956; Westminster, Calif.: privately published, [2002?]), DVD; Vĩnh Noãn, *Chúng tôi muốn sống* (Westminster: privately published, 2002), 67-68.

subjugation. Anticommunist thinkers employed terms such as "vassal" *(chư hầu)* and "lackey" *(tay sai)* to describe the DRV's alleged subservience and referred to the international communist alliance as "International Communism" *(Cộng sản Quốc tế),* the "Communist bloc" *(khối Cộng sản),* and the "Communist Empire" *(Đế quốc Cộng sản*).[82] They labeled the PRC *Trung cộng,* meaning "Communist China," an epithet that paralleled *Việt cộng.*[83] These various terms implied a centralized, monolithic political system that disregarded the national interests of its member states. During a speech commemorating the founding of the Republic, Ngô Đình Diệm referred to the DRV as "*Việt cộng,* lackeys of the communist empire and red colonialism."[84] Trần Linh Giang's *ABC đả cộng (The ABC's of Opposing Communism)* borrowed the imperial idea of *mẫu quốc,* or "mother country," and applied it to the role of the Soviet Union: "The Communist Party only recognizes the Mother Country of Russia as its homeland and doesn't know anything about its own ancestral land."[85]

The concept of communist imperialism combined multiple foreign and local influences. Terms such as "International Communism" and "Communist bloc" reflected global anticommunist discourse during the early Cold War. Vietnam's own experiences of foreign domination seem to have been more important for other anticommunist epithets. During the colonial period, words such as "imperialism" *(đế quốc),* "colonialism" *(thực dân),* and "mother country" referred to France and French relations with Vietnam, and nationalists often used the pejorative "lackey" against Vietnamese collaborators.[86] Even terms associated with the Cold War were often based on a local idiom of foreign rule. "Vassal" *(chư hầu)* was the Vietnamese equivalent of the Cold War term, "satellite state," but *chư hầu* had a distinctly premodern connotation. *Chư hầu* refers to vassal states within the Chinese empire during the Spring and Autumn period (771-403 BC) and the Warring States period (475-221 BC), and it indirectly recalled the millennium of Chinese rule over northern Vietnam (111 BC - 939 AD). Vietnam had actually been a province rather than a vassal of the Chinese empire, but labeling the DRV a *chư*

---

[82] For examples of "vassal" and "lackey" see, respectively, *Chủ nghĩa cộng sản và dân tộc Việt Nam,* 3; *Lý luận về kháng chiến* (Saigon: Văn hữu Á châu, 1959), 11. For examples of "communist bloc," see Trần Việt Sơn, "Những khuynh hướng kinh tế mới trong khối Cộng sản: Chế độ kinh tế ở Bắc Việt," *Văn hóa Á châu* 12 (Mar 1959): 41-52. For examples of "International Communism," see Uyên Châu, *Người Cộng sản có yêu nước không?,* 5.

[83] *Trung cộng* is considered somewhat pejorative in Vietnamese, but the original Chinese term *zhonggong* (中共) is not. In fact, the Chinese term appears to have been invented by the Chinese Communist Party to refer to itself. For an example of Chinese usage, see Zhou Enlai's speech in 1946 in which he used the term to refer to the party: Zhou Enlai, "Zai Yan'an gejie juxing de 'shuang shi er' jinianhui shang de jiangyan" [Lecture at a meeting in Yan'an held by people from all walks of life to commemorate the December 12th Incident], 12 December 1946, in *Zhou Enlai xuanji* [Selected works of Zhou Enlai], vol. 1 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1980), 247-250, reference to 248-249. For a translation of the speech, see Zhou Enlai, "Speech at a Meeting Held by Representatives of all Walks of Life in Yan'an in Commemoration of the December 12th Incident," 12 December 1946, in *Selected Works of Zhou Enlai*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1981), 275-279, reference to 276. For an example of Vietnamese usage, see *Lý luận về kháng chiến,* 11.

[84] "Việt-cộng, tay sai của đế quốc cộng-sản, thực dân đỏ": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Hiệu triệu của Tổng thống nhân dịp lễ Quốc khánh," in *Con đường chính nghĩa* [hereafter, *CĐCN]* (Saigon: Nha Tổng Giám đốc Thông tin, 1961), 7:27-29, citation on 28.

[85] "Đảng Cộng-Sản ngoài mẫu-quốc Nga là quê-hương của mình thời không còn biết gì đến Tổ-Quốc của mình nữa": Trần Linh Giang, *ABC đả cộng* (Saigon: Sa Giang, 1955), 19. The title of the book appears to reference the popular Soviet work, *The ABC of Communism.* See Nikolai Bukharin and Yevgeni Preobrazhenski, *The ABC of Communism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988).

[86] Perhaps the earliest known instance of the term *tay sai* as a pejorative for collaborators is a royal edict issued against Catholics who assisted the French invasion. See Mark McLeod, *Vietnamese Response to French Intervention, 1862-1874* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 46.

hầu implied that a foreign empire had once again conquered northern Vietnam. The diverse influences of French imperialism, the memory of premodern Chinese rule, and the international Cold War point to the changes in Vietnam during the 1950s, as Vietnamese politics transitioned from a colonial framework to the Cold War.[87] Republican nationalism was a part of this shift, and anticommunists viewed North Vietnam through the framework of both their indigenous experience with colonialism and the coming Cold War.

The division of Vietnam by the Geneva Agreement on 20 July 1954 also exemplified communist imperialism. The main signatories of the agreement were France and the Việt Minh, but the PRC, Soviet Union, United States, and United Kingdom all participated in the negotiations. In contrast, the State of Vietnam was only allowed the role of observer, and the indignation that the agreement generated reflected the powerlessness that anticommunists felt when they watched their rivals determine the country's fate. Ngô Đình Diệm vehemently protested the partition in 1954, and he later rejected reunification through national elections as the agreement required. Officially, he explained that Hanoi could not be trusted to administer a democratic election and that his government was not bound by an agreement it never signed. In reality, Ngô Đình Diệm realized that reunification would place the weaker southern regime under northern control. He and other anticommunists blamed the communists for partition. They denounced the Geneva Agreement for violating national unity and independence, claimed that the agreement was part of a larger communist plan to invade Vietnam, and lamented the Chinese occupation of North Vietnam.

On the day before the treaty was signed, the Saigon daily, *Tiếng chuông (Sound of the Bell),* published an article that foreshadowed the main themes of the anti-Geneva critique, entitled, "Is It Possible to Restore Peace by Bargaining Away National Independence and Unity?" The article contended that the Việt Minh had sacrificed unity to communist imperialism: "For the sake of the communist empire, the Việt Minh must close their eyes and ears, agree to everything, and divide the territory, which advances their strategy."[88] The article added that the Việt Minh willingly violated Vietnamese independence because communists do not recognize national sovereignty: "To those who only recognize the borders of the communist bloc, meaning the borders of the Soviet bloc, the territory of Vietnam… is merely a piece of land that must be invaded."[89] After the Geneva Agreement was finalized, Ngô Đình Diệm issued a formal statement repudiating the agreement and the loss of Vietnamese independence: "[W]e cannot allow Communist China to borrow the hands of their vassal, the Việt Minh, and place a yoke of subjugation over half of our national territory."[90] The metaphor of a yoke emphasized the oppressive character of foreign communist rule. The PCSC blatantly accused Vietnamese communists of taking orders from the communist superpowers in the proceedings of the national

[87] Tuan Hoang has also remarked that anticommunist authors compared colonialism and communism in their discussion of communist imprisonment. See Tuan Hoang, "The Early South Vietnamese Critique of Communism," 23.

[88] "Nhưng vì quyền lợi của đế quốc cộng sãng [*sic*], Việt Minh phải nhắm mắt bịt tai ưng thuận tất cả để chia xẽ [*sic*] đất đai, hầu có lợi cho chiến lược chung của họ": "Chống mọi mưu mô chia xẻ đất nước," *Tiếng chuông* 989 (19 Jul 1954): 1, 4, citation from 4.

[89] "Đối với nhưng [*sic*] kẻ chỉ biết có những biên giới của khối cộng-sản, nghĩa [*sic*] là biên giới của khối Nga sô, thì lảnh thổ Việt Nam này có nghĩa [*sic*] lý gì. Lãnh thổ ấy củng [*sic*] chỉ là một phần đất cần phải xâm chiếm": "Chống mọi mưu mô chia xẻ đất nước," *Tiếng chuông* 989 (19 Jul 1954): 1, 4, citation from 4.

[90] "chúng ta không thể nào công nhận để Trung-Cộng mượn bàn tay chư hầu Việt-Minh đặt ách thống trị trên quá nửa lẫnh thổ nước nhà": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Thủ-tướng Ngô-Đình-Diệm tuyên-bố," *Tiếng chuông* 994 (24 July 1954): 1.

conference: "The *Việt cộng* faithfully followed the directives of the disguised imperialist clique, the Soviet Union and Communist China. They [Vietnamese communists] shook hands with the Colonialists to sign the Geneva Agreement and [the Việt Minh and the French] divided the country for their own respective interests."[91] Most historians acknowledge that the Việt Minh accepted the partition under Soviet and Chinese pressure,[92] but anticommunists neglected to mention that the SVN enjoyed far less autonomy from France than the Việt Minh did in relation to the Soviet Union and the PRC at the time of the agreement.

Subsequent writers elaborated on the accusation to suggest that the partition was part of a long term communist plan. *The Geneva Treaty and Us (Hiệp ước Genève với chúng ta),* a political training handbook for soldiers published during the Denounce the Communists Campaign, purported to explain the motivation of both signatories: "International Communism" wanted to conquer all of Vietnam, and the French hoped to salvage their economic interests in its former colony. The temporary partition gave the former a much needed reprieve: "they ['International Communism'] would enjoy a free hand in North Vietnam and have the time to reinvigorate their forces after the battle of Điện Biên Phủ… The liquidation of the South would come last."[93] In 1959, Thái Lăng Nghiêm broadened the accusation to argue that Geneva was a necessary step for world domination, in the eyes of the communists. Thái Lăng Nghiêm was an émigré scholar and a former member of the Đại Việt party (and a future senator under the Nguyễn Văn Thiệu government). In *Bàn về thống nhất dân tộc (On National Reunification),* an analysis of the partition published in 1959, he contends that Vietnam played a critical role in the global strategy of "Sino-Russian International Communism": after the Chinese Revolution, they "quickly revised their plan of world conquest and plotted to expand into Southeast Asia, the portal of the contemporary world."[94] The purpose of the Geneva Agreement was to give foreign communists a launching pad for the invasion, and the Việt Minh willingly sacrificed national interests to further the communist cause: the partition "placed Vietnam's national revolution in the hands of international communism to use as a vanguard force and [gave] the territory of Vietnam to the Sino-Russian international communist system to use as a foothold on the path of world conquest."[95]

For critics of the DRV, one consequence of partition was Chinese occupation of North Vietnam, which many authors compared to the millennium of Chinese rule. The presence of Chinese advisers attracted particular ire. Vũ Thược charged that real power rested in the hands of foreign advisers while the North Vietnamese were stooges, a situation he found comparable to Chinese domination in the premodern period: "The new Chinese governors have formally placed the yoke of enslavement upon the heads of the Vietnamese people through a systematic

[91] "Việt-Cộng trung-thành theo chỉ-thị của bọn đế-quốc trá hình Nga-Sô, Trung-Cộng, đã bắt tay với Thực-dân ký-kết hiệp-định Genève chia đôi đất nước để cùng mưu lợi riêng": *Thành tích Tố cộng*, 35.

[92] For a dissenting view, see Pierre Asselin, "The Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the 1954 Geneva Conference: A Revisionist Critique," *Cold War History* 11, no. 2 (May 2011): 155-195.

[93] "Chúng sẽ rảnh tay ở Bắc-Việt và có thời gian củng cố lại lực lượng, sau trận Điện-Biên-Phủ…Sau cùng, sẽ thanh toán nốt miền Nam": Ngọc Tuấn, *Hiệp ước Genève với chúng ta* ([Saigon?]: Quân đội ĐTQK, 1956), 6.

[94] "quốc tế cộng sản Nga-Hoa say sưa với chiến thắng mới vội sắp xếp lại súy đồ thống trị thế giới, âm mưu lan tràn xuống Đông Nam Á là cửa ngõ của thế giới thời đại": Thái Lăng Nghiêm [Phạm Văn Tâm], *Bàn về thống nhất dân tộc* ([Saigon?]: Tủ sách Kinh Dương, 1959), 10.

[95] "hiến dâng thành quả cách mệnh dân tộc Việt để làm một lực lượng tiền phong trong tay quốc tế cộng sản và lãnh thổ Việt để làm bàn đạp cho hệ thống quốc tế cộng sản Nga-Hoa trên bước đường thống trị thế giới": Thái Lăng Nghiêm, *Bàn về thống nhất dân tộc*, 11.

organization, for which the *Việt Cộng* gang are the faithful and eager lackeys."[96] The original Vietnamese for "governor" is *quan thái thú,* the historical name for governors during the period of Chinese suzerainty. Bùi Anh Tuấn, an émigré journalist, former Đại Việt activist, and later the RVN's most famous spy novelist,[97] drew a similar conclusion in *Mầm biến động tại Bắc Việt? (Seeds of Revolt in North Vietnam?):* "[T]he traditional hatred between the Chinese and us have caused our people, especially Northerners, to feel like the *Việt cộng* have taken them back to the life of slavery that their ancestors endured for over a thousand years."[98] As evidence, he claimed that there were over 300,000 Chinese advisers in the DRV in 1955, that is, one Chinese adviser for every 30 North Vietnamese, a wildly exaggerated figure.[99]

The PRC's cultural influence also recalled premodern Chinese rule, and anticommunists decried Hanoi's complicity in assimilationist policies. In 1957, *Chỉ Đạo (Guidance),* the literary journal of the Ministry of National Defense, published an anonymous article entitled, "Cuộc xâm lược về phương diện văn hóa của Đế Quốc Cộng Sản tại miền Bắc" ("The Cultural Invasion of the North by the Communist Empire"). It examined the popularization of Chinese dances by the Hanoi government, which the article denounced as a cultural betrayal. Again comparing the DRV to premodern Chinese rule, the author wondered whether contemporary Vietnamese could once again resist the erasure of their native culture: "The peril of assimilation, that our people

---

[96] "Các quan thái thú kiểu mới này chính thức đặt ách nô lệ lên đầu nhân dân Việt Nam bằng cả một hệ thống tổ chức mà bè lũ Việt Cộng là những tên tay sai trung thành đắc lực": Vũ Thược, *Giai đoạn suy tàn của cộng sản Việt Nam,* 74.

[97] For a biographical sketch of Bùi Anh Tuấn, see Nguyễn Nguyệt Cầm, "Z.28 and the Appeal of Spy Fiction in Southern Vietnam, 1954-1975" (master's thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 2001), 1-8.

[98] "Như trên đã nói, mối câm thù truyền thống giữa ta và Tầu đã khiến dân ta, nhất là người dân phía Bắc, cảm thấy Việt cộng đã đưa họ trở lại cuộc sống trâu ngựa mà cha ông họ đã cắn răng chịu đựng trên một ngàn năm": Bùi Anh Tuấn, *Mầm biến động tại Bắc Việt?: Chính luận* ([Saigon?]: 1957), 17.

[99] I have been unable to determine the exact number of Chinese advisers present in North Vietnam in 1955. The PRC sent a variety of advisers to Vietnam to assist the Việt Minh, including military, political, economic, and land reform advisers. In 1955, the PRC was in the process of withdrawing its military delegation and increasing the number of non-military advisers. The last members of the Chinese Military Advisory Delegation left on 13 January 1956, and the highest figure I have been able to find in Chinese accounts for the delegation is 397 members. According to Christopher Goscha, North Vietnamese sources indicate that there were around 2000 Chinese advisers serving in the DRV from 1950 to 1954. In any case, Bùi Anh Tuấn's estimate for 1955 was unusually high even when compared to contemporary western sources, which ran as high as 8000 during the height of the First Indochina War. I am indebted to Peter Lavelle for the translation of Chinese sources and to Bradley Davis, Han Xiaorong, and Phi Van Nguyen for help locating sources. For the figure of 397, see Zhang Guanghua, "Zhongguo junshi guwentuan yu Yuenan kang Fa zhanzhen" [The Chinese Military Advisors Group and the War of Vietnamese Resistance to the French], in *Zhongguo junshi guwentuan yuan Yue kang Fa shilu* [Records of the Chinese Military Advisory Group helping Vietnam resist the French], ed. Zhongguo junshi guwentuan yuan Yue kang Fa shilu bianji zu (Beijing: Zhong gong dang shi chubanshe, 2002), 243-269, reference to 298. See also Christopher Goscha, *Historical Dictionary of the Indochina War, 1945-1954: An International and Interdisciplinary Approach* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2012), s.vv. "Chinese Military Advisory Delegation," "Chinese Political Advisory Delegation"; Chen, *Vietnam and China,* 273; Qian Jiang, *Mimi zhengzhan: Zhongguo junshi guwen tuan yuan Yue kang Fa jishi* [The secret campaign: A real account of a Chinese Military Advisory Group helping Vietnam resist France] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1999), 128, 592, 708, 713; Qian Jiang, *Zai shenmi de zhanzheng zhong: Zhongguo junshi guwentuan fu Yuenan zhengzhan ji* [In the midst of a mysterious war: A record of the Chinese Military Advisors Group going to Vietnam to campaign] (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1992), 50, 89; Wang Yanquan, "Yuenan bianjie zhanyi qianhou de Chen Geng tongzhi" [Comrade Chen Geng throughout the battle on the Vietnamese border], in *Zhongguo junshi guwentuan yuan Yue kang Fa shilu* [Records of the Chinese Military Advisory Group helping Vietnam resist the French], ed. Zhongguo junshi guwentuan yuan Yue kang Fa shilu bianji zu (Beijing: Zhong gong dang shi chubanshe, 2002), 106-132, reference to 107; Bùi Anh Tuấn, *Mầm biến động tại Bắc Việt,* 17.

avoided long ago, over ten long centuries of Chinese rule – can we accomplish that today, with the cunning schemes of the invaders and the blind loyalty of internal traitors?"[100] *Tại sao chống Cộng? (Why Oppose Communism?),* a propaganda tract published in 1960, complained about the Sinicization of North Vietnam: Vietnamese communists "forced the population to 'study the conduct of Chairman Mao' and attire themselves in the Chinese Communist style, from 'mandarin shirts' to braided pigtails for girls."[101] The anonymous author concluded sadly, "Those measures will make our national character slowly fade, and the younger generation in the North will become rootless."[102]

In retrospect, the fear of political subjugation and cultural assimilation seems alarmist. Yet most authors strived for accuracy and specificity in their writing. Bùi Anh Tuấn estimated the number of Chinese advisers based on a Chinese-language journal from the DRV, and Thái Lăng Nghiêm grounded his argument in an analysis of the Cold War and Vietnamese history.[103] Even the anonymous article from *Guidance* discussed a particular cultural campaign rather than vague generalizations. As with the history of the resistance, the paucity of reliable information on the DRV likely contributed to the exaggerations. The closing of the border on 20 July 1955 sealed off direct access to North Vietnam, and very few émigrés had personal experience with contemporary events in the DRV after that date. The Saigon government banned North Vietnamese publications, unless they were excerpted in anticommunist tracts, and only military and government personnel had access to communist materials.[104] The memory of French colonialism likely colored the way Republican anticommunists understood communist imperialism. Just as nationalists during the colonial period worried that Vietnamese culture and the Vietnamese people would become extinct,[105] anticommunists feared that North Vietnam was losing its distinctively Vietnamese culture and political independence. These anxieties were compounded by the international anticommunist discourse that depicted communism as expansive and monolithic.

Freedom and Oppression: The Great Migration and the Nhân văn – Giai phẩm Affair

The fear of communist colonialism was linked to a third conceptual binary within Republican anticommunism: the belief that communism *(cộng sản)* was incompatible with freedom *(tự do)* and, by extension, that communist North Vietnam was oppressive and while the anticommunist RVN championed freedom. The dichotomy of *tự do* and *cộng sản* does not

---

[100] "Cái nguy cơ đồng hóa, ngày xưa dân tộc ta đã từng tránh thoát, trải qua những thời Bắc thuộc lâu hàng 10 thế kỷ, ngày nay liệu có vì những mưu toan sâu sắc của kẻ xâm lăng, vì sự trung thành mù quáng của bọn nội phản mà thực hiện được không?": "Cuộc xâm-lược về phương-diện văn-hóa của Đế-quốc Cộng-sản tại miền Bắc," *Chỉ đạo* 7 (1 Aug 1957): 25.

[101] "bắt nhân dân 'học tập tác phong Mao chủ tịch', phục sức theo kiểu Trung Cộng, từ bộ 'áo đại quan' đến lối thiếu nữ tết tóc đuôi sam": *Tại sao chống cộng?* (Saigon: Văn hữu Á châu, 1960), 40.

[102] "Những biện pháp đó sẽ làm mất dần dân tộc tính và biến những thế hệ hậu sinh ở miền Bắc thành những kẻ mất rễ": *Tại sao chống Cộng?,* 41.

[103] Bùi Anh Tuấn claimed that he was relying on a secondary quote from Phạm Văn Sơn's *Việt Tuyến 17.* See Bùi Anh Tuấn, *Mầm biến động ở miền Bắc,* 17. I have been unable to locate the original reference in *Việt Tuyến 17.*

[104] For example, the anonymous reviewer of Minh Võ's *Sách lược xâm lăng của Cộng sản*, an anticommunist monograph, pointed out that Minh Võ's access to communist materials indicated that the writer was likely a member of the government. A reference note suggests the reviewer, identified only as Nguyễn, is Nguyễn Mạnh Côn. See Nguyễn [Nguyễn Mạnh Côn?], review of Minh Võ, *Sách lược xâm lăng của Cộng sản* (Saigon: privately published, 1963) in *Tin sách* 12 (Jun 1963): 15-18, reference to 15.

[105] Tai, *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution,* 21, 48; Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial,* 297-300.

employ a distinctive vocabulary, which makes its origins difficult to determine, but the binary likely reflected both global influences and local experience. It appears to have been influenced by international ideas of the early Cold War, particularly the American division of the globe into the communist bloc and the so-called Free World. Vietnamese anticommunists frequently referenced the "Free World" *(thế giới tự do),* the iron curtain *(bức màn sắt),* and the bamboo curtain *(bức màn tre),* and they often referred to the RVN as "Free Vietnam" *(Việt Nam tự do)* or the "Free South" *(Miền Nam tự do).*[106] The term *tự do* is a common Vietnamese word that dated back at least to the 1920s, when it was introduced in the discussion of rights, the loss of independence, and French colonialism.[107] Whether indigenous or derivative, the binary of communism and freedom had already achieved currency at the time of partition, at least within anticommunist circles. On the very day of the Geneva Agreement, Lê Văn Viễn, leader of the Bình Xuyên, invoked the dichotomy when he called upon northerners to escape the Việt Minh and migrate to the "remaining Free Vietnamese area" *(vùng Việt Nam tự do còn lại).*[108]

Numerous observers have noted that the migration of 1954-1955 was a powerful propaganda tool for Ngô Đình Diệm, but few have examined how the Saigon government portrayed the event.[109] Anticommunists predictably attributed the exodus to communist oppression, but what is surprising is that both the government and independent intellectuals consistently minimized the Catholic character of the migration. Instead, they depicted the event in universal terms of freedom, oppression, and nationalism that transcended religious particularities. In the fall of 1955, at the first annual commemoration of the migration, Ngô Đình Diệm praised the refugees for their love of liberty and their embodiment of the national spirit: "The émigrés abandoned everything that was precious to them in return for something that is the most precious of all: Freedom. Our compatriots left to protect the right of being a person and to express the traditional indomitable spirit of our people."[110] The official account of the migration, *Cuộc di cư lịch sử tại Việt Nam (The Historical Migration in Vietnam),* combined the ideas of freedom, the Vietnamese national spirit, and communist imperialism. Published in 1958 by the Commissariat for Émigrés and Refugees, the glossy volume contended that the desire for independence was the defining principle of Vietnamese history: "[O]ur country was dominated by the Chinese for over 1000 years and ruled by the French for just under 100 years, but the Vietnamese people were never assimilated and never yielded but always rose up to overthrow the

[106] For examples of "Free World," see *Tại sao chống Cộng?,* 38; "Tài-liệu học-tập về Tuyên-ngôn Quốc-tế Nhân-quyền," 10 Dec 1962, file 20682, ĐICH. For examples of "iron curtain," see *Tại sao chống Cộng?,* 38; "Kiến nghị phản đối Liên Sô tàn sát nhân dân Hung Gia Lợi," *Nội san Quốc hội* 1 (Jan 1957): 8; Thanh Thảo, *Tù ngục và thoát ly: Hồi ký ba năm tám tháng* (Saigon: 1957), 152. For examples of "bamboo curtain," see Nguiễn Ngu Í, "Đại hội chống chính sách nô dịch Văn hóa," *Bách khoa* 113 (15 Sep 1961): 113-115, reference to 115. For examples of the "Free Vietnam," see Nguyễn Quang Lệ, "Vấn đề dân khẩu ở Việt Nam Tự Do," *Bách khoa* 44 (1 Nov 1958): 11-19; Nguyễn Thanh Hoàng, "Chống chính sách nô dịch văn hóa tại miền Bắc," *Văn hóa Á châu* 3 (Jun 1960): 100-103. For examples of the "Free South," see Nguiễn Ngu Í, "Nhận xét về hiện trạng Âm nhạc và Kịch nghệ tại miền Nam tự do," *Bách khoa* 150 (1 Apr 1953): 99-103; Thiết Mai, "Một công trình xây dựng tối tân xứng đáng với thủ đô hoa lệ của miền Nam tự do: Rạp Chiếu bóng Rex," *Sáng dội miền Nam* 30 (Dec 1961): 29; *Những tội ác của Việt Cộng tại miền Nam Việt Nam,* 13.

[107] Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial,* 54, 64, 66 n21.

[108] Lê Văn Viễn, "Lời kêu gọi của Trung-Tướng Lê-Văn-Viển [*sic*], Tư lịnh quân đội Quốc-gia Bình-Xuyên," *Tiếng chuông* 992 (22 July 1954): 1, 4, citation on 1.

[109] Young, *Vietnam Wars,* 45.

[110] "Người di cư đã từ bỏ tất cả những gì quí giá, để đổi lấy một điều quí giá hơn cả, là Tự Do. Đồng bào ra đi để bảo vệ quyền làm người, để nêu cao tinh thần bất khuất truyền thống của dân tộc": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Diễn văn của Thủ tướng Chánh phủ nhân dịp khai mạc Đại hội kỷ niệm Đệ nhất chu niên di cư (11-10-1955)," in *CĐCN* (Saigon: Sở Báo Chí Thông Tin, Phủ Tổng Thống, 1956), 2:141-145, citation on 141.

yoke of foreign domination."[111] Now that the North Vietnamese population was again suffering under foreign oppression, the émigrés continued the traditional struggle for freedom by migrating south: "The migration manifests our people's thirst for freedom, which is the result of a heroic tradition of struggle."[112]

Few intellectuals repeated Ngô Đình Diệm's argument about the historical spirit, but virtually all émigrés authors emphasized the secular themes of nationalism and liberty. In Lã Huy Quý's *Đây… Bắc Việt, 1957 (This… is North Vietnam, 1957),* the author attributed his escape to a love of freedom and country, among other noble ideals: "Because of human dignity, because of personal happiness and the happiness of my people, because of the future of the Fatherland, I was determined to find life in death, find freedom next to a prison, and find a future through a nearly hopeless path: 'TO CROSS THE MERIDIAN INTO THE SOUTH'" (capitalization in original).[113] The author was a "meridian crosser" *(người vượt tuyến),* an émigré who escaped North Vietnam after the border closed. Meridian crossers were so named because they traversed the 17th parallel that separated the two Vietnams.[114] The mention of a "hopeless path" referred to the difficulty of clandestine escape from the DRV, including physical hardship, tight security measures, and severe punishment for those that were caught. Even the few Catholic accounts often interpreted the migration through the prism of patriotism and the quest for freedom. Thanh Thảo's *Tù ngục và thoát ly (Imprisonment and Liberation),* a Catholic memoir purportedly dictated to the author by an unnamed émigré, mourned the plight of Catholics under the Việt Minh and explored the narrator's identity as a Catholic nationalist. Yet the memoir concluded with the secular themes that recast the narrative as a quest for personal and national freedom. The narrator explains to Thanh Thảo, "Retelling the story of *Imprisonment and Liberation,* my intention was to ask you [Thanh Thảo] to record everything that really happened, the savagery on the other side of the iron curtain, and simultaneously portray the reaction, the unflagging determination, whether clandestine or in the open, of our compatriots on the other side – those who still love Freedom and the Righteous Cause."[115] "Righteous cause" *(chính nghĩa)* was a term that anticommunists used to describe noncommunist Vietnamese nationalism.

Although freedom and patriotism undoubtedly spurred some émigrés to leave, Peter Hansen's research on Catholic émigrés demonstrates that they left not for political or religious freedom but because their local parish priest decided to leave.[116] Moreover, the American navy provided transportation to the northern émigrés, a fact that partially explains why northerners came south in far larger numbers than southerners going north. Yet the consistently secular

---

[111] "nước ta bị người Tàu đô-hộ hơn 1000 năm và người Pháp cai trị non 100 năm, không bao giờ dân-tộc Việt-Nam chịu đồng-hóa và khuất-phục, luôn luôn nổi dậy lật đổ ách thống-trị của ngoại-bang. Đấy chính là nhờ ở tinh-thần quật-khởi mạnh mẽ của Dân-tộc ta": *Cuộc di cư lịch sử tại Việt Nam*, 14.

[112] "Công cuộc di-cư đã biểu dương lòng khao khát tự-do của dân ta, kết quả của tuyền thống đấu tranh anh dũng": *Cuộc di cư lịch sử tại Việt Nam,* 279.

[113] "Vì tự do và nhân cách của con người, vì hạnh phúc của bản thân và dân tộc, vì tương lai của Tổ quốc tôi nuôi ý chí tìm sự sống trong cái chết, tìm tự do bên cạnh lao tù, tìm tương lai bằng con đường hình như tuyệt vọng: 'VƯỢT TUYẾN VÀO NAM'": Lã Huy Quý, *Đây… Bắc Việt, 1957* (N.p.: 1958), 66.

[114] I have chosen to translate *vượt tuyến* as "to cross the meridian" and *người vượt tuyến* as "meridian crosser." It is more accurate to translate *tuyến* as "parallel" because the partition was at the 17th parallel, but "meridian" more accurately captures the specifically cartographic connotation of the word *tuyến*.

[115] "Kể lại chuyện: 'TÙ-NGỤC và THOÁT-LY' tôi có ý nhờ bạn ghi lại những cái gì có thật, những cái dã-man ở bên kia bức màn sắt, đồng thời mô-tả lại những phản ứng, những bất khuất liên-tục hoặc ngấm-ngầm hoặc công khai của đồng bào ta bên ấy – số người còn yêu-chuộng Tự-do và Chính-Nghĩa": Thanh Thảo, *Tù ngục và thoát ly,* 152.

[116] Peter Hansen, "Bắc Di Cư: Catholic Refugees from the North of Vietnam, and Their Role in the Southern Republic, 1954-1959," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 4, no. 3 (fall 2009): 173-211.

emphasis of the anticommunist discourse is nonetheless remarkable.[117] It suggests that Ngô Đình Diệm intentionally minimized the significance of his own religion in favor of promoting an anticommunist nationalism that embraced Catholics and non-Catholics alike. The absence of explicitly Catholic themes also highlights the disproportionate role played by secularly-oriented émigré intellectuals. While their accounts sometimes denounced the communist persecution of religion, none granted the historical conflict between the Việt Minh and northern Catholics the same level of significance as the dissolution of the Việt Minh coalition or the radicalization of the movement. In fact, the discourse on freedom and oppression may have been one of the few ways for Catholics like Thanh Thảo to incorporate a specifically Catholic voice into the RVN's national narrative.

The other major event that came to represent communist oppression was the Nhân văn – Giai phẩm Affair. The affair refers to a protest movement led by communist intellectuals and Hanoi's repression of the movement throughout the latter half of the 1950s.[118] On 15 December 1956, the DRV closed down two literary arts journals, *Nhân văn (Humanities)* and *Giai phẩm (Masterworks),* that were critical of the northern government. The leaders of the movement included some of North Vietnam's most respected writers, scholars, artists, and musicians. Many of them had been active in intellectual life as early as the 1930s, and all of them had supported the Việt Minh during the resistance. The Hanoi government launched a defamation campaign against the journals and denounced the life and works of the contributors. Some members of the movement were jailed, others expelled from professional organizations or removed from academic appointments, and most were never able to publish again until the 1980s.[119] The affair provoked a flurry of protest in the RVN and inspired the formation of anticommunist cultural organizations, the staging of various conferences, continuous coverage in the Republican media, and at least six full-length publications.[120] Because of the ban on communist materials, documents relating to the affair became some of the only North Vietnamese publications widely available in the South. Trial documents, attacks from the defamation campaign, and select

---

[117] A notable exception is Trần Quốc Bảo's *Cuộc di cư vĩ đại trong lịch sử thế giới cận kim,* which argues that the émigrés left for religious freedom. See Trần Quốc Bảo, *Cuộc di cư vĩ đại trong lịch sử thế giới cận kim* (Saigon: privately published, 1956).

[118] It is interesting to note that, prior to the Nhân văn – Giai phẩm Affair, it was the radicalization of the Việt Minh that was most closely associated with the suppression of artistic and intellectual freedom. Among the many new policies introduced during the radicalization was a stricter cultural policy. See Hoàng Đạt, *Tôi sang đánh chiếm đất Thượng Lào,* 54; Lê Lam Sơn, "Hiện tình Văn nghệ Việt cộng," in *Phê bình văn nghệ cộng sản,* ed. Võ Phương Tùng, Lê Lam Sơn, and Phan Lạc Tuyền ([Saigon?]: Việt Nam, 1955), 13-21; Nguyễn Kiên Trung [Nguyễn Mạnh Côn], "Có hay không có một nền văn nghệ Việt Cộng," *Chỉ đạo* 10-11 (26 Oct 1956): 33-42; Như Phong, "Trí thức và văn nghệ sĩ miền Bắc Việt Nam mười lăm năm dưới bóng cờ đỏ," *Bách khoa* 129 (15 May 1962); Như Phong, "Trí thức và văn nghệ sĩ miền Bắc Việt Nam mười lăm năm dưới bóng cờ đỏ," *Bách khoa* 130 (1 Jun 1962): 17-30.

[119] Peter Zinoman, "Nhân Văn – Giai Phẩm and Vietnamese 'Reform Communism' in the 1950s: A Revisionist Interpretation," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 13, no. 1 (winter 2011): 60-100, reference to 72-83.

[120] For the full-length publications, see Hoàng Văn Chí [Mạc Đình, pseud.], ed., *Tâm trạng của giới văn nghệ ở miền Bắc* (Saigon: [privately published?], 1956); *Tìm hiểu sự thật* (Saigon: 1957); *Số phận trí thức miền Bắc (qua vụ Trần Đức Thảo)* (Saigon: Văn hữu Á Châu, 1959); Hoàng Văn Chí [Mạc Đình, pseud.], ed., *Trăm hoa đua nở trên đất Bắc* (Saigon: Mặt trận bảo vệ tự do văn hóa, 1959); Nguyễn Vạn An, *Vụ án đấu tranh tư tưởng ở miền Bắc* (Saigon: privately published, 1960); Nguyễn Vạn An, *Phan Khôi và cuộc tranh đấu tư tưởng ở miền Bắc* (Saigon: Ủy ban Trung ương Chống chính sách nô dịch văn hóa và đàn áp văn nghệ sĩ, trí thức sinh viên tại miền Bắc, 1961). For journalistic coverage, see "Báo 'Nhân-Văn' của nhóm Phan Khôi bị đóng cửa," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 448 (27 Dec 1956): 1, 4; "Chung quanh vụ án Phan Khôi: Phe đảng Trần Huy Liệu tấn công," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 449 (28 Dec 1956): 1, 4; "Đài bá âm VC và thống tấn xã ngoại quốc xác nhận 'Vụ Phan Khôi,'" *Cách mạng quốc gia* 449 (28 Dec 1956): 1, 4.

articles from the banned journals circulated in the Republican press and provided a harsh portrayal of the northern government. The agitation over the Nhân văn – Giai phẩm Affair was a distinct movement from the Denounce the Communists Campaign and a second instance when intellectuals rallied against the DRV.

The RVN responded swiftly to news of the affair. Only three weeks after the closure of *Humanities* and *Masterworks*, the Office of Cultural Affairs in Saigon organized the National Cultural Conference from 7 to 16 January 1957.[121] Minister of Information Trần Chánh Thành opened the conference by contrasting the oppression of intellectuals in the DRV with artistic freedom in the RVN: "The National Cultural Conference opens in Saigon… in an atmosphere of intellectual and artistic freedom, amidst every person's faith in the majestic future of the Republic."[122] The minister then quoted one of the prohibited journals to portray the Nhân văn – Giai phẩm Affair as a heroic fight against dictatorial cultural policies: "[I]in the north, Writers and Artists who were once restrained have begun to raise their voices and criticize the unidirectional leadership of the Communist party's Political Office, which wants to turn Artists into 'frightened, obedient sheep, willing to let the shepherd walk them in any direction,' according to a journal published in Hanoi."[123] Should anyone doubt the superior freedom of the RVN, he or she only had to look northward, the Minister of Information seemed to imply. Trần Chánh Thành concluded by affirming support for the dissenters: "We hope that the Writers and Artists of the North will continue to struggle for the freedom to think and to create in accordance with their own principles and inspiration, without having to follow the cultural directives of the central authority of the Communist Party."[124]

Republican intellectuals also organized associations and conferences to condemn the repression of the movement. In summer of 1958, over 150 intellectuals from prominent cultural organizations met in Saigon to form the Mặt trận Bảo vệ Tự do Văn Hóa (Congress for Cultural Freedom, CCF) to protest Hanoi's suppression of free speech.[125] The organization was the

---

[121] I have been unable to determine whether the conference was already planned or if the Ministry of Information decided to hold the conference in response to the Nhân văn – Giai phẩm Affair. The ministry considered organizing a national cultural conference as early as 1955 but postponed it. Discussions of a cultural conference emerged again in the fall of 1956 as a capstone to the Denounce the Communists campaign, and it appears that preparation for a conference were already underway prior to the news of the affair. Most likely, preparation for the conference converged with developments in Hanoi, an opportunity that Saigon was happy to exploit. See Phạm Xuân Thái to Prime Minister [Ngô Đình Diệm], correspondence no. 398-VP/BTT, 29 Mar 1955, file 16246, ĐICH; Trần Trung Dung to Minister of Information and Psychological Warfare [Phạm Xuân Thái], correspondence no. 243-PTT/TTK, 4 Apr 1955, file 16246, ĐICH; T.M. Tiểu ban Kế hoạch Phòng Hai, "Đại hội văn hóa toàn quốc," *Xây dựng* 23 (15 Nov 1956): 13-14, 24-26; "Về Đại hội Văn hóa toàn quốc khai mạc sáng hôm qua," *Bản tin VTX* 2139 (8 Jan 1957, entire day), VII-VIII, file 16246, ĐICH; John Donnell, "Politics in South Vietnam: Doctrines of Authority in Conflict" (PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1964), 101.

[122] "Đại-hội văn-hóa khai-mạc tại Saigon… trong bầu không-khí tự-do tư-tưởng, tự-do sáng-tác, giữa niềm tin-tưởng của mọi người về tương-lai huy-hoàng của nền Cộng-hòa": *Đại hội văn hóa toàn quốc 1957* (Saigon: Bộ Thông tin, 1957), 13.

[123] "Trong lúc đó ở Bắc-phần, các Văn-nghệ-sĩ bấy lâu bị kìm-hãm, bắt đầu lên tiếng công-kích đường lối lãnh-đạo một chiều của Phòng Chánh-trị đảng Cộng-Sản muốn biến Văn-Nghệ sĩ – theo một tờ báo xuất-bản tại Hanoi – thành 'những con cừu ngoan ngoãn, sợ-sệt chịu để cho bọn chăn giắt lùa đi ngả nào cũng được'": *Đại hội Văn hoá toàn quốc,* 13-14.

[124] "Chúng ta mong các Văn-nghệ-sĩ ở Bắc phần sẽ tranh-đấu cho được tự-do tư-tưởng, tự-do sáng-tác theo quan-niệm và cảm-hứng của mình, không phải theo chỉ-thị Văn-hoá của Trung-ương Đảng-bộ Cộng-sản": *Đại hội Văn hóa toàn quốc,* 14.

[125] The founders of the Vietnamese CCF cast their mission in universal terms, but their public statements and publications focused on North Vietnam. The member organizations included the Hội Khổng học Việt Nam (Confucian Studies Association), Hội Bút Việt (Vietnamese PEN Club), Hội Văn hóa Bình dân (Association for

Vietnamese branch of the international CCF, an institution promoting artistic and intellectual creativity in noncommunist societies. The international CCF had ties with the CIA, but little is known regarding the relationship between the Vietnamese CCF and the CIA. In fall 1958, the Vietnamese CCF passed a resolution describing the Nhân văn – Giai phẩm Affair as a conflict between a dictatorial government and freedom-loving intellectuals: "[t]he measures implemented by the Hanoi regime to exterminate the movement for 'Cultural Freedom,' led by North Vietnamese intellectuals, writers, and artists, is a severe violation of the most sacred rights of a human being and the most basic freedoms of all genuine democracies in the world."[126] The congress subsequently published the RVN's definitive account of the affair, *Trăm hoa đua nở trên đất Bắc (A Hundred Flowers Bloom on Northern Soil).* The volume was edited by Hoàng Văn Chí, an émigré scholar who was chair of the organization and a former Việt Minh activist. The title of the book referred to two events in Chinese history. The first was the Hundred Flowers Movement, a period of brief liberalization followed by the repression of free speech in the PRC in 1956-1957. The second was the Warring States period, during which diverse philosophies flourished until Qin Shi Huang, the first Chinese emperor, imposed a state-sanctioned school of thought. Hoàng Văn Chí argued that Mao Zedong was a modern-day Qin Shi Huang who squelched intellectual freedom in China and North Vietnam: "[W]hether a monarchical- or communist-style autocracy, centralized regimes will annihilate intellectual freedom. Today, just as it was 2000 years ago, Chinese intellectuals are still being smothered."[127] Hoàng Văn Chí added sadly, "North Vietnamese intellectuals face the same conditions as their colleagues everywhere else behind the iron curtain."[128]

Protests over the Nhân văn – Giai phẩm Affair continued throughout 1960. A number of intellectuals established the Ủy ban trung ương chống chính sách nô dịch văn hóa và đàn áp văn nghệ sĩ, trí thức, sinh viên tại miền Bắc (Central Committee Against the Policy of Cultural Enslavement and the Oppression of Artists, Intellectuals, and Students in the North). The organization apparently had close ties to the government because Trần Chánh Thành was the honorary chair at some of its events.[129] The Central Committee Against Cultural Enslavement organized conferences in 1960 and 1961 featuring presentations about the Nhân văn – Giai phẩm Affair and performances of poems and plays written by the Northern dissenters.[130] Speakers

---

Popular Culture), Hội Liên lạc Văn hóa Á châu (Vietnamese Association for Asian Cultural Relations), Hội Ái hữu Ký giả (Journalists' Guild), and a labor union of artists known as the Liên đoàn Văn nghệ (League of Artists). See Mặt trận Bảo vệ Tự do Văn hóa, "Bản tuyên ngôn của Mặt trận Bảo vệ Tự do Văn hóa," *Tự do* 435 (19 Jun 1958): 1, 4; "Một quyết nghị lịch sử của các giới văn học nghệ thuật Việt Nam," *Tự do* 435 (19 Jun 1958): 1, 4; "Sinh hoạt của Mặt trận Bảo vệ Tự do Văn hóa," *Văn hóa Á châu* 4 (Jul 1958): 93-94).

[126] "những phương pháp do nhà cầm quyền ở Hànội thi hành với mục đích duy nhất là diệt trừ phong trào đòi hỏi 'Tự Do Văn Hóa' của giới trí thức và văn nghệ sĩ miền Bắc Việt Nam, là một sự vi phạm nặng nề đến những quyền thiêng liêng của con người và những tự do căn bản của bất cứ một nền dân chủ chân chính nào trên thế giới": Mặt trận Bảo vệ Tự do Văn hóa, "Quyết nghị của Mặt trận Bảo vệ Tự do Văn hóa tại Việt Nam về vụ án Văn học xảy ra tại miền Bắc Việt Nam," *Tự do* 549 (30 Oct 1958): 3.

[127] "dù là chuyên-chế kiểu quân-chủ hay kiểu cộng-sản, chế-độ tập quyền vẫn tiêu-diệt tự-do tư-tưởng. Ngày nay cũng như suốt hai nghìn năm về trước, trí-thức Trung-hoa vẫn bị bịt mồm, bịt miệng': Hoàng Văn Chí, *Trăm hoa đua nở trên đất Bắc,* xvi.

[128] "trí-thức ở Bắc-Việt cũng lâm vào tình-trạng chung của đồng bạn ở khắp trong bức màn sắt": Hoàng Văn Chí, *Trăm hoa đua nở trên đất Bắc,* xvi.

[129] "Đại hội Văn nghệ sĩ thủ đô chống văn hóa nô dịch của Việt cộng," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 538 (14 May 1960): 1, 4.

[130] Nguyễn Thanh Hoàng, "Chống chính sách nô dịch văn hóa tại miền Bắc," *Văn hóa Á châu* 3 (Jun 1960): 100-103; "Chương trình Đại hội chống chính sách nô dịch văn hóa và đàn áp văn nghệ sĩ, trí thức, sinh viên tại miền Bắc," *Minh tân* 70 (15 May 1960): 4; "Đại Hội Văn Nghệ sĩ miền Nam tự do," *Tiếng chuông* 2761 (11 May 1960):

included émigré intellectuals like journalist Tam Lang, Trúc Sĩ and Lê Văn Duyện,[131] and audience members consisted primarily of students, writers, and artists, including the son of Thụy An, one of the dissenters.[132] The committee also published at least two full-length volumes on the affair, though neither matched the scholarly quality of Hoàng Văn Chí's compilation.[133] Interestingly, critics assessed the North Vietnamese dissenters in different ways. Nguyễn Vạn An, General Secretary of the Central Committee Against Cultural Enslavement, anointed the leaders of the movement the "cultural warriors of the North, who were struggling to defend the national culture and cultural freedom."[134] In contrast, during the National Cultural Conference of 1957, émigré journalists Tô Văn and Văn Hoàn dismissed the movement's "gentle criticism" as minor disagreements with the party that was not genuinely anticommunist (*chỉ trích nhẹ nhàng*).[135]

Tô Văn and Văn Hoàn appear to have been more accurate. Peter Zinoman's study of the affair finds that the movement was weak, isolated, and mild compared to analogous strains of reform communism in Eastern Europe. He suggests that researchers have overstated the dissident character of the movement because they have focused on the most oppositional pieces in the banned journals, a critique that applies equally to anticommunists in the RVN.[136] Republican journals and anthologies tended to reprint the same incendiary pieces, and it is unclear whether Hoàng Văn Chí or Nguyễn Vạn An had access to the full run of *Humanity* and *Masterworks.* Hanoi's cultural policies were indeed as draconian as its critics claimed, but the selectivity of available materials also contributed to negative perceptions of the DRV as an oppressive regime.

The Suppression of Anticommunist Rivals and Communist Nationalists

Beyond the minor differences in the interpretations of the affair, the joint effort of the government and independent intellectuals concealed major conflicts between anticommunists. The regime claimed to represent the victimized nationalist parties and disillusioned resistance fighters, but Ngô Đình Diệm and most of his administration belonged to neither group. The government refused to incorporate them except on an individual basis and actively suppressed the nationalist parties, especially the Đại Việt and VNQDĐ. Prior to Ngô Đình Diệm's tenure, the Đại Việt supported the SVN, and Phan Huy Quát, the most prominent Đại Việt politician, served as a cabinet minister in the former regime. In 1954, a number of American officials, especially J. Lawton Collins, the American representative of ambassadorial rank, pushed Ngô Đình Diệm to appoint Phan Huy Quát as the Minister of Defense, but Ngô Đình Diệm refused.[137] So intense was the hostility between the government and the two parties that armed conflict erupted. The Vietnamese National Army attacked VNQDĐ bases in south central Vietnam and

---

1, 4; Nguiễn Ngu Í, "Đại hội chống chính sách nô dịch Văn hóa," *Bách khoa* 113 (15 Sep 1961): 113-115; BBĐPV, "Buổi Đại hội chống chính sách nô dịch văn hóa miền Bắc," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 943 (2 Sep 1961).

[131] Nguiễn Ngu Í, "Đại hội chống chính sách nô dịch Văn hóa," 113-115.

[132] Nguiễn Ngu Í, "Đại hội chống chính sách nô dịch Văn hóa," 114.

[133] Only one of volumes specifically mentions the Central Committee Against Cultural Enslavement as the publisher, but chair of the General Secretary of the committee, Nguyễn Vạn An, penned both works. See Nguyễn Vạn An, *Vụ án đấu tranh tư tưởng ở miền Bắc;* Nguyễn Vạn An, *Phan Khôi và cuộc đấu tranh tư tưởng ở miền Bắc*.

[134] "các chiến sĩ văn hóa đất Bắc đang đấu tranh bảo vệ nền văn hóa dân tộc và quyền tự do văn hóa": Nguyễn Vạn An, *Phan Khôi và cuộc đấu tranh tư tưởng ở miền Bắc,* 5.

[135] *Đại hội văn hoá toàn quốc*, 144.

[136] Zinoman, "Nhân văn – Giai phẩm and Vietnamese 'Reform Communism' in the 1950s," 63.

[137] Anderson, *Trapped by Success,* 95-96.

Đại Việt military zones in the provinces of Quảng Trị, Phú Yên, and Châu Đốc.[138] By May 1955, most of the nationalist forces had fled to Cambodia or were captured. Yet elements of the Đại Việt continued to oppose the government. Their radio station operated as late as the winter of 1956, broadcasting blistering critiques of Ngô Đình Diệm and circulating anti-government newsletters.[139] The Đại Việt military zone in Châu Đốc, formed in cooperation with the Hòa Hảo sect, remained active for the entirety of Ngô Đình Diệm's tenure.[140]

The Saigon regime appears to have blocked any organized activity by the Đại Việt and other independent political groups, even when those activities in no way opposed the government. Sidelined by Ngô Đình Diệm, the opposition often sought American assistance. The clearest example of this was the movie *We Want to Live* mentioned earlier. The film was financed and produced by a Đại Việt leader named Bùi Diễm, who would later became the RVN ambassador to the US. Even though the movie supported the government's hardline stance on communism, Edward Lansdale had to vouch for the project in order to secure Ngô Đình Diệm's approval. Then, just before the movie premiered, Ngô Đình Diệm's brother and political adviser, Ngô Đình Nhu, canceled the Ministry of Defense contract to buy copies of the film, which ensured that Bùi Diễm and the Đại Việt would face substantial financial losses. Nhu claimed that the Đại Việt was using the film to raise funds for anti-government activities.[141] Only after the fall of the First Republic was Bùi Diễm able to reenter political life. Moreover, the Đại Việt filmmakers were not alone in their difficulties with Ngô Đình Diệm. Hoàng Văn Chí, chair of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, became disillusioned with the regime and left his post as ambassador to India in 1960, and Bùi Anh Tuấn, author of *Seeds of Revolt in North Vietnam,* was jailed for his opposition against the government. Seen in this light, the First Republic marginalized many émigré intellectuals while appropriating their nationalist legacy. Conversely, the outpouring of literature demonstrated support for an anticommunist southern state but not necessarily for Ngô Đình Diệm's government.

Outside of the émigré population, the distinctively northern orientation of state nationalism limited its appeal to southerners. The narrative of communist betrayal highlighted turning points such as the August Revolution in Hanoi and the attack on noncommunists in the northern countryside. The critique of the Geneva Agreement and the Nhân văn – Giai phẩm Affair continued to emphasize northern concerns. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Civic Action cadres and other government agents often found it impossible to convince southern peasants to adopt anticommunism.[142] Especially in parts of the south formerly controlled by the Việt Minh, peasants admired local communists as leaders of the resistance struggle and considered

---

[138] Nguyễn Khắc Ngữ, *Đại cương về các đàng phái chính trị Việt Nam* (Montreal: Nhóm Nghiên cứu Sử địa, 1989), 65-66; Guillemot, *Dai Viêt,* 574-576.

[139] It is unclear when the radio station ceased broadcasting. Guillemot suggests that it broadcasted for about six months from May to October 1955, but I have located copies of newsletters put out by the radio station in the winter of 1956. See "Bản Thông tin của Đài Phát thanh, Đại Việt Quốc dân Đảng nói về Cao Đài và lên án chế độ độc tài Ngô Đình Diệm năm 1956," file 4350, ĐICH; "Despatch from the Ambassador in Vietnam (Reinhardt) to the Department of State," 29 Nov 1955, in *Foreign Relations of the United States* [hereafter, *FRUS], 1955-1957,* vol. 1, *Vietnam,* by the US Department of State (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1985), 589-594, reference to 593; Guillemot, *Dai Viêt,* 575.

[140] Guillemot, *Dai Viet,* 576-577.

[141] Phillips, *Why Vietnam Matters,* 90-91.

[142] This sentiment is echoed by many northern émigrés who felt that southerners refused to believe their stories. See Jeffery Race, *War Comes to Long An,* 26; Hoàng Văn Chí, "Land Reform," in *To Bear Any Burden: The Vietnam War and Its Aftermath in the Words of Americans and Southeast Asians,* ed. Al Santoli (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 41-47, reference to 47.

communists to be nationalist, in direct contradiction to the claims of northern émigrés. The discrepancy partly reflects the regional differences within the Việt Minh. Because the communist movement had been much weaker in the south, the Việt Minh enacted more moderate policies there than in the rest of the country.[143]

More importantly, Saigon undermined its own claims to nationalism with the poor execution of the Denounce the Communists Campaign. The stated policy was to distinguish full-fledged communists from patriotic noncommunists who had supported the Việt Minh. But, in practice, officials arrested all those who had supported or sympathized with the Việt Minh, including those who had long abandoned the resistance.[144] Even former resistance fighters who voluntarily presented themselves to the authorities could be arrested and detained.[145] That the anticommunist campaign was carried out by local officials, most of whom had served the colonial regime, did not help Saigon's cause. Therefore, in the eyes of many southerners, the government targeted not communists but ordinary nationalists. Widespread abuse at the local level only made matters worse.[146] In a somewhat contradictory fashion, the government simultaneously denounced communist persecution in North Vietnam while actively carrying out anticommunist persecution in the south. At least one observer has suggested that the Denounce the Communists Campaign was modeled on communist indoctrination techniques that Trần Chánh Thành first learned in service of the Việt Minh.[147]

Conclusion

An analysis of anticommunist nationalism raises three important issues. First, it indicates that Republican anticommunism was an indigenous response to Vietnamese communism. The narrative of betrayal centered on events that took place in northern Vietnam rather than the Soviet Union or mainland China, and they occurred prior to or simultaneously with the beginning of American involvement in the First Indochina War. Cold War concerns influenced the anticommunist vocabulary to a certain extent, but the war between two Vietnamese belligerents, the Việt Minh and the SVN, inspired the most fundamental concept of the new discourse, the dichotomy of *Việt cộng* and *quốc gia.* Émigré intellectuals in the 1950s shared similar criticisms of communist treachery and dictatorship as their counterparts in the 1930s. Although more research is needed, the similarities between the anticommunism of the two periods and the significance of the resistance war suggest that the RVN was part of a longer history of Vietnamese anticommunism and that the Vietnam War began as a Vietnamese conflict.

Second, the northern, secular orientation of anticommunist nationalism begs the question, why did non-religious intellectuals dominate the discourse when Catholics formed the majority of the émigré population? This question is particularly puzzling given that northern Catholics were disproportionately represented in the government administration. One possible explanation is that the Saigon government deliberately promoted secular anticommunist nationalism rather than the more religious variety. Ngô Đình Diệm certainly downplayed the Catholic dimension of

[143] Nguyễn Trân, province chief of Định Tường, later recounted that when Civic Action teams composed of émigrés expounded on the cruelty and treachery of the Việt Minh, southern peasants considered found the tales bizarre and difficult to believe. See Nguyễn Trân, *Công và tội: Những sự thật lịch sử* (Los Alamitos, Calif.: Xuân Thu, 1992), 218.
[144] Karnow, *Vietnam,* 243-245.
[145] Elliott, *The Vietnamese War,* 96-97;
[146] Race, *War Comes to Long An,* 26-27; Kahin, *Intervention,* 96.
[147] Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken,* 65.

the migration, but there is no evidence that the government discouraged Catholics from publicly discussing communist persecution of their religion or articulating an explicitly Catholic anticommunism. A better explanation lies in the social backgrounds of émigré intellectuals. Most intellectuals probably belonged to the educated middle class and were better able to write and publish about their experiences than average émigrés. Indeed, many authors identified as middle class resistance fighters or chose to examine the fate of the largely middle class Đại Việt and VNQDĐ.[148] In contrast, the majority of Catholic émigrés were peasants, rarely came from middle class backgrounds, and were relatively uneducated. Therefore, the Catholics were not as well positioned to publish memoirs and research monographs as émigré intellectuals.[149] Another possible reason is that that Catholic émigrés that were educated may have preferred to publish in religious journals rather than the mainstream secular press, and Catholic anticommunism may have developed parallel to secular, state-sponsored anticommunism. Such an explanation would be in line with the social practices of Catholics émigrés. Unlike their southern counterparts, northern Catholics tended to live in Catholic villages segregated from non-Catholic Vietnamese and later resettled as distinct communities in the South.[150]

The third issue expands beyond the émigré population: Why did northerners contribute disproportionately to the new nationalism when they were far outnumbered by southerners? Why did southern anticommunist nationalists not contribute their voices to the anticommunist literature and scholarship? The next chapter takes up this question.

[148] For example, Nghiêm Xuân Hồng, an émigré and member of the Đại Việt Duy Dân Đảng, categorized the Đại Việt parties and the VNQDĐ as petty bourgeois nationalism and distinct from elite and lower class nationalism. See Nghiêm Xuân Hồng, *Lịch trình diễn tiến của phong trào quốc gia Việt Nam* (Saigon: Quan Điểm, 1958), 109.
[149] Peter Hansen, email message to author, 27 Mar 2013.
[150] Hansen, "Bắc di cư," 178.

Chapter 2

Eliminate the Feudalists and Strike Down the Colonialists: The Eclipse of Southern Anticommunism, 1954-1960

In 1955, Nguyễn Văn Hầu and Dật Sĩ published *Thất sơn mầu nhiệm (The Miraculous Seven Mountains),* one of the only accounts to describe the suffering of southern nationalists at the hands of the Việt Minh. The monograph examined the religious history of the Seven Mountains region, located in the south near the Cambodian border, and devoted one chapter to the life and career of Huỳnh Phú Sổ, the founder of Hòa Hảo Buddhism and a prophet in the local religious tradition.[1] According to the authors, both of whom were members of the Hòa Hảo faith, the prophet brought over two million religious adepts into the anticolonial movement and prepared for national independence by allying with other southern nationalists in August 1945. But the Việt Minh outmaneuvered the coalition and refused to share power. Afterwards, relations between the communists and the sect teetered between cooperation and hostility. The coauthors singled out two incidents in particular: the clash between the Việt Minh and the Hòa Hảo in the city of Cần Thơ on 8 September 1945 and the murder of Huỳnh Phú Sổ in April 1947. The coauthors described the first conflict as a massacre of peaceful demonstrators: "Suddenly, the V.M. [Việt Minh] fired onto the unarmed crowd, arrested Mậu, Thiếp, and Hoàng, and tens of thousands of believers in Cần Thơ and the southwestern provinces were imprisoned, beaten, and slandered in every way."[2] The three named individuals were well known leaders of the Hòa Hảo movement. In the spring of 1947, the Việt Minh demanded that Huỳnh Phú Sổ resolve a conflict between communist and sect forces, but the prophet was mysteriously attacked while traveling with Việt Minh cadres.[3] Dật Sĩ and Nguyễn Văn Hầu concluded sadly, "From 16 April 1947 until now, no one knows where the Master resides."[4]

This tale of communist violence resembled the northern anticommunist narrative in that it emphasized communist treachery against noncommunist nationalists. Interestingly, the volume did not appear to reflect any government influence. Nowhere in the book did the authors describe the Việt Minh as *Việt cộng,* and the authors may have published their account prior to the Denounce the Communists Campaign. The book differed from most of the anticommunist discourse in that it was one of the few works that described the resistance in the south. If some southerners harbored grievances against the Việt Minh similar to that of the émigrés, as the volumes suggests, why did the anticommunist discourse reflect only the northern experience? Put differently, why did southern intellectuals not produce more accounts like *The Miraculous Seven Mountains?* Understanding the absence of southern anticommunist voices requires examining the remaining elements of the triple enemy formula: antifeudalism and anticolonialism.

Ngô Đình Diệm appealed to anticolonialism and antifeudalism to justify his consolidation of power. From 1954 to 1956, he secured the withdrawal of French troops, overthrew Bảo Đại, and neutralized or displaced rival anticommunists. Throughout these maneuvers, he and his propagandists developed an anticolonial, antifeudal discourse that discredited his enemies,

---

[1] Dật Sĩ and Nguyễn Văn Hầu, *Thất sơn mầu nhiệm* (Saigon: Liên Chính, 1955), 175-292.
[2] "Thình lình bên V.M. bắn xả vào đám quần chúng không võ trang, bắt ba ông Mậu, Thiếp, Hoành và cả vạn tín đồ ở Cần Thơ và ở các tỉnh miền Tây Nam Bộ giam cầm, đánh đập và phao vu đủ điều": Dật Sĩ and Nguyễn Vă Hầu, *Thất Sơn Mầu Nhiệm,* 265.
[3] Dật Sĩ and Nguyễn Văn Hầu, *Thất Sơn Mầu Nhiệm,* 280-284.
[4] "Thế là từ ngày 16-4-47 đến nay không ai biết Đức Thầy lưu trú hà phương": Dật Sĩ and Nguyễn Văn Hầu, *Thất Sơn Mầu Nhiệm,* 284.

exaggerated the regime's anticolonial achievements, and marginalized sectarian nationalists within the official historical memory. The turning point was the Battle of Saigon in late April 1955, after which Ngô Đình Diệm gained the military advantage against the sects and began publicly describing his Vietnamese rivals as "feudalists." Three months later, the Ministry of Information launched the Denounce the Communist Campaign and formally promoted antifeudalism and anticolonialism as part of the triple enemy formula. Propagandists cited the opposition to feudalism and colonialism to retroactively justify initiatives that took place before the campaign. Their usage of the term "feudalist" lumped together disparate groups and individuals, including Bảo Đại, leaders of the SVN, and the three sects – the Cao Đài, Hòa Hảo, and Bình Xuyên. Also problematic was that the label did not differentiate between anticolonialists and collaborators. Thus, government officials claimed that all feudalists were the stooges of the French, an accusation that inadvertently erased southern nationalism from the official historical memory. The result of the propaganda campaign was mixed. It effectively silenced alternative political voices but inspired little enthusiasm from intellectuals. As a result, anticolonialism and antifeudalism remained a diffuse collection of disjointed accusations that never crystallized into a consistent historical narrative.

The chapter begins with an overview of the sects and the SVN regime. Prior to Ngô Đình Diệm's tenure, the sects and the leaders of the SVN administration were the most important anticommunist leaders in the south. Ngô Đình Diệm's premiership upended the existing political arrangement, and the second section of the chapter traces his struggle against Vietnamese and French adversaries. What propagandists later portrayed as a war against feudalism was in part a political contest between Ngô Đình Diệm and sectarian nationalists. A deeper examination of the antifeudal, anticolonial vocabulary suggests that the premier may have been influenced by the French and the communists in his adoption of antifeudalism. Then, the chapter surveys four discrete strands of antifeudal and anticolonial critique, including the accusation of "feudal-colonial" collusion, complaints about divisiveness, a diffuse critique concerning morality and patriotism, and the denunciation of sect leaders as medieval warlords. Lastly, the chapter ends by considering the reasons for the lack of popular support for antifeudal, anticolonial ideas.

Nationalists and Collaborators in Colonial Vietnam

It is necessary to understand the history of the so-called feudalists to appreciate the significance of Ngô Đình Diệm's actions in the 1950s. The feudalists can be divided into two broad groups, the sects and the leaders of the SVN. Both were anticommunist and predominantly southern, but the former was anticolonial and populist while the latter was elite and largely collaborationist. The "sects" *(giáo phái)* was the collective name for three different groups that emerged in southern Vietnam in the 1920s and 1930s, but the label was bit of a misnomer because it included only two religious groups, the Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo, while the third was a crime syndicate known as the Bình Xuyên. The sects did not manifest anticolonial tendencies at the outset, but, in the mid-1940s, they all joined the resistance and eventually emerged as the south's most prominent anticommunist nationalists. All subscribed to the ideal of an independent Vietnamese nation-state ruled by Vietnamese leaders. The sects, with their autonomous territories and private armies, were far stronger and more able to compete against the Việt Minh than the Đại Việt and other northern-based political parties. The Cao Đài was based in Tây Ninh, northwest of Saigon, the Hòa Hảo ruled much of the Mekong delta, and the Bình Xuyên controlled the Saigon-Chợ Lớn area and the river route from Saigon to Vũng Tàu. But despite their importance, their contribution to Vietnamese nationalism remains poorly understood

because most scholarly studies of the anticolonial movement have ignored them in favor of political parties and secular intellectuals.[5] Nonetheless, the existing research demonstrates that the sects formed a southern strand of nationalism that reflected the region's distinctive cultural and political patterns.

In particular, the evidence suggests that the Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo belonged to a southern tradition of combining religion with anticolonial politics. The Hòa Hảo, the smaller and younger of the two, was a reformed Buddhist sect founded in 1939 by Huỳnh Phú Sổ. Hòa Hảo Buddhism was based on a local strand of Buddhist sectarianism that had opposed French rule since the mid-19th century. The Bửu Sơn Kỳ Hương, meaning "Strange Fragrance from the Precious Mountain,"[6] was a millenarian Buddhist tradition from the Mekong delta and encompassed a variety of sects, many of which revolted against the French from the 1860s to the 1890s and in the 1910s.[7] Huỳnh Phú Sổ proved himself to be an heir to this anticolonial heritage in the 1940s, when he joined the nationalist movement.

The roots of the Cao Đài[8] religion were more eclectic. Founded in 1926, the syncretic faith blended Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Catholicism, but scholars have suggested that its most direct precursors were anticolonial sects and secret societies, including the spiritist Minh Sư sect,[9] a Chinese secret society known as the Thiên Địa Hội (Heaven and Earth Society),[10] and the Bửu Sơn Kỳ Hương.[11] All of these groups participated in the anticolonial

---

[5] For example, none of the following studies discuss the sects as a major political and intellectual force, and some do not mention the sects at all: Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism;* Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial,* 51, 89-90, 105, 303-306, 415; Tai, *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution,* 189-190, 192, 262; Nghiêm Xuân Hồng, *Lịch trình diễn tiến của phong trào quốc gia Việt Nam.*

[6] This translation is Tai's. See Tai, *Millenarianism and Peasant Politics,* 3.

[7] Tai, *Millenarianism and Peasant Politics,* 44-59.

[8] The religion was popularly known as the Cao Đài, meaning "high platform," but its official name was "The Great Way of the Third Era of Salvation." The translation is Tai's. See Tai, *Peasant Politics and Millenarianism,* 84.

[9] The Minh Sư was one of many spiritist sects known collectively as the Minh sects. According to Victor Oliver, the Minh Sư sect was a Ming loyalist organization brought into Vietnam by Chinese migrants, but the other Minh sects were established in southern Vietnam in the early 20th century. The lineage from the Minh sects to the Cao Đài religion was so direct that some Minh sects suffered schisms or disappeared as independent organizations because a substantial portion of their membership converted to the Cao Đài faith. A significant number of high ranking Cao Đài dignitaries began their religious careers as masters in the Minh sects and borrowed the liturgy, divination, and practices of mediumship from the Minh sects for use in the new religion. For more on the characteristics of the Minh sects, see Victor Oliver, *Caodai Spiritism: A Study of Religion in Vietnamese Society* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 28. For the relationship between the Minh sects and the Cao Đài, see Jérémy Jammes, "Divination and Politics in Southern Vietnam: Roots of Caodaism," *Social Compass* 57, no. 3 (2010): 357-371, reference to 359-362; Werner, *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism,* 8-9, 20-21; Oliver, *Caodai Spiritism,* 27-29; R.B. Smith, "An Introduction to Caodaism I: Origins and Early History," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 33, no. 2 (1970): 335-349, reference to 336-340, 348-349; R.B. Smith, "An Introduction to Caodaism II: Beliefs and Organization," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 33, no. 3 (1970): 573-589, reference to 588-589; Đồng Tân, *Tìm hiểu đạo Cao Đài* (St. Albans East, Australia: Cao Hiên, 1997), 119-120.

[10] Chinese migrants introduced the Heaven and Earth Society into Vietnam in the late 18th century, but its membership became increasingly Vietnamese from the 1870s onwards. In China, the motto of the society was an expression of Ming loyalism: "Phản Thanh phục Minh," or "Overthrow the Qing and restore the Ming," meaning the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the restoration of the Ming. In Vietnam, this slogan was gradually replaced by the anticolonial rallying call, "Phản Pháp phục Nam," or "Overthrow the French and restore Vietnam." As the secret society declined in the 1920s, many of its leaders joined the Cao Đài. Perhaps the most notable convert was the gang leader Nguyễn Văn Tước, known as Tư Mật, a section leader of the Heaven and Earth Society who later attained the rank of bishop *(giáo sư)* in the Cao Đài movement. Jayne Werner speculates that leaders of secret societies likely brought their followers with them when they converted. Interestingly, the French would later accuse the Cao Đài of being a secret society that cloaked its anticolonialism under the guise of religion. For more on the character of the

struggles of the early 20th century, especially the Gilbert Chiêu Affair of 1908-1909[12] and the Phan Xích Long rebellions of 1913 and 1916.[13] The exact relationship between the Cao Đài religion and its precursors is unclear, but it appears that the new faith absorbed not only the liturgy and membership but also the politics of the older traditions.[14] The three precursors favored monarchism, and the Minh Sư and the secret society pledged support for Prince Cường Để, a royalist leader of the anticolonial movement exiled in Japan.[15] Continuing this tendency, the main Cao Đài branch in Tây Ninh would also support Cường Để a few decades later. Set within this cultural and historical context, the Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo were the foremost leaders of southern anticolonialism along with the Việt Minh.

Heaven and Earth Society, see Oliver, *Caodai Spiritism,* 26-27; Tai, *Millenarianism and Peasant Politics,* 55, 67-79; Werner, *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism,* 12. For more on the relationship between the secret society and the Cao Đài, see Werner, *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism,* 27-28; Tai, *Millenarianism and Peasant Politics,* 72, 78; Sergei Blagov, *Caodaism: Vietnamese Traditionalism and its Leap into Modernity* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2001), 67. For French interpretations of the Cao Đài as a secret society, see Oliver, *Caodai Spiritism,* 27.

[11] Jérémy Jammes and Hue-Tam Ho Tai note that the Bửu Sơn Kỳ Hương tradition also influenced the Cao Đài, but the influence was not as direct as for Hòa Hảo Buddhism. See Jérémy Jammes, "Le Saint-Siège Caodaïste de Tây Ninh et le médium Phạm Công Tắc (1890-1959): Millénarisme, prosélytisme et oracles politiques en Cochinchine," *Outre-Mers: Revue d'Histoire* 93, no. 352-353 (2006): 209-248, reference to 211-214; Tai, *Millenarianism and Peasant Politics,* 85-88.

[12] The French dubbed the plot the Gilbert Chiêu Affair after Gilbert Trần Chánh Chiêu, a wealthy Catholic landowner and the main southern agent of the Việt Nam Duy Tân Hội (Association for the Modernization of Vietnam), Phan Bội Châu and Prince Cường Để's anticolonial organization. The most active anticolonial force at the time, the association promoted the violent overthrow of French colonialism and the restoration of the Vietnamese monarchy under Cường Để. It also encouraged young Vietnamese to study in Japan, a movement known as the Đông Du (Travel East). For more on the Gilbert Chiêu Affair, see Trần Mỹ-Vân, *A Vietnamese Royal Exile in Japan,* 55; Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism,* 136-145; Philippe Peycam, *The Birth of Vietnamese Political Journalism: Saigon, 1916-1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 55-58. For more on the involvement of the Minh Sư in the Gilbert Chiêu Affair, see Tai, *Millenarianism and Peasant Politics,* 84. For more on the Association for the Modernization of Vietnam, see Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism,* 120-155.

[13] For the participation of the Minh Sư in the Phan Xích Long rebellions, see Tai, *Millenarianism and Peasant Politics,* 84, 179-180. For the participation of the Heaven and Earth Society, see Tai, *Millenarianism and Peasant Politics,* 72-74; Werner, *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism,* 12. For the participation of the Bửu Sơn Kỳ Hương sects, see Tai, *Millenarianism and Peasant Politics,* 72-74.

[14] For a fuller discussion of the various religious and political influences on the Cao Đài, see Oliver, *Caodai Spiritism,* 25-32; Werner, *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism,* 4-14.

[15] The rebel leader Phan Xích Long claimed descent from former emperor Hàm Nghi and attracted followers from the various religious traditions through a mixture of royal pretensions, mysticism, and prophecies. In the 1910s, the Minh Sư, apparently the most politically active of the Minh sects, organized on the behalf of Prince Cường Để, though little is known about their involvement. The prince was the figurehead of several successive anticolonial movements established by Phan Bội Châu. More is known about the support of the Heaven and Earth Society for Cường Để and Phan Bội Châu. The fraternal order was clearly monarchist, and it fused with the southern chapters of Cường Để and Phan Bội Châu's Việt Nam Quang Phục Hội (Society for the Restoration of Vietnam, or Society for the Recovery of Vietnam) in the 1910s. In fact, members of the secret society swore eternal loyalty to Cường Để, even though the official program of the Restoration League called for the establishment of a republic. Interestingly, there was a dissident faction within the league led primarily by southerners who favored monarchism. The relationship between the secret society and the dissident faction is unknown, but the convergence of southern monarchist tendencies suggests a regional dimension in the support of royalism. For more on the Phan Xích Long rebellions, see Tai, *Millenarianism and Peasant Politics,* 70. For the involvement of the Minh Sư in Cường Để's movement, see Werner, *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism,* 13. For more on the support of the Heaven and Earth Society for Cường Để, see Werner, *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism,* 12; Blagov, *Caodaism,* 67. For monarchist tendencies within the Restoration League, see Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism,* 216-217.

The two sects emerged as the only nationalists capable of competing with the communists for the loyalty of the masses, especially lower class southerners. The Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo were, respectively, the largest and second largest mass movement in modern Vietnamese history. In the mid-1950s, the former claimed between 1.5 to 2 million adherents,[16] the latter reached up to 800,000,[17] and their combined membership represented one-third of the population below the 17th parallel.[18] The development of the religious sects into anticommunist nationalists resembled the history of the northern anticommunists with its failed alliances and violent conflicts. The Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo first entered politics as monarchist nationalists aligned with Japan.[19] Just prior to or during the Japanese Occupation (1940-1945), they endorsed Cường Để's monarchical movement, the Việt Nam Phục Quốc Đồng Minh Hội (League for the Restoration of Vietnam, or Phục Quốc).[20] They also formed private armies, either in anticipation of the prince's return or to protect their members.[21] But the Japanese surrender in 1945 spelled the demise of pro-Japanese politics, and the sects formed a broad nationalist alliance with the Việt Minh and other southern groups to resist the French. The shift to anticommunism came in 1947. The Việt Minh arrested Huỳnh Phú Sổ, and, after he died under their custody, the outraged Hòa Hảo declared war on the communists. A second consequence of the prophet's death was the fragmentation of the Hòa Hảo armed forces into four independent factions, each under the leadership of a different general: Trần Văn Soái, known as Năm Lửa (Fiery Five); Nguyễn Giác Ngộ; Lâm Thành Nguyên; and Lê Quang Vinh, known as Ba Cụt (Stumpy Third Finger). All of the factions eventually sided with the French.

---

[16] A.M. Savani, *Visage et images du Sud Viet-Nam* (Saigon: Imprimerie Française d'Outre-mer, 1955), 73; "National Intelligence Estimate," 28 Nov 1954, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 13, no. 2, *Indochina*, by the US Department of State (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1985), 286-2301, citation on 2289; Scigliano, *South Vietnam*, 18; Trần Mỹ-Vân, *Vietnam's Caodaism, Independence, and Peace: The Life and Work of Pham Cong Tac, 1890-1959*, PROSEA Research Paper 38 (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 2000), 12.

[17] Pascal Bourdeaux, "Approches statistiques de la communauté du bouddhisme Hòa Hảo (1939-1954)," in *Naissance d'un État-Parti: Le Viêt Nam depuis 1945* [The Birth of a Party-State: Vietnam Since 1945], ed. Christopher Goscha and Benoit de Tréglodé (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2004), 277-304, citation from 302.

[18] Werner claims that combined forces of the Hòa Hảo and Cao Đài controlled up to half of the population of southern Vietnam during the First Indochina War, but the standard estimate for the proportion of the population controlled by all three sects in combination is no more than one third of the population in 1954. See Jayne Werner, "Vietnamese Communism and Religious Sectarianism," in *Vietnamese Communism in Comparative Perspective*, ed. William S. Turley (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1980), 107-127, reference to 108; Chapman, "Debating the Will of Heaven," 295.

[19] Japanese assistance to the Cao Đài and the Hòa Hảo was fairly limited. The Japanese protected certain nationalist leaders from French security forces and, to a lesser extent, shielded the sects from persecution by colonial authorities. For more on Japanese relations with Vietnamese nationalists, see Trần Mỹ-Vân, "Japan and Vietnam's Caodaists," 179-193; Trần Mỹ-Vân, "Beneath the Japanese Umbrella"; Kiyoko Kurusu Nitz, "'Independence Without Nationalists': The Japanese and Vietnamese Nationalism During the Japanese Period, 1940-1945," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 15, no. 1 (1984): 108-132; Trương Bửu Lâm, "Japan and the Disruption of the Vietnamese Nationalist Movement," in *Aspects of Vietnamese History*, ed. Walter Vella (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1973) 237-270.

[20] Cường Để launched the League for the Restoration of Vietnam in the spring of 1939, but the Tây Ninh branch of the Cao Đài actually began organizing on the behalf of Cường Để as early as September 1938. The Cao Đài did not formally join the league until 1943. See Werner, *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism*, 39; Trần Mỹ-Vân, *A Vietnamese Royal Exile*, 149, 185.

[21] Trần Mỹ-Vân, "Under the Japanese Umbrella," 80; Trần Mỹ-Vân, "Japan and Vietnam's Caodaists," 166; Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ Tòa Thánh Tây Ninh, *Hồi ký Trần Quang Vinh và lịch sử quân đội Cao Đài* (Washington D.C.: Thánh thất vùng Hoa Thịnh Đốn, 1996), 22. The latter was originally published as Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ Tòa Thánh Tây Ninh, *Hồi ký của Phối sư Thượng Vinh Thanh, Trần Quang Vinh, 1897-1975* (Tây Ninh: Tòa Thánh Tây Ninh, 1972). See Trần Mỹ-Vân, "Japan and Vietnam's Caodaists," 184 n18.

In the Cao Đài camp, mounting tensions between the Tây Ninh branch and the communists also encouraged the Cao Đài to abandon the alliance. In 1947, Trần Quang Vinh, then head of the Cao Đài army, decided to switch sides after being arrested by the Việt Minh and the French in succession. After rejecting the Việt Minh, the Hòa Hảo and Cao Đài turned their weapons against the communists, professed loyalty to the SVN, and cooperated with the French. In return, the French recognized them as supplementary forces and supplied them with subsidies to fight the communists. Yet the religious sects never completely disavowed anticolonialism, contrary to later accusations that the feudalists became mercenaries for the French. Ba Cụt's forces returned to the resistance several times after rallying,[22] and some Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo units assassinated the French liaison officers assigned to them.[23] The rallying even provoked a splinter group to leave the Cao Đài ranks. In 1951, the rogue general Trình Minh Thế led his men back to into the maquis and launched his own resistance organization, the Quân Đội Quốc Gia Liên Minh (Army of the National Alliance, or Liên Minh). The decision of the Cao Đài leadership to rally to the French had disappointed Trình Minh Thế, and he continued to fight both the French and the Việt Minh.

The smallest of the three sects, the Bình Xuyên, followed a similar trajectory towards nationalism and anticommunism. The gang first emerged in the 1920s as group of river pirates around the margins of the Saigon-Chợ Lớn area.[24] Composed mostly of poor men from Chợ Lớn,[25] the crime syndicate enjoyed a certain romantic mystique as heroic bandits, and many observers compared them favorably to the chivalrous band of outlaws that were the main protagonists in the *Water Margin,* a classical Chinese novel popular in Vietnam.[26] Some time prior to the August Revolution, the gang's leader, Dương Văn Dương, decided to join the nationalist movement and allied with the Việt Minh to fight the French.[27] Several Bình Xuyên

[22] Lê Quang Vinh initially refused to rally in 1947 and led his followers back into the resistance. He eventually came to an agreement with the French in January 1948, but he abandoned and then returned to the alliance at least three times in the next five years. See Lê Văn Dương, *Quân lực Việt Nam Cộng hòa trong giai đoạn hình thành, 1946-1955* [hereafter, *Quân lực VNCH]* (Saigon: Bộ Tổng tham mưu, 1972), 433.

[23] Bernard Fall, "The Political-Religious Sects of Viet-Nam," *Pacific Affairs* 28, no. 3 (Sep 1955): 235-253, reference to 241; Frisco Short, "The Influence of Religious/Political/Military Growth on National Politics: A Case Study, the Phat Gia Hoa Hao, Republic of Vietnam" (unpublished manuscriBook, 1974), accessed 4 Oct 2012, http://pghh-research.tripod.com/chap3.html.

[24] Alfred McCoy with Cathleen Read and Leonard Adams, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 111.

[25] McCoy, *Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia,* 111.

[26] Comparisons between the Bình Xuyên and the heroes of the *Water Margin* date back to the 1930s. Liêm Anh quotes an unnamed journalist from 1932 who made such a comparison. By the RVN period, the comparison to the *Water Margin* had become a cliché among Vietnamese and foreign observers. Aspects of the Bình Xuyên bolstered this reputation, including its honor code, blood oaths, and custom of sheltering fugitives, including anticolonial activists. For the comparisons, see Liêm Anh, *Bảy Viễn: Một đời ngang dọc* (West Germany: Nguồn Việt, [1986?]), 9, 159; A.M. Savani, *Notes sur les Binh Xuyen* (Saigon: 1954), 4; Trần Kim Trúc, *Tôi giết Nguyễn Bình: hồi ký Tham mưu trưởng Trung đoàn 25 Bình Xuyên* (Saigon: Đồng Nai, 1972), 43, 127; Lê Văn Dương, *Quân lực VNCH,* 409. For more on its honor code, see Liêm Anh, *Bảy Viễn,* 160. For blood oaths, see Savani, *Notes sur les Binh-Xuyen,* 4. For more on the gang's reception of fugitives, see Savani, *Notes sur les Binh-Xuyen,* 4; Liêm Anh, *Bảy Viễn,* 161; Lucien Bodard, *The Quicksand War: Prelude to Vietnam,* trans. Patrick O'Brian (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), 116.

[27] Little is known about the political orientation of the gang prior to 1945, but some its chieftains joined Cường Để's Phục Quốc and had contacts with the Japanese. For more on the politics of the Bình Xuyên prior to the alliance with the Việt Minh, see Savani, *Notes sur les Binh-Xuyen,* 9-10; Liêm Anh, *Bảy Viễn,* 240, 242. For the alliance between Dương Văn Dương and the Việt Minh, see McCoy, *Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia,* 112-113; Savani, *Notes sur le Binh Xuyen,* 13-14.

chieftains publicly renounced their criminal past and swore to fight for independence.[28] But as the fighting wore on, Dương Văn Dương and his successor, Lê Văn Viễn, clashed with the Việt Minh over communist attempts to intervene in the gang's internal affairs.[29] The alliance broke down in 1948 when Lê Văn Viễn, better known as Bảy Viễn (Viễn the Seventh), broke with the communists. He defected to the French after narrowly escaping a Việt Minh attempt on his life. After some negotiation, the French agreed to supply Bảy Viễn with regular subsidies in return for clearing the Saigon-Chợ Lớn area of Việt Minh agents. From then on, the gang became reliable allies for their former enemy and even benefited from their close relations with Franco-Vietnamese authorities. In 1950, Bảy Viễn convinced Bảo Đại to grant him the management of the lucrative Grand Monde casino. Four years later, the French awarded the control of the police to the Bình Xuyên; in exchange, the gang continued to flush out communist agents from the city.

The wealthy collaborators that ruled the SVN, or what might be termed the SVN establishment, were a stark contrast to the sects. Bảo Đại and French High Commissioner Léon Pignon signed the Élysée Accords in 1949 creating the State of Vietnam as an independent state within the French Union. The French envisioned the SVN as a Vietnamese puppet state that could undermine the popularity of the Việt Minh,[30] whereas many anticommunist nationalists urged Bảo Đại to negotiate for a genuinely independent government.[31] When it became clear that Paris allowed the SVN only limited autonomy and placed economic and diplomatic affairs under French supervision, many nationalists refused to participate in the new government except for the sects and some Đại Việt elements.[32] The highest military and civilian leadership of the new government drew from a different group altogether: wealthy Francophile men from southern Vietnam who supported the colonial regime. These men were anticommunist, but none had fought in the resistance, and most had a long history of collaborating with the colonial government.[33] Bảo Đại's first appointee to the premiership was Nguyễn Văn Xuân, a French citizen who had served in the French military, married a French woman, and was active in a

[28] For Lê Văn Viễn's statement, see Liêm Anh, *Bảy Viễn,* 338-339, 363, 377. For Phan Tất Đạt's statement, see Savani, *Notes sur les Binh-Xuyen,* 47.

[29] According to various accounts, disagreements between Dương Văn Dương and the Việt Minh centered on Nguyễn Bình's punishment of the Dương Văn Dương's close followers and on Nguyễn Bình's attempt to place his own political cadres into the Bình Xuyên organization. Nguyễn Bình was the southern commander of the Việt Minh. Dương Văn Dương planned to overthrow Nguyễn Bình but died in battle fighting the French on 16 February 1946. Trần Kim Trúc, a former soldier who fought with the Bình Xuyên, has suggested that Nguyễn Bình was behind the death of Dương Văn Dương. Personal differences aside, Bình Xuyên leaders also worried that the Việt Minh would eliminate the Bình Xuyên just as it had the Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo. For more on the conflict between Dương Văn Dương and Nguyễn Bình, see Savani, *Notes sur les Binh-Xuyen,* 34-36; McCoy, *Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia,* 115; Liêm Anh, *Bảy Viễn,* 359-362; Trần Kim Trúc, *Tôi giết Nguyễn Bình,* 106. For more on Bình Xuyên fears of elimination by the Việt Minh, see Savani, *Notes sur les Binh-Xuyen,* 70. For more on disagreements between the Việt Minh and Bảy Viễn, see Donald Lancaster, *The Emancipation of French Indochina* (New York: Oxford University Press,1961), 138.

[30] Hammer, *Struggle for Indochina,* 217.

[31] Miller, "Vision, Power, and Agency," 439

[32] For difficulties that the SVN had in attracting nationalist participation, see Hammer, *Struggle for Indochina,* 245, 273, 275-277.

[33] The two major exceptions were Nguyễn Phan Long and Bửu Lộc. Neither had served in the Autonomous Republic of Cochinchina. Nguyễn Phan Long, arguably the most reformist of the SVN's prime ministers, was a prominent southern journalist, a member of the Constitutionalist Party, and a former member of the Colonial Council of Cochinchina, but he apparently did not become a naturalized French citizen. Bửu Lộc, Ngô Đình Diệm's immediate predecessor, was a cousin of Bảo Đại from the central region and a diplomat. See Hammer, *Struggle for Indochina,* 216, 274; Peycam, *Birth of Vietnamese Journalism,* 270 n6.

French-sponsored separatist movement for southern Vietnam.[34] Nguyễn Văn Tâm, the prime minister from June 1952 to December 1953, was also a French citizen and a southern separatist.[35] His son, Nguyễn Văn Hinh, served as the Chief of Staff of the Vietnamese National Army (VNA) and was an officer in the French air force. He, too, was a French citizen married to a French wife.[36] Though not a southerner, Bảo Đại shared the elite background and Francophile outlook of the SVN establishment. Thus, Ngô Đình Diệm was largely justified when he later accused the "feudal leaders" of the SVN of being collaborationist, though the SVN establishment hardly belonged in the same category as the more populist, anticolonial sects.

Beginning in the mid-1940s and after, anticommunists repeatedly tried to form a unified nationalist front to oppose communism, but intense rivalry undermined efforts at collaboration. Virtually every anticommunist faction tried their hand at coalition-building between 1946 and 1954, including the Hòa Hảo, Cao Đài, Bình Xuyên, VNQDĐ, Đồng Minh Hội, the dissident Cao Đài Liên Minh, and various independent nationalists.[37] The resulting alliances were weak and short-lived, but they nevertheless represented a vision of Vietnam that was nationalist, anticommunist, and independent of France, an ideal that foreshadowed the establishment of the future RVN and coincided with the American search for a "third force." Among the many contenders was Ngô Đình Diệm, an independent nationalist with no mass following. His fame derived primarily from his resignation from the mandarinate in the 1930s after the French refused to implement the nationalist reforms he proposed.[38] In 1947, the future premier collaborated with Đại Việt politician Nguyễn Tôn Hoàn to form the Việt Nam Quốc Gia Liên

---

[34] Ngo Ngoc Trung, "Nguyen Van Xuan," in *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War: A Political, Social, and Military History,* 2nd ed., ed. Spencer Tucker (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 843-844.
[35] Hammer, *Struggle for Indochina,* 281.
[36] Kathryn C. Statler, *Replacing France: The Origins of American Intervention in Vietnam* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 128; Ngo Ngoc Trung, "Nguyen Van Hinh," in *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War: A Political, Social, and Military History,* 2nd ed., ed. Spencer Tucker (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 839.
[37] Attempts at a united nationalist, anticommunist front included a succession of organizations sponsored by various groups. In fall 1946, Huỳnh Phú Sổ tried to unite all noncommunist nationalists with a new political party, the Việt Nam Dân Chủ Xã Hội Đảng (Democratic Socialist Party of Vietnam, or Dân Xã). The Hòa Hảo entered into a formal alliance with the Cao Đài and pursued negotiations with the Bình Xuyên, but the latter initiative collapsed due to the death of the prophet. Meanwhile, in early 1947, the Đồng Minh Hội and VNQDĐ formed the Mặt Trận Thống nhất Quốc Gia (National Union Front) in southern China, which the Hòa Hảo and Cao Đài soon joined. Even Lê Văn Viễn flirted with the idea of forming a "third force," and he later joined Phạm Công Tắc and Huỳnh Phú Sổ's father, the new religious leader of the Hòa Hảo, in a front sponsored by independent nationalist Trần Văn Ân in 1949, known as Việt Nam Độc Lập Dân Chúng Liên Đoàn or Việt Nam Dân Chúng Liên Đoàn (Vietnamese People's League). The initiative for a third force passed to the Cao Đài in the early 1950s, and Phạm Công Tắc traveled to the north to meet with the Đại Việt in hopes of forming a new coalition. Meanwhile, dissident Cao Đài general Trình Minh Thế formed the Mặt Trận Quốc Gia Kháng Chiến (National Resistance Front) in 1951. For more on the Dân Xã and negotiations between the Hòa Hảo and the other sects, see Trần Mỹ-Vân, "Under the Japanese Umbrella," 90, 100; Savani, *Visage et Images,* 89; Savani, *Notes sur les Binh Xuyen,* 78-79; Nguyễn Long Thành Nam, *Phật giáo Hòa Hảo trong dòng lịch sử dân tộc* [hereafter, *PGHH trong dòng lịch sử dân tộc]* (Santa Fe Springs, Calif.: Đuốc Từ bi, 1991), 391; Werner, "Vietnamese Communism and Religious Sectarianism," 125; Lê Văn Dương, *Quân lực VNCH,* 432; A.M. Savani, *Notes sur la secte PGHH* (Saigon: 1951), 51; Sergei Blagov, *Honest Mistakes: The Life and Death of Trình Minh Thế, 1922-1955: South Vietnam's Alternative Leader* (Huntington, N.Y.: Nova Science Publishers, 2001), 22; Tai, *Millenarianism and Peasant Politics,* 163. For more on the National Union Front, see Hammer, *Struggle for Indochina,* 210-212; Bernard Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams: A Political and Military Analysis,* 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 210. For more on the Vietnamese People's League, see Savani, *Notes sur les Binh-Xuyen,* 149, 152. For Phạm Công Tắc's travels to the north, see A.M. Savani, *Notes sur le Caodaisme* (Saigon: 1954), 130.
[38] For an account of Ngô Đình Diệm's political career prior to 1954, see Miller, "Vision, Power and Agency," 422.

Hiệp (Vietnam National Rally) in support of a new, noncommunist political force headed by Bảo Đại, but the front failed just as its many predecessors.[39]

Ngô Đình Diệm left Vietnam in 1950 due to threats on his life but continued to be active in anticommunist politics. He cultivated contacts among prominent Americans while his younger brother, Ngô Đình Nhu, remained in Vietnam and began organizing a clandestine political party to support his brother's political movement.[40] This group would later be known as the Cần Lao. In 1953, Ngô Đình Nhu, Nguyễn Tôn Hoàn, and Cao Đài Pope Phạm Công Tắc convened a Unity Congress (Đại Hội Đoàn Kết) in Chợ Lớn. The Congress captured the growing nationalist frustration with Bảo Đại's gradualist policies when it demanded unconditional independence, an end to corruption, and other reforms.[41] More importantly, the Congress enhanced the standing of the Ngô brothers' among anticommunist nationalists and eroded political support for Bảo Đại. The Chief of State gave in to nationalist demands by replacing Nguyễn Văn Tâm with a caretaker government, but nationalist politicians continued to pressure him to take more decisive measures.[42] In October 1953, the former emperor met with Ngô Đình Diệm to discuss his possible candidacy for the premiership.[43] In May of the following year, the Chief of State appointed Ngô Đình Diệm the new prime minister of the SVN.

Saigon in Crisis

The selection of Ngô Đình Diệm marked a clear departure from the Francophile orientation of the regime. His fierce anticolonialism aligned him with anticommunist nationalists rather than the SVN establishment, and the power of the premiership combined with his experience in organizing anticommunist coalitions meant that he was far better positioned to form an enduring united front than those who had tried before.[44] But the premier sidelined other nationalists, rejected coalition-building, and filled his administration with his own entourage. Throughout his first two years in power, he gradually coopted, neutralized, or removed the sects and the SVN establishment. The premier initially split the sects into allies and opponents by isolating hardliners and accommodating moderates. Beginning with the Battle of Saigon, he shifted to a more military approach and ordered the VNA to attack the Bình Xuyên and recalcitrant Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo forces. The plebiscite against Bảo Đại, the dissolution of loyalist sect organizations, and the withdrawal of the French forces completed his consolidation of power. The Americans played a discreet but important role in these maneuvers by withholding support from his rivals and transferring American aid from the French to Ngô Đình Diệm's government. By the end of 1956, the president and his loyal supporters had displaced all of the major anticommunist groups that dominated late colonial southern Vietnam. It was during these formative years that Ngô Đình Diệm laid the foundation for antifeudalism and anticolonialism. He accused his opponents of colluding with one another and denounced their alleged selfishness, divisiveness, moral depravity, greed, and cruelty. He and his sect allies also introduced the triple

[39] Miller, "Vision, Power, and Agency," 438-439.
[40] Miller, "Vision, Power, and Agency," 450.
[41] Hammer, *Struggle for Indochina,* 305; Miller, "Vision, Power, and Agency," 452-453; Chapman, "Debating the Will of Heaven," 62-64; Savani, *Notes sur les Binh-Xuyen,* 158. It should be noted that the genesis of the Unity Congress is unclear. Alternative accounts highlight the roles of Ngô Đình Nhu or Phạm Công Tắc as the driving force behind the congress.
[42] Miller, "Vision, Power, and Agency," 454.
[43] Miller, "Vision, Power, and Agency," 454.
[44] Jessica Chapman points out this missed opportunity to create a broad coalition in Chapman, "Debating the Will of Heaven," 91-92.

enemy formula to describe the perceived coordination between the regime's many enemies. These claims targeted specific factions at particular junctures, but later propagandists indiscriminately applied them to all feudalists and colonialists as a whole.

The premier began his tenure at a distinct military disadvantage. The French had at their disposal the French Expeditionary Corps (FEC), a force of over 270,000 men.[45] The Geneva Agreement allowed the FEC to remain until 1956,[46] and the French prime minister Pierre Mendès France claimed that its presence was necessary to preserve order,[47] but many French officials plotted against the premier. More broadly, the continuing presence of French soldiers belied the claim that the SVN was an independent country. Another potential threat came from the sect armies. American intelligence estimated that Cao Đài forces numbered around 10,000 soldiers, including 4,000 under the leadership of Trình Minh Thế, whereas the French placed the total number around 30,000.[48] Slightly smaller were the Hòa Hảo armies, estimated at 8,000 to 15,000 men divided among the various generals.[49] In Saigon, the Bình Xuyên forces commanded between 2,000 and 2,600 soldiers.[50] In contrast to these well-armed rivals, Ngô Đình Diệm could not even assume the loyalty of his own army, the Vietnamese National Army. At the time, the VNA had an estimated strength of 170,000 regulars and 10,000 auxiliaries, but Chief of Staff Nguyễn Văn Hinh openly flouted Ngô Đình Diệm's authority.[51]

The premier provoked opposition when he announced his first cabinet on 7 July 1954. Instead of a broad-based anticommunist coalition, the new government was dominated by the premier's family and friends and largely excluded sect leaders and the SVN establishment. Thus, loyalty to Ngô Đình Diệm distinguished the cabinet ministers more than shared ideology. But his rivals quickly began conspiring to replace him, often with tacit approval from French officials.[52]

---

[45] Statler, *Replacing France,* 185.
[46] Statler, *Replacing France,* 185.
[47] Miller, "Grand Designs," 113; Statler, *Replacing France,* 187.
[48] Estimates of the sects' troop levels vary greatly. For contemporary French and American estimates, see "National Intelligence Estimate," *FRUS, 1952-1954, Indochina,* 2293; Savani, *Notes sur le Caodaisme,* 215; Dana Schmidt, "Collins' Advice Awaited," *New York Times* (21 Apr 1955): 8.
[49] American intelligence provided the much lower figure of 8000 Hòa Hảo soldiers, French sources offered a middle-of-the-road estimate of 12,500, and contemporary American observers suggested the range of 10,000 to 15,000. See "National Intelligence Estimate," *FRUS, 1952-1954, Indochina,* 2293; Savani, *Visages et images du Sud-Viêtnam,* 96; Dana Schmidt, "Collins' Advice Awaited," *New York Times* (21 Apr 1955): 8.
[50] American intelligence estimated that the Bình Xuyên numbered 2,600 soliders, in addition to a few thousand policemen. In contrast, Lê Văn Dương offers the much lower figure of 2000 Bình Xuyên soldiers, and contemporary American newspaper accounts estimated the range of 2,000 to 2,500. See "National Intelligence Estimate," *FRUS, 1952-1954, Indochina,* 2293; Lê Văn Dương, *Quân lực VNCH,* 410; Dana Schmidt, "Collins' Advice Awaited," *New York Times* (21 Apr 1955): 8.
[51] "National Intelligence Estimate," *FRUS, 1952-1954, Indochina,* 2291.
[52] The French made it clear to the Americans that they preferred their own candidates to Ngô Đình Diệm. The French candidates included Trần Văn Hữu, Nguyễn Văn Xuân, and Nguyễn Văn Tâm, all of whom were former prime ministers of the SVN. But despite French misgivings concerning Ngô Đình Diệm, it was not the official French policy to replace the premier, though a number of French officials and military officers actively encouraged Ngô Đình Diệm's rivals to band against him. Perhaps the clearest example of French meddling was the mission of Jacques Raphael-Leygues, who tried to mobilize support against Ngô Đình Diệm in August 1954. Raphael-Leygues was in contact with Bửu Hội, Phạm Công Tắc, Trần Văn Soái, and Nguyễn Văn Hinh. For more on the Raphael-Leygues mission, see Miller, "Grand Designs," 132; Chapman, "Debating the Will of Heaven," 96-97. For French-backed candidates for the premiership, see "Telegram form Donald Heath to Department of State," 27 Aug 1954, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Indochina,* 1989; "Telegram from US Ambassador to France Dillon to Department of State," 30 Aug 1954, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Indochina,* 1997; "Memorandum of conversation between by MacArthur," 6 Sep 1954, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Indochina,* 2008.

The first serious crisis emerged in late August, when Nguyễn Văn Hinh publicly boasted that he intended to overthrow the premier and refused to give up his command when the Ngô Đình Diệm dismissed him. The premier diffused the situation by undermining the general's support among the sects. He reshuffled the government to offer several portfolios each to the Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo and convinced Hòa Hảo general Trần Văn Soái and Cao Đài general Nguyễn Thành Phương to join the government as cabinet ministers.[53] American ambassador Donald Heath also helped stave off the coup when he persuaded Bảo Đại not to intervene in Nguyễn Văn Hinh's favor and warned the general that the US would cut off aid in the event of a successful coup.[54] But it was Bảo Đại who finally resolved the crisis in mid-fall 1954 when he recalled the general to France.[55] At the peak of the crisis, Ngô Đình Diệm publicly criticized Nguyễn Văn Hinh for his selfish ambition, which would become one of the major themes of the antifeudal discourse. In a press conference on 19 September, the premier complained, "Lieutenant General [Hinh] pretends to be ignorant of my instructions, does not respect the authority of the government, and only follows his own ambition and acts like a rebel."[56] Ngô Đình Diệm emphatically contrasted the selfishness of personal ambition with the common good of the country: "Actions that place personal ambition above the common good are not acceptable."[57] The shifting alliances between Vietnamese factions and the French during the Hinh crisis constituted a new political pattern. This pattern would dominate Saigon politics for the next two years and give rise to charges of feudal and colonial collusion.

Ngô Đình Diệm then turned his attention to disarming the sects. Throughout the winter of 1955, he tried to win the support of sect generals with generous payments and promises to integrate their armies into the VNA. Cash for these payments came from the CIA, though the premier relied primarily on Ngô Đình Nhu and other Vietnamese associates to negotiate with the sects.[58] The most prominent American participant, Edward Lansdale, head of the CIA's Saigon Military Mission, visited Trình Minh Thế as a gesture of good faith on the behalf of Ngô Đình Diệm but did not participate in actual negotiations.[59] Subsequent changes in American and French policy strengthened Ngô Đình Diệm's bargaining position considerably. After the end of the First Indochina War, the US reduced aid to the FEC and rechanneled some of the assistance directly to the governments of Cambodia, Laos, and the RVN.[60] The decrease forced the French

---

[53] Hòa Hảo members of the cabinet included Trần Văn Soái, Lương Trọng Tường, Nguyễn Công Hầu, and Huỳnh Văn Nhiệm. The latter three were most likely members of the Dân Xã and a distinct faction within Hòa Hảo Buddhism than that of Trần Văn Soái. Cao Đài members of the cabinet included Nguyễn Thành Phương, Phạm Xuân Thái, Nguyễn Mạnh Bảo, and Nguyễn Văn Cát. See Nguyễn Long Thành Nam, *PGHH trong dòng lịch sử dân tộc,* 547.

[54] "Telegram from Dillon to the Department of State," 4 Oct 1954, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Indochina,* 2216; "Telegram from US Ambassador to Vietnam Donald Heath to Department of State," 12 Nov 1954, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Indochina,* 2239-2240.

[55] Miller points out that Ngo Đình Diệm's younger brother, Ngô Đình Luyện, played the critical role in persuading Bảo Đại to remove Nguyễn Văn Hinh. See Miller, "Grand Designs," 146-147.

[56] "Trung tướng làm như không biết gì đến những chỉ thị của tôi, coi thường uy quyền của Chánh phủ, chỉ nghe theo những tham vọng riêng của mình và hành động như một kẻ phiến loạn": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Tuyên bố về việc tướng Nguyễn Văn Hinh bội phản (hội họp báo chí ngày 19-9-1954)," in *CĐCN* (Saigon: Sở Báo Chí Thông Tin, Phủ Tổng Thống, 1955), 1:138-140, citation on 138.

[57] "Không thể dung được những hành vi đặt tham vọng cá nhân lên trên quyền lợi chung": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Tuyên bố về việc tướng Nguyễn Văn Hinh bội phản," *CĐCN* 1:140.

[58] Edward Miller, *Misalliance: Ngo Dinh Diem, the United States, and the Fate of South Vietnam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013), 113-114.

[59] Miller, *Misalliance,* 114.

[60] Statler, *Replacing France,* 186.

to cut off stipends for the sects and left sect leaders potentially strapped for cash.[61] The overall reduction in French and American aid also meant that Ngô Đình Diệm lacked the funds to integrate all sect forces into the national army.[62] Thus, various sect factions had to compete for monetary payments and limited spots in the VNA. The stakes were especially high for Trần Văn Soái and Nguyễn Thành Phương because their armies were the largest. The pressure on them increased after Hòa Hảo general Nguyễn Giác Ngộ, Trần Văn Soái's chief of staff, and dissident Cao Đài general Trình Minh Thế rallied to the government.[63]

Ngô Đình Diệm used the occasion of Trình Minh Thế's rallying to emphasize the need for national unity against communism and implied that sect generals who refused to join the government were guilty of divisiveness. At the ceremony celebrating the alliance on 13 February, Ngô Đình Diệm invoked the war dead and the dangers of communism to justify his demand for integration: "Because the numerous sacrifices of thousands of heroic warriors would be rendered pointless, if after winning Independence, we are not united in our actions, under one flag and one command, to fight together against the cause that has forced our compatriots to rise up and migrate from northern Vietnam, one after the other."[64] The unnamed cause of the migration referred to Vietnamese communism. What national unity meant to Ngô Đình Diệm was not an alliance but integration, and he implied that failure to surrender to his authority was synonymous with factionalism.

Dissatisfaction among remaining sect elements soon coalesced into organized opposition.[65] On 4 March 1955, Phạm Công Tắc announced the formation of a new sectarian alliance, the Mặt Trận Thống Nhất Toàn Lực Quốc Gia (United Front of National Forces). The United Front recalled the broad-based anticommunist coalitions from the previous decade. In contrast to Ngô Đình Diệm's cabinet, the front included a wide array of anticommunists, including: Phạm Công Tắc of the Cao Đài; Bảy Viễn of the Bình Xuyên; Hòa Hảo factions led by Trần Văn Soái, Lâm Thành Nguyên, and Lê Quang Vinh; Nguyễn Tôn Hoàn, the Đại Việt leader and former associate of Ngô Đình Diệm; the Trotskyist Hồ Hữu Tường; southern intellectual Trần Văn Ân; and Phan Quang Đán, who would later gain fame as an opposition politician.[66] On 21 March, the United Front issued an ultimatum demanding that Ngô Đình Diệm

---

[61] Miller, "Grand Designs" 162; Lancaster, *Emancipation of French Indochina,* 380.

[62] Fall, "The Political-Religious Sects of Vietnam," 251.

[63] Nguyễn Giác Ngộ reportedly brought 8000 soldiers with him over to the government, and Trần Văn Soái's chiefof staff, Nguyễn Văn Huê, reportedly brought 3000. See Đoàn Thêm, *Hai mươi năm qua: Việc từng ngày, 1945-1964* (Saigon: Nam Chí Tùng Thư, 1966; Los Alamitos, Cal.: Xuân Thu, 1986), 161, 163; Lancaster, *Emancipation of French Indochina,* 380. All citations refer to the 1986 edition of *Hai mươi năm qua.*

[64] "Vì bao nhiêu hy sinh của hàng ngàn chiến sĩ anh hùng sẽ trở nên vô hiệu, nếu sau khi thu hồi Độc lập, chúng ta không thống nhứt được hành động, để cùng nhau, dưới một bóng cờ và một quyền chỉ huy duy nhứt, chống lại cái nguyên nhân đã lam cho đòng bào ta ở Bắc Việt vùng đứng dậy di cư liên tiếp": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Diễn văn nhân dịp lễ tiếp nhận Mặt trận Quốc gia kháng chiến (13-2-1955)," in *CĐCN* 1:149-150, citation on 150.

[65] Many sect leaders felt threatened by Ngô Đình Diệm's growing strength. Trần Văn Soái, who still held a portfolio in the government, was alarmed that the government might send Trình Minh Thế to fight Ba Cụt's forces in the Mekong delta. These fears may have been unfounded, but earlier clashes between the VNA and Ba Cụt's forces in Long Xuyên province no doubt reinforced them. Nguyễn Thành Phương, another cabinet minister with waffling loyalties, worried that Ngô Đình Diệm might integrate fewer Cao Đài troops to accommodate Trình Minh Thế's soldiers. For Trần Văn Soái's reaction to the rallying of Trình Minh Thế, see "Telegram From the Chargé in Vietnam (Kidder) to the Department of State," 3 Feb 1955, *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vietnam,* 75; Lancaster, *Emancipation of French Indochina,* 382. For Nguyễn Thành Phương's reaction to the rallying of Trình Minh Thế, see Miller, "Grand Designs," 169.

[66] Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled,* vol. 2, *Vietnam at War* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 868-869; Phạm Văn Sơn, *Việt Nam tranh đấu sử,* 5th ed., 386.

form a "national coalition government" *(chánh quyền liên hiệp quốc gia)* that would meet the approval of the front within the next five days.[67] The idea of a "national coalition," like the front itself, was a rejection of Ngô Đình Diệm's top-down approach to national unity. Unlike the initial proclamation, even Trình Minh Thế and Nguyễn Thành Phương signed the ultimatum. But their appeal fell on deaf ears. Ngô Đình Diệm ignored the deadline and publicly accused the United Front of selfishness and divisiveness. He invoked the history of the resistance to argue that self-interest and partisanship harmed national unity: "It is only because the Communist party did not sincerely unite with the nationalist forces and used the resistance to serve the private interests of their party… which resulted in the division of the country."[68] Then, he suggested that oppositional sect leaders were guilty of the same sin: "In the south, it is because a few leaders of the nationalist parties care only about advancing their own interests and positions and are refusing to unite… so that the people in many areas still do not live in prosperity and safety, even though it has been over eight months since the cease fire."[69]

The cohesion of the United Front did not last. On 27 March, Trình Minh Thế broke with the front and again pledged support for Ngô Đình Diệm. He explained in a press conference that his only motivation for joining the Front was to unite the different groups to more effectively fight the communists, but he disagreed with their opposition to the government.[70] Nguyễn Thành Phương rallied a few days later when the premier agreed to accept 8000 soldiers from the main Cao Đài army into the VNA.[71] The move openly flouted Phạm Công Tắc's authority and robbed the front of its largest armed contingent. Once again, Ngô Đình Diệm praised his allies as nationalists and criticized opponents for being divisive. During a ceremony at the Independence Palace to celebrate Nguyễn Thành Phương's defection,[72] the premier claimed that the general's decision to rally was "evidence of the undying unity among all true patriots."[73] The premier also boasted that it was a setback for the United Front, which he did not explicitly name: "It is also a heavy blow for those who conspire to sow internal division in our country, which lays the path for communist invasion."[74] Whereas earlier, he had merely compared sect opponents to the

---

[67] "Kiến nghị của Mặt trận Thống nhứt Toàn lực Quốc gia," 20 Mar 1955, in Công văn lịch sử, vol. 2, ed. Quang Minh [Bùi Văn Tiếp], accessed 2 Oct 2012, http://www-personal.usyd.edu.au/~cdao/booksv/BuiVanTiep/congvanlichsu-II/congvanlichsu-II.htm.

[68] "Cũng vì đảng Cộng sản không có thái độ chân thành đoàn kết với các lực lượng quốc gia, đem kháng chiến phụng sự riêng cho đảng… mà kết quả là đất nước bị chia xẻ làm hai": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Bức thư gởi đại diện 'Mặt trận Thống nhất toàn lực quốc gia' (27-3-1955)," in *CĐCN* 1:106-107, citation on 107.

[69] "Trong miền Nam, cũng vì một vài lãnh tụ các đảng phái quốc gia không chịu đoàn kết với nhau, chỉ lo bồi đắp cho quyền lợi và địa vị riêng… cho nên mặc dầu đã đình chiến hơn tám tháng nay, dân chúng trong nhiều miền vẫn chưa được sống an cư lạc nghiệp": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Bức thư gởi đại diện 'Mặt trận Thống nhất toàn lực quốc gia,'" *CĐCN* 1:107.

[70] Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế* (Boulder, Colo.: Lion Press, 1985), 277. In an earlier meeting with special representative Collins, Trình Minh Thế claimed that he only signed the manifesto to soften the hardline position that the other sect leaders adopted, but the general did not want to overthrow Ngô Đình Diệm. See "Telegram from the Special Representative in Vietnam (Collins) to the Department of State," 23 Mar 1955, *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vietnam,* 142.

[71] "Telegram from the Special Representative in Vietnam (Collins) to the Department of State," 30 Mar 1955, *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vietnam,* 162; "Telegram from the Special Representative in Vietnam (Collins) to the Department of State," 30 Mar 1955, *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vietnam,* 165.

[72] Đoàn Thêm, *Hai mươi năm qua,* 168.

[73] "là một bằng chứng tỏ rõ tinh thần đoàn kết bất diệt của các phần tử chân chính yêu nước": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Diễn văn đọc trong buổi lễ Quốc gia hóa Quân đội Cao Đài (31-3-1955)," in *CĐCN* 1:151-152, citation on 152.

[74] "Đó còn là một đòn rất nặng cho những kẻ âm mưu chia rẽ nội bộ nước ta, làm dễ dàng bước đường xâm lăng của Cộng sản": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Diễn văn đọc trong buổi lễ Quốc gia hóa Quân đội Cao Đài," *CĐCN* 1:152.

communists, he now accused them of facilitating a communist invasion. Angry at Ngô Đình Diệm's disregard for the ultimatum, Trần Văn Soái and Phạm Công Tắc withdrew all Hòa Hảo and Cao Đài members from the cabinet.[75]

The Battle of Saigon and the Revolutionary Committee

Meanwhile, trouble was brewing from the Bình Xuyên. Earlier that year, Bảy Viễn had quietly accepted the cancellation of the vice concessions,[76] but he refused to relinquish control of the police when Ngô Đình Diệm announced that it would be nationalized. When the premier tried to dismiss Bảy Viễn's chief of police, a skirmish broke out between the Bình Xuyên and the VNA on the night of March 30. The French intervened to prevent further violence, first by withholding fuel and supplies to the VNA,[77] then by negotiating a truce.[78] But the involvement of the FEC gave rise to accusations of collusion. American observers noted that French action during the skirmish was widely seen as favoring the Bình Xuyên,[79] and Dương Văn Mai Elliott later recounted in her memoir that the city was rampant with rumors that the French had brokered a truce only to protect their gangster allies.[80] On April 19, when skirmishes again flared up in between the VNA and the Bình Xuyên, Ngô Đình Diệm told American special envoy J. Lawton Collins in a private conversation that the Vietnamese government had to fight communism, feudalism, and colonialism – one of the first recorded instances of the premier listing the three enemies by their epithets.[81] As tensions mounted, Ngô Đình Diệm and his sect opponents independently contacted Bảo Đại to win the support of the Chief of State. The former emperor appeared to be avoiding the premier's emissary,[82] and rumormongers in Saigon began speculating that Bảo Đại was in league with the Bình Xuyên. Edward Lansdale later recalled that signs denouncing the Chief of State started appearing in Saigon, most of which were probably the work of Ngô Đình Diệm's supporters.[83] On 26 April, the premier dismissed the Bình Xuyên police chief.[84] Two days later, fighting erupted between the VNA and the Bình Xuyên, and the Battle of Saigon began. This time, neither the French nor the remaining members of the United Front assisted the gang in any substantial way.

The premier immediately pinned responsibility for the violence on the "gang of Bình Xuyên rebels" *(bọn phiến loạn Bình Xuyên)*.[85] In a public address to the people, he denounced the gang for sowing discord and undermining international confidence in the country's ability to

[75] Lê Văn Dương, *Quân lực VNCH,* 414-415.
[76] There appears to be a slight disagreement as to when the closure of the casinos and brothels actually took place, ranging from early to mid-January. See Lê Văn Dương, *Quân lực VNCH,* 411; Lancaster, *Emancipation of French Indochina,* 379; Đoàn Thêm, *Hai mươi năm qua,* 161.
[77] Statler, *Replacing France,* 135
[78] "Telegram from the Special Representative in Vietnam (Collins) to the Department of State," 31 Mar 1955, *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vietnam,* 171.
[79] "Telegram from the Chargé in Vietnam (Kidder) to the Department of State," 30 April 1954, *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vietnam,* 327.
[80] Duong Van Mai Elliott, *The Sacred Willow: Four Generations in the Life of a Vietnamese Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 252.
[81] Telegram from the Special Representative in Vietnam (Collins) to the Department of State, 19 Apr 1955, *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vietnam,* 269.
[82] Lansdale, *In the Midst of War,* 274-275; Miller, "Grand Designs," 184-185.
[83] Lansdale, *In the Midst of War,* 275.
[84] Lancaster, *Emancipation of French Indochina,* 26-27.
[85] Ngô Đình Diệm, "Tuyên bố về việc Công an Xung phong Bình Xuyên gây hấn ngày 28 tháng 4 năm 1955," in *CĐCN* 1: 117-118, citation on 117.

resist communism: "They have provoked an internal rebellion so that foreigners will use it as evidence to malign [the Vietnamese people and the country and] say that the Vietnamese people do not deserve Independence, that the Nationalists cannot maintain order, and that Free Vietnam will fall into the hands of the Communists."[86] Privately, the premier claimed that the French had provided helicopters to evacuate wounded Bình Xuyên soldiers and that the VNA had captured French soldiers fighting side by side with the gang.[87] Bảy Viễn was nothing more than an "organ of French colonialism," Ngô Đình Diệm angrily told an official at the American embassy.[88] Similar accusations found their way into propaganda leaflets that began appearing in the capital. Like the signs denouncing Bảo Đại, the provenance of the tracts was unknown. General Ely, French High Commissioner, angrily showed an American official a pamphlet accusing French "colonialists" of aiding both the Bình Xuyên and the communists. The pamphlet read, "French colonialists go home. French military have been found on [the] side [of the] Binh Xuyen pirates fighting against Vietnamese National Army. Stop your double game which consists of holding hand[s] with Viet Minh in [the] north and passing yourself off officially as friends of Vietnamese nationalists in [the] south."[89] These early rumors linking the French, the Bình Xuyên, Bảo Đại, and the Việt Minh foreshadowed later claims that colonialists, feudalists, and the communists were conspiring against the Vietnamese nation.

Meanwhile, Bảo Đại decided to dismiss Ngô Đình Diệm. Before the fighting had even subsided, the former emperor summoned the premier to France and replaced the Chief of Staff of the VNA with Nguyễn Văn Vỹ, then second in command.[90] Suspicious, Ngô Đình Diệm convened a meeting with his supporters at the Independence Palace to seek their advice regarding Bảo Đại's instructions.[91] The meeting attracted some 200 individuals representing 18 parties and was dominated by three parties affiliated with recently rallied sect forces, including the Trình Minh Thế's Phong Trào Quốc Gia Kháng Chiến (National Resistance Movement), Nguyễn Thành Phương's Phục Quốc (National Restoration), and Nguyễn Giác Ngộ's Dân Chủ Xã Hội Đảng (Democratic Socialist Party, or Dân Xã).[92] The gathering was likely a ploy to strengthen the premier's legitimacy, but the assembly remade itself into an independent pressure group. It quickly resolved that the premier should remain in Saigon in defiance of Bảo Đại's summons. Then, at the instigation of the Trình Minh Thế's and Nguyễn Thành Phương's representatives, the assembly passed a resolution demanding the overthrow of Bảo Đại, the immediate dissolution of the government, and the establishment of a republican government based on general elections. Excited, members of the assembly removed the portrait of Bảo Đại

[86] "Chúng gây nội loạn để cho người ngoại quốc có thể vin vào đấy để rêu rao rằng dân Việt Nam không xứng đáng Độc lập, người Quốc gia không giữ nổi trật tự, nước việt Nam Tự do sẽ rơi vào tay bọn Cộng sản": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Tuyên bố về việc Công an Xung phong Bình Xuyên gây hấn," *CĐCN* 1:117.
[87] Lansdale, *In the Midst of War,* 290; "Telegram from Chargé in Vietnam (Kidder) to the Department of State," 29 Apr 1955, *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vietnam,* 317.
[88] "Telegram from Chargé in Vietnam (Kidder) to the Department of State," 29 Apr 1955, *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vietnam,* 318.
[89] "Telegram from the Chargé in Vietnam (Kidder) to the Department of State," 1 May 1955, *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vietnam,* 341-342.
[90] Bảo Đại informed the American embassy in Paris that he intended to replace Ngô Đình Diệm a week prior to summoning the premier to Paris. See Memorandum of a Conversation, Paris, 21 April 1955, *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vietnam,* 274-275.
[91] Robert Scigliano, "Political Parties in South Vietnam Under the Republic," *Pacific Affairs* 33, no. 4 (Dec 1960): 327-346, reference to 333; Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 281-282.
[92] Lancaster, *Emancipation of French Indochina,* 391.

hanging on the wall, threw it on the ground, and stomped on it amidst cheering and clapping.[93] The assembly eventually formed an executive committee, known as the Ủy ban Cách mạng (Revolutionary Committee), led by the three sect parties.[94] So radical were the demands of the Revolutionary Committee that Ngô Đình Diệm reportedly went pale and asked, "Do you want me to make a *revolution?"*[95] The following day, representatives of the committee blocked Nguyễn Văn Vỹ from assuming command of the VNA. On 1 May, the committee issued a public declaration announcing their platform. Besides repeating the demands listed in the resolution, the manifesto called for the complete withdrawal of the FEC.[96]

The declaration of the Revolutionary Committee delineated an antifeudal, anticolonial, and anticommunist agenda that Ngô Đình Diệm would later publicly embrace. Not only did the premier incorporate most of the recommendations listed in committee's proclamation, the statement appears to have been the first public expression of the triple enemy formula. The declaration stated, "The Vietnamese people will not stop struggling against the outdated Feudal regime, the obstinate Colonial regime, and the dictatorial Communist regime in order to secure the right to live in honor."[97] The "Feudal regime" apparently referred to the SVN government but not to the sects. The statement also denounced Ngô Đình Diệm's noncommunist enemies for serving the French and likened the noncommunists to the Việt Minh. Commenting on the Battle of Saigon, the declaration argued that the "treasonous lackey clique" *(bọn tay sai phản quốc)* was now trying to give southern Vietnam to the "French Colonialist clique" *(lũ Thực dân Pháp)* similar to how the communists had offered northern Vietnam to "Sino-Soviet red colonialism" *(thực dân đỏ Nga Tàu)*.[98] In the context of the battle, the "treasonous lackey clique" pointed not only to the Bình Xuyên but possibly to Bảo Đại and Nguyễn Văn Vỹ as well. Future propagandists would similarly accuse the noncommunists of colluding with the French and Việt Minh and reprise epithets such as "lackey," the "feudal regime," the "colonialist clique," and "red colonialism."

The political similarities between Ngô Đình Diệm's later policy and the Revolutionary Committee raise an interesting issue: was the committee merely a mouthpiece for the premier? After all, numerous observers have suggested that Ngô Đình Diệm "bought" the loyalty of Trình Minh Thế, Nguyễn Thành Phương, and Nguyễn Giác Ngộ with large sums of cash.[99]

---

[93] Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 290-291, 297.

[94] The group is also known by its original name, Hội đồng Nhân dân Cách mạng Quốc gia (National Revolutionary People's Council) and alternately translated as "Revolutionary Council" and "Popular Revolutionary Committee." See Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 297.

[95] Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 298-299; Scigliano, *South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress*, 23.

[96] "Hội đồng nhân dân Cách mạng quyết nghị truất phế Bảo Đại," *Tiếng chuông* 1224 (3 May 1955): 1, 4, reference to 4.

[97] "Dân tộc Việt Nam không ngừng chiến đấu chống chế độ Phong kiến lạc hậu [,] chống chế độ Thực dân ngoan cố, chống chế độ Cộng Sản Độc tài để đòi quyền sống vinh dự": "Hội đồng nhân dân Cách mạng quyết nghị truất phế Bảo Đại," 1.

[98] "Hội đồng nhân dân Cách mạng quyết nghị truất phế Bảo Đại," 1.

[99] The total amount the CIA provided to Ngô Đình Diệm to pay the sects in March and April 1955 is unknown, but the sum was probably considerably less what previous authors have suggested. In Thomas Ahern's *CIA and the House of Ngo,* the internal history of the CIA, the specific amount is redacted, but Ahern conclusively states that there is no documentary evidence for the figure of $12 million cited by Bernard Fall and subsequent authors who relied on Fall. Interestingly, Edward Lansdale never admitted to paying the sect leaders, and some witnesses have questioned whether Trình Minh Thế ever received a bribe, not least because the general apparently died in poverty. It is not currently possible to determine how much Trình Minh Thế received, but his poverty at the time of death does suggest that sect leaders were not merely mercenary when they accepted payments. The sect leaders were driven by the need to pay their troops, who were generally not as well-paid or well-equipped as regular soldiers in

Alternatively, Jessica Chapman argues that the sects that constituted the committee remained true to their own interests while adopting a new political tactic. The sect factions "had rechanneled their political energies into the Revolutionary Council to seek the same concessions that they had demanded all along," she explains.[100] The evidence suggests that Chapman's argument is closer to the mark. Ngô Đình Diệm's payments certainly encouraged the cash-strapped sect leaders to rally, but the alliance between the premier and the sect factions was also founded on real political affinities. The demands listed in the official declaration largely mirrored the politics of the sects during the previous decade. The sects had opposed the French and then the Việt Minh during the resistance, and Trình Minh Thế, the most influential leader affiliated with the committee, had simultaneously fought the French, the SVN, and the Việt Minh since 1951. In July 1954, sect leaders such as Nguyễn Thành Phương publicly criticized the partition of the country along with Ngô Đình Diệm and other government officials.[101] Therefore, it is not such a stretch to imagine that the sect factions shared Ngô Đình Diệm's opposition to Bảo Đại, the FEC, and the Geneva Agreement or that they wanted a government free from monarchism, colonialism, and communism. The denunciation of the three enemies in the committee's declaration may well have reflected a resumption of the politics that the sects had long championed. Despite these similarities, the Revolutionary Committee did not belong to the premier's entourage of loyal followers but followed the model of broad-based anticommunist coalitions, similar to the United Front, and Ngô Đình Diệm only tolerated the group as long as he needed its support.

The Battle of Saigon was a spectacular success for Ngô Đình Diệm. Within less than a week, the VNA and allied sects forces completely evicted the Bình Xuyên from the greater Saigon area, and the gang was forced to retreat to Rừng Sát (Jungle of Assassins), a mangrove forest southeast of Saigon that had been their base in the 1940s.[102] The victory also strengthened Ngô Đình Diệm's position in relation to his rivals. As anti-French sentiments in Saigon rose to a fever pitch, the premier's assault on the Bình Xuyên was widely perceived as an attack on the French and significantly enhanced his prestige.[103] Conversely, the defeat of the gang weakened Bảo Đại, the French, and the United Front because Bảy Viễn had been their closest remaining ally. Even the premier's supporters, the Revolutionary Committee, felt their strength diminish. Among the dead was Trình Minh Thế, whose nationalist reputation had lent the committee much

---

the VNA. In particular, Trình Minh Thế's guerilla forces never received subsidies from the French, and whatever amount he was given by Ngô Đình Diệm was clearly insufficient to alleviate his poverty. I am indebted to Edward Miller for assistance on this point. See Miller, *Misalliance,* 112. For the official account of the CIA, see Ahern, *CIA and the House of Ngo,* 69 n26. For the figure of $12 million, see Fall, *Two Viet-Nams,* 246-247; Frances Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam,* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 99; Currey, *Unquiet American,* 172-3; Kahin, *Intervention,* 83. For Lansdale's refusal to discuss the payments, see Fall, *Two Viet-Nams,* 246; Shaplen, *Lost Revolution,* 117. For Trình Minh Thế's financial situation and doubts about whether he received payment, see Lansdale, *In the Midst of War,* 309; Philips, *Why Vietnam Matters,* 324 n2; Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 263-264, 268-270.

[100] Jessica Chapman, "The Sect Crisis of 1955 and the American Commitment to Ngô Đình Diệm," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 5, no. 1 (winter 2010): 37-85, citation on 69.

[101] VTX, "Cuộc phỏng-vấn Thiếu-tướng Nguyễn-thành-Phương, Tư-lịnh Quân-đội Quốc-gia Cao-Đài," *Tiếng chuông* 994 (24 July 1954): 4; "Trần Văn Đỗ [*sic*] lên tiếng trước nhứt kháng nghị cuộc ngưng bắn qua phân lảnh thỗ [*sic*]," *Tiếng chuông* 993 (23 Jul 1954): 1, 4; "Thủ-Tướng Ngô-Đình-Diệm tuyên bố sau phiên nhóm chót ở Genève," *Tiếng chuông* 994 (24 Jul 1954): 1.

[102] Lê Văn Dương, *Quân lực VNCH,* 423.

[103] "Telegram from the Chargé in Vietnam (Kidder) to the Department of State," 30 Apr 1955, *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vietnam,* 331.

of its power. The mysterious circumstances of his death sparked rumors that the French, the Bình Xuyên, or Ngô Đình Diệm assassinated him.[104] Whatever the case, the passing of Trình Minh Thế facilitated the premier's consolidation of power at the expense of sect allies. The battle also cemented American support for the premier. At the end of March, Ngô Đình Diệm's refusal to compromise with the Bình Xuyên had convinced J. Lawton Collins that the premier should be removed, and the State Department approved a plan to replace Ngô Đình Diệm with alternative candidates. But the premier's unexpected triumph reversed the decision. Within days after the battle concluded, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles informed French and British representatives in a series of meetings in Paris that, "Whatever US view has been in past, today [the] US must support Diem wholeheartedly."[105] Ngô Đình Diệm even secured American approval for the ouster of Bảo Đại.[106]

Consolidation of Power, May – October 1955

The attack on the Bình Xuyên marked a hardening of Ngô Đình Diệm's policy towards noncommunist rivals. The Battle of Saigon marked the first of several military victories against sect opponents, and each success emboldened Ngô Đình Diệm to act against the Revolutionary Committee, Bảo Đại, and the French. By the second anniversary of the Geneva Agreement, he found himself the uncontested ruler of the RVN. The premier started by blunting the political momentum of the Revolutionary Committee. On 4-5 May 1955, he convened an alternative assembly that would deliver less radical demands than the committee. The 600 delegates came from throughout the country to meet at the Independence Palace, but they all belonged to the premier's own party, the National Revolutionary Movement, unlike the more broad-based Revolutionary Committee. In contrast to the committee's call for the immediate dissolution of the government, the new assembly passed a modest resolution requesting Bảo Đại to empower Ngô Đình Diệm to organize elections for a National Assembly in six months, at which point the former emperor would transfer all power over to the new legislative body.[107] The additional six months would allow the premier more time to consolidate his power before a general election. On May 10, the premier established a new cabinet that included several close associates and family members but excluded the leaders of the Revolutionary Committee.[108] Like his first cabinet, the government of May 10 exemplified Ngô Đình Diệm's rejection of broad anticommunist coalitions in favor of his loyal but politically narrow entourage. Undeterred, the committee continued to promote their program. While the premier's alternative congress deliberated, the committee organized a rally against Bảo Đại at a cinema in downtown Saigon[109] and later held a press conference to explain its political platform.[110] Interestingly, it was the Revolutionary Committee rather than the government that led public denunciations of Bảo Đại in

[104] For a survey of the various theories on his death, see Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 334-349; Blagov, *Honest Mistakes,* 173-194.
[105] "Telegram from the Secretary of State [Dulles] to the Department of State," 8 May 1955, *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vietnam,* 374.
[106] Statler, *Replacing France,* 144.
[107] Đoàn Them, *Hai mươi năm qua,* 174-175; Lansdale, *In the Midst of War,* 302-303.
[108] The three highest ranking members of the Revolutionary Committee were: Nguyễn Bảo Toàn, chair, representing the Hòa Hảo; Hồ Hán Sơn, vice chair, representing Nguyễn Thành Phương's Cao Đài faction; and Nhị Lang, general secretary, representing Trình Minh Thế's Cao Đài Liên Minh. Ngô Đình Diệm did not name a single one of them to the cabinet of 10 May 1955. See Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 297.
[109] Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 342-343; Đoàn Thêm, *Hai mươi năm qua,* 174.
[110] Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 342-343.

the wake of the Battle of Saigon – further evidence of the committee's contribution to antifeudalism.

In mid-May, the premier stepped up his efforts to eliminate sectarian opposition through a combination of military violence, monetary inducements, and negotiations. Ngô Đình Diệm offered each of the Hòa Hảo generals a hefty payment,[111] but they had already reached a joint agreement to resist the government.[112] The premier then turned to coercion and sent the VNA to attack the Hòa Hảo forces in the Mekong delta. Dương Văn Minh, a rising star in the VNA and later the leader of the coup that toppled Ngô Đình Diệm, led a victorious assault in Cần Thơ in early June 1955. The defeat convinced Nguyễn Giác Ngộ[113] and Lâm Thành Nguyên to rally. From Saigon, Ngô Đình Diệm denounced the Hòa Hảo generals as cruel, greedy bandits, another important theme of antifeudalism. Referring specifically to Năm Lửa and Ba Cụt, the premier asserted, "You, my compatriots, know that they have always plundered, raped, tortured, killed and harmed the population of the Hậu Giang River in an incredibly savage manner."[114] The premier depicted the years of autonomous Hòa Hảo rule in the delta as exploitative and corrupt: "They became millionaires in only a few short years and built their huge property on the blood and bones of our compatriots."[115]

According to the Geneva Agreement, the authorities in North and South Vietnam were supposed to convene in preparation for reunification elections no later than 20 July 1955, exactly one year after the signing of the agreement. Instead, Ngô Đình Diệm argued that the DRV was too undemocratic to hold free elections and chose the same date to formally announce the Denounce the Communists Campaign. For the first time, he publicly promoted the triple enemy formula that had first been introduced by the Revolutionary Committee three months prior. The campaign began as a shared, though contested, effort between the government and the Revolutionary Committee to denounce communism and overthrow Bảo Đại. Because anticommunists considered the Geneva Agreement the result of communist perfidy, the campaign began with denunciations of the agreement and protests against the International Control Commission (ICC), the committee set up by agreement to oversee its implementation. The Revolutionary Committee also demanded the deportation of North Vietnamese representatives to the ICC, who were lodged at the Hotel Majestic and Hotel Galliéni along with members of the ICC.[116] On the first day of the campaign, a crowd of over 200,000 people gathered in front of the Saigon City Hall to hear anti-Geneva speeches before marching to the Hotel Galliéni, the headquarters of the ICC, and then the Independence Palace.[117] The

---

[111] Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Political History* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), 41.
[112] Lancaster, *Emancipation of French Indochina,* 396.
[113] Lancaster, *Emancipation of French Indochina,* 396.
[114] "Quốc dân đồng bào đều biết chúng là những kẻ xưa nay chuyên nghề cướp bóc, hãm hiếp, tra tấn giết hại dân-chúng miền Hậu giang một cách vô cùng dã man": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Hiệu triệu Quốc dân về việc Năm Lửa và Ba Cụt gây hấn (7-6-1955)," in *CĐCN* 1:125-128, citation on 126.
[115] "Chỉ trong vòng mấy năm chúng đã thành triệu phú, tài sản khổng lồ của chúng xây dựng trên xướng máu đồng bào": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Hiệu triệu Quốc dân về việc Năm Lửa và Ba Cụt gây hấn," *CĐCN* 1:126.
[116] Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 348-349; "Mobs Sack Hotels in Saigon, 60 Hurt," *New York Times* (21 Jul 1955): 1, 3.
[117] I have been unable to determine the exact route of the demonstrations, the location of the Hotel Galliéni, and the location of the headquarters of the ICC. Based on the available accounts of the event, the demonstrators most likely marched along Boulevard Bonnard (later renamed Lê Lợi), continued on Boulevard Galliéni (later renamed Trần Hưng Đạo), and then looped back to the Independence Palace. Nhị Lang's memoir mentions that the Hotel Galliéni was located on Trần Hưng Đạo Boulevard and that the headquarters of the ICC was on Cống Quỳnh Street (then known as Rue d'Arras). See VP, "Hôm qua, có trên 20 vạn người đã biểu tình, biểu lộ sự căm hờn đối với thõa [*sic*]

demonstration turned violent when anticommunist mobs ransacked the Hotel Galliéni and the Hotel Majestic.[118] Western sources accused the government of supporting the attacks, and the head of the ICC claimed that the local police failed to intervene, though Ngô Đình Diệm later expressed his regrets, and the police arrested scores of participants.[119]

It remains unclear who directed the rally and the riots. Although the Revolutionary Committee and the Ministry of Information competed to control the demonstrations,[120] the evidence suggests that the former was largely responsible for the violence. Nhị Lang, the general secretary of the Revolutionary Committee and a senior leader in Trình Minh Thế's National Resistance Movement, later credited the committee for both the protest and the riots. He claimed that the committee recruited a group of students and directed them to break into the two hotels to capture the North Vietnamese representatives to the ICC.[121] This explanation is bolstered by the fact that eyewitnesses at both hotels described the rioters as mostly émigré students and the followers of the deceased Trình Minh Thế.[122] Indeed, the disorderliness of the riots recalled the boisterous behavior of the Revolutionary Committee during its inaugural meeting. Moreover, Ngô Đình Diệm immediately distanced his administration from the riots. The newspaper, *Cách mạng quốc gia (National Revolution),* the mouthpiece of his political party, the National Revolutionary Movement, covered the demonstrations in great detail but avoided any mention of the riots.[123] The government also issued a communiqué blaming the violence on communist agents while claiming that the demonstrations were anticommunist rather than against the ICC.[124] Such a response suggests that the government likely had a hand in the protests but did not authorize the riots.[125] That the Revolutionary Committee was able to foment riots largely on its own indicates that it was serious political contender still able to act independently from the administration.

Throughout the summer and early fall of 1955, Ngô Đình Diệm and his government orchestrated a defamation campaign against Bảo Đại. The role of the Revolutionary Committee in the antifeudal agitation is unclear, but the group most likely participated, given its impassioned condemnations against the Chief of State. Finally, in early October, Minister of the Interior Bùi Văn Thinh announced that a plebiscite would take place on 23 October. He explained that the country had been under a "nebulous political system" *(chính thế mập mờ)* without any popular representation for the last seven years, that is, since the founding of the

---

hiệp Genève," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 5 (21 Jul 1955): 1, 4; Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 342, 348-349.

[118] There were reportedly 2 deaths and 60 injuries. See "Mobs Sack Hotels in Saigon, 60 Hurt," *New York Times* (21 Jul 1955): 1, 3; *Chronology of International Events* 11, no. 14 (7-20 Jul 1955): 463; "Peace Sabotaged in Vietnam," *New Age* 1, no. 43 (11 Aug 1955): 3.

[119] "Mobs Sack Hotels in Saigon, 60 Hurt," *New York Times* (21 Jul 1955): 3; "Saigon Transformers Blown Up," *New York Times* (23 Jul 1955): 3; "Peace Sabotaged in Vietnam," *New Age* 1, no. 43 (11 Aug 1955): 3; Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 350.

[120] Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 348-350;

[121] Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 349-350.

[122] "Mobs sack hotels in Saigon, 60 hurt," *New York Times* (21 Jul 1955): 3.

[123] VP, "Hôm qua, có trên 20 vạn người đã biểu tình, biểu lộ sự căm hờn đối với thõa hiệp Genève," 1, 4.

[124] "Mobs sack hotels in Saigon, 60 hurt," *New York Times* (21 Jul 1955): 3.

[125] According to Nhị Lang, Ngô Đình Diệm later expressed his displeasure regarding the riots, but the former remained gleefully unrepentant. Interestingly, newspaper coverage of government demonstrations against the ICC over the death of Hoàng Thụy Năm, the RVN's liaison officer to the ICC, in October 1961 praised demonstrators for their orderly conduct, in direct contrast to the "Majestic affair" of July 1955. See Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 350; "Tang lễ Đại tá Trưởng phái đoàn Giao dịch với Ủy hội Quốc tế đã tránh được một vụ Majestic thứ hai nhờ kỷ luật của Thanh niên Cộng Hòa," *Tự do* 1375 (21 Oct 1961): 1, 4.

SVN. However, the people began demanding an end to the existing political system "[s]ince the rebellious feudal forces openly used arms and betrayed the interests of the people,"[126] Bùi Văn Thinh claimed. Which groups the minister meant by the phrase "feudal forces" was unclear, though it could refer to Nguyễn Văn Hinh, Nguyễn Văn Vỹ, the Bình Xuyên, the Hòa Hảo, and, by association, Bảo Đại. The Revolutionary Committee supported the referendum against Bảo Đại, but nothing is known concerning its participation.[127]

The rhetoric intensified as the date of the plebiscite approached. The popular press played a critical role in popularizing the image of Bảo Đại as a dissipated lackey serving colonial interests. Two common epithets dominated the discussion, *hôn quân,* meaning "benighted king," and *bù nhìn,* or "puppet." On 17 October, a commentary in the newspaper *Thời Cuộc (Current Politics)* criticized Bảo Đại's alleged willingness to serve the French after the Geneva Agreement: "Bảo Đại was still willingly to play that same puppet role, involving the rebellious plots of the rebellious military, [meaning,] the coup d'états of the bandit generals Vỹ and Hinh."[128] Similarly, an editorial in the weekly journal *Ý Dân (Will of the People)* described Bảo Đại as "a benighted king and great traitor, a symbol of a rotten, outdated regime, and a representative of a backwards feudal clique that wants to use the colonialists to betray the interests of the people."[129] An alternate critique concerned the former emperor's moral character. The journal *Đường Sống (The Path of Life)* published an article under the urgent headline, "Cần phải truất phế" ("Dethronement is Necessary"), in which the unknown author complained that Bảo Đại's wanton ways were incompatible with traditional Vietnamese morality: "Bảo Đại has maintained a system of depraved customs and degenerate habits that rejects the five virtues and the three bonds, which are the pillars that preserves Vietnamese society."[130] The "three bonds" and "five virtues" referred to the Confucian ideal of a harmonious social order *(tam cương, ngũ thường).* Therefore, the retention of Bảo Đại would mean continued corruption: "As long as Bảo Đại remains, there will be bribery at all levels, and there will be colorful lights that transform the capital of Vietnam into an enormous brothel that brings shame to the people."[131] The various accusations reinforced the idea that Bảo Đại was colluding with the French and Vietnamese generals and introduced the theme of moral debauchery that would feature prominently in later antifeudal writing.

The rigged election of 23 October 1955 delivered a resounding victory for the government. On 26 October, Ngô Đình Diệm proclaimed the founding of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) from the steps of the Independence Palace before a crowd of cheering

---

[126] "Từ ngày những lực lượng phong kiến phiến loạn công nhiên dùng võ lực phản bội quyền lợi của dân tộc": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Tuyên-cáo của Chánh-phủ về việc mở cuộc Trưng-cầu Dân-ý," in *CĐCN* 1:14-15, citation from 14.
[127] Scigliano, "Political Parties in South Vietnam," 334.
[128] "Bảo Đại vẫn bằng lòng vai tuồng bù-nhìn đó, với âm-mưu những cuộc tao-loạn của loạn-quân, cuộc đảo chính của tặc-trưởng Vỹ, Hinh": "Truất phế Bảo Đại là vạch đường cứu quốc và kiến quốc…," *Thời Cuộc* (17 Oct 1955), in *Chánh nghĩa đã thắng* ([Saigon?]: [1955?]), 33.
[129] "một tên hôn-quân và đại phản-quốc tiêu-biểu cho cả một chế-độ mục nát lỗi thời đại-diện của cả một bè lũ phong-kiến lạc-hậu còn muốn dựa lưng thực-dân để phản-bội quyền-lợi dân-tộc": "Ý dân qua cuộc trưng cầu dân ý," *Ý dân* (15 Oct 1955), in *Chánh nghĩa đã thắng*, 38.
[130] "Bảo-Đại đã duy-trì hẳn một tổ-chức hủ tục, bại-phong, khinh mạt tam-cường, ngũ-thường, là những rường mối bảo-tồn xã-hội Việt-Nam": "Cần phải truất phế," *Đường sống* (13 October 1955), in *Chánh nghĩa đã thắng,* 39.
[131] "Còn Bảo-Đại, còn hối-lộ từ trên xuống dưới; còn đèn đỏ đèn xanh khiến thủ-đô Việt-Nam thành một lầu xanh vĩ-đại tủi hổ dân-tộc": "Cần phải truất-phế," *Đường sống* (13 October 1955), in *Chánh nghĩa đã thắng,* 39.

supporters.[132] He declared himself president, and his government enshrined 26 October as a national holiday known as Republic Day *(Tết Cộng Hòa)*. Ngô Đình Diệm had finally defeated Bảo Đại, the Bình Xuyên, and the Hòa Hảo opposition.

Consolidation of Power, October 1955 – June 1956

The newly anointed president was now sufficiently strong to discard his sect allies. The president requested that the Revolutionary Committee dissolve itself,[133] and, after the group complied, he began hunting down the parties that led it.[134] Some time in late 1955 or early 1956, the government began persecuting the Dân Xã of the Hòa Hảo, the National Resistance Movement founded by Trình Minh Thế, and the Phục Quốc of the Cao Đài. In mid-January 1956, Nguyễn Bảo Toàn, former chairman of the Revolutionary Committee and General Secretary of the Dân Xã, publicly denounced Ngô Đình Diệm as a dictator before fleeing to Cambodia.[135] Numerous other leaders of the Dân Xã faced arrest.[136] Nguyễn Bảo Toàn returned to Vietnam several years later but was allegedly assassinated by government agents.[137] Less is known about the fortunes of the two Cao Đài parties. In mid-February, Nhị Lang, general secretary of the Revolutionary Committee, also escaped to Cambodia to escape harassment from Minister of Information Trần Chánh Thành and avoid involvement in the rivalry between Cao Đài generals Nguyễn Thành Phương and Văn Thành Cao.[138] The suppression of the sect parties sounded the demise of autonomous political organizations at the national level. Although Ngô Đình Diệm tolerated the continued existence of the sect-affiliated parties, the government gutted them of independent leaders and reduced them to mere provincial organizations.[139]

Concurrent with the decline of the sect parties was the final elimination of the sect armies. In early fall 1955, the VNA turned its attention back to the Bình Xuyên, who were still languishing in Rừng Sát. Dương Văn Minh led a month-long siege against the remnants of the gang and declared victory in mid-October, though Bảy Viễn managed to escape to France. In early October, Ngô Đình Diệm sent Nguyễn Thành Phương to disarm Phạm Công Tắc's Papal Guard, the only significant armed body among the Cao Đài that remained in the opposition. The general went so far as to depose the pope, much to the dismay of Cao Đài adepts. In February 1956, the president ordered the occupation of the Holy See,[140] and Phạm Công Tắc fled to Cambodia to avoid arrest. Ngô Đình Diệm assigned Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ, a career civil servant and future vice president of the RVN, to negotiate with the Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo. On 28 February, Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ reached an agreement with the Holy See that stripped the Cao Đài church of

---

[132] For accounts of the event, see "Treo cờ quốc kỳ ở các tư gia," *Tiếng chuông* 1375 (26 Oct 1955): 1; "26-10-55: V.N. là một nước cọng [*sic*] hòa," *Tiếng chuông* 1376 (27 Oct 1955): 1, 4; "Ngày lịch sử," *Tự do* 276 (28 Oct 1955): 1.

[133] Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled,* 885.

[134] Scigliano, "Political Parties in South Vietnam," 334.

[135] Scigliano, "Political Parties in South Vietnam," 335; Vương Kim, "Chánh trị: Việt Nam Dân Chủ Xã Hội Đảng," ch. 16 in *Đức Huỳnh Giáo Chủ* (N.p.: VP Phật Giáo Hòa Hảo/HN, 1997), accessed 4 Dec 2012, http://www.phatgiaohoahao.net/dhuc-huynh-giao-chu/phan-ii-su-nghiep/thien-v-su-nghiep-ve-mat-dhoi-cong-nghiep-canh-mang/chuong-xvi-chanh-tri-viet-nam-dan-chu-xa-hoi-dhang.

[136] Nguyễn Long Thành Nam, *PGHH trong dòng lịch sử dân tộc,* 411.

[137] Lâm Lễ Trinh, "Truất phế Bảo Đại và khai sinh Đệ Nhất Cộng Hòa: Ký ức 50 năm sau," *Định Hướng* 45 (winter 2005): 64-82, reference to 73; Nguyễn Long Thành Nam, *PGHH trong dòng lịch sử dân tộc,* 581-583.

[138] Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 125, 286, 364-365.

[139] Short, "The Influence of Religious/Political/Military Growth on National Politics," accessed 8 Oct 2012, http://pghh-research.tripod.com/chap4.html.

[140] Blagov, *Caodaism,* 107.

its administrative power in Tây Ninh province, granted the church freedom of worship, and required that it to refrain from politics.[141] In late January, Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ began negotiations with Trần Văn Soái, and the Hòa Hảo general agreed to relinquish his forces the following month.[142] Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ also convinced Lê Quang Vinh to negotiate, but Ngô Đình Diệm refused to grant Ba Cụt's conditions for surrender.[143] In April, government forces captured Lê Quang Vinh with such surprising ease that some observers speculated that Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ had tricked the Hòa Hảo general.[144] Lê Quang Vinh was executed on 13 July 1956 by guillotine. Huỳnh Công Bộ, father of Huỳnh Phú Sổ, became the undisputed leader of the Hòa Hảo faithful, but he carefully steered clear of politics.[145] Nevertheless, he was kidnapped in 1962, and many adepts blamed Ngô Đình Nhu's security apparatus for his disappearance.[146]

The withdrawal of the FEC in late spring 1956 concluded Ngô Đình Diệm's consolidation of power, but this feat was due as much to the Americans as to the president's own efforts. The reduction of American aid forced the FEC to drastically reduce its troop levels during the first year after the Geneva Agreement.[147] Then, in early 1956, the Eisenhower administration announced that it would stop providing funds for French forces to remain after the end of June.[148] Back in Saigon, Ngô Đình Diệm's initiatives created an increasingly hostile environment for the French, especially during the Battle of Saigon. The president's growing strength and the American decision to support him also precluded the emergence of an alternative leader more amenable to French interests. His administration insisted on the rapid reduction and complete departure of the FEC. Finally, on 30 March 1956, Saigon and Paris agreed on a timetable for imminent withdrawal. On 28 April 1956, the French dissolved the FEC and the French High Command, and the French naval and air force training missions left a year later. By the spring of 1956, Ngô Đình Diệm had triumphed over all of his noncommunist rivals.

Consolidation of Power: An Assessment

Victory over the sects came at the price of alienating large numbers of adepts. The population in sect territories had lived under sectarian administration for years and perceived attacks by the VNA as an invasion. Hòa Hảo peasants supplied their armies with food and medicine during the fight against the national army,[149] and the invasion of the Holy See in February 1956 was deeply unpopular among the Cao Đài faithful.[150] Even the official military history of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), the new name of the VNA, obliquely admitted that the government lost the goodwill of the rural population in Hòa Hảo areas due to

---

[141] Blagov, *Caodaism,* 107.
[142] Lê Văn Dương, *Quân lực VNCH,* 449.
[143] Ba Cụt demanded that Ngô Đình Diệm reject the Geneva Agreement, grant legal recognition for the Dân Xã party, and grant Ba Cụt an independent command outside of the regular army that would report directly to the Ministry of National Defense. For the full text of the general's demands, see Lê Văn Dương, *Quân lực VNCH,* 456.
[144] For an official explanation provided by the military, see Lê Văn Dương, *Quân lực VNCH,* 457. For speculation that Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ was responsible, see Đỗ Mậu, *Việt Nam máu lửa quê hương tôi: Hồi ký chính trị* (Calif.: privately published, 1986), 145-146.
[145] Nguyễn Long Thành Nam, *PGHH tròng dòng lịch sử dân tộc,* 577-577.
[146] Nguyễn Long Thành Nam, *PGHH trong dòng lịch sử dân tộc,* 583-587.
[147] The FEC decreased from 271,000 at the time of the Geneva Agreement to 75,000 in June 1955. See Statler, *Replacing France,* 185.
[148] Statler, *Replacing France*, 189.
[149] Lê Văn Dương, *Quân lực VNCH,* 443.
[150] Victor L. Oliver, "The Development of Caodai Sectarianism," *Religion* 4, no. 1 (1974): 1-25, reference to 6.

"tough military tactics" *(chiến thuật có tính cách cứng rắn).*[151] The mass arrests that followed the pacification campaigns further terrified the population. No reliable figures on the number of arrests are available, but one communist writer claimed that 3400 Cao Đài dignitaries were arrested between 1956 and 1958.[152] The imprisonment of such a large number of adepts became a sticking point when Ngô Đình Diệm attempted to reconcile with Phạm Công Tắc in 1957.[153] Less is known about arrests in Hòa Hảo areas. Instead, the single event that most galvanized the disciples of Huỳnh Phú Sổ was the execution of Ba Cụt, who was widely regarded as a popular hero. On 15 June 1956, the Dân Xã party managed to issue a white paper condemning the government for its arbitrary decision to execute the captured general, despite government persecution of the party.[154] A particularly contentious issue was Ngô Đình Diệm's treatment of rallied sect soldiers. Despite earlier promises, most former members of Nguyễn Thành Phương's and Trình Minh Thế's armies were not integrated,[155] and, in some cases, the government deliberately failed former Cao Đài fighters in their entrance exams into the ARVN.[156] Even sect soldiers accepted into the national military might not be able to keep their ranks,[157] were separated from their sectarian comrades,[158] or assigned lowly, non-combatant duties.[159]

Ngô Đình Diệm's antagonism even pushed some sect militants into armed resistance. Remnants of the Bình Xuyên, Hòa Hảo, and Cao Đài escaped into the maquis and coordinated their attacks against government outposts.[160] The appearance of sect insurgents was welcome news for the communists, and, in October 1955, the party leadership in Hanoi instructed its southern branch to recruit the sects into an alliance.[161] In late 1955, the communists convinced Trần Văn Soái and Lê Quang Vinh to join the executive committee of the Fatherland Front, a new front organization created by the communists.[162] In the following year, the various sect insurgents formed a unified command under the name, Cao Thiên Hòa Bình, short for Cao Đài – Thiên Chúa – Hòa Hảo – Bình Xuyên (Cao Đài – Catholicism – Hòa Hảo – Bình Xuyên, or Alliance of Sectarian Forces).[163] A communist-led unit known as the People's Liberation

---

[151] Lê Văn Dương, *Quân lực VNCH,* 444.
[152] Nguyễn Kiên, *Le Sud-Vietnam depuis Dien-bien-phu* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1963), 137. Nguyễn Kiên's account is highly sympathetic towards the DRV and NLF, and he later went on to publish pro-government accounts of the postwar Socialist Republic of Vietnam. For example, see Nguyễn Kiên, *Vietnam: 15 Years After the Liberation of Saigon* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1990).
[153] Werner, *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism,* 67.
[154] Chapman, "Debating the Will of Heaven," 197.
[155] Werner, *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism,* 54.
[156] Werner, *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism,* 54.
[157] Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 360.
[158] Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 360; Nguyễn Long Thành Nam, *PGHH trong dòng lịch sử dân tộc,* 579.
[159] Nguyễn Long Thành Nam, *PGHH trong dòng lịch sử dân tộc,* 576-577.
[160] For more on Hòa Hảo opposition to the government, see Pentagon Papers, Book IV.A.5: Tab 2, 22, National Archives, accessed 27 Mar 2013, http://www.archives.gov/research/pentagon-papers/; Dennis Warner, *Last Confucian* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 108. For Hòa Hảo cooperation with the Việt Minh to oppose Ngô Đình Diệm, see Thayer, *War By Other Means,* 52. For Bình Xuyên opposition to the government and cooperation with the communists, see Pentagon Papers, Book IV.A.5: Tab 2, 20, National Archives, accessed 27 Mar 2013, http://www.archives.gov/research/pentagon-papers. For Cao Đài opposition to the government, see Werner, *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism,* 54, 68; Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 360.
[161] Thayer, *War By Other Means,* 51-52.
[162] Thayer, *War By Other Means,* 54.
[163] Pentagon Papers, Book IV.A.5: Tab 4, 16, National Archives, accessed 27 Mar 2013, http://www.archives.gov/research/pentagon-paper.

Movement later absorbed the alliance.[164] Ultimately, sectarian resistance contributed to the origins of the southern insurgency and the emergence of the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (National Liberation Front, or NLF). After the rise of the insurgency in 1959, the ARVN sometimes found sect soldiers among captured prisoners.[165]

The early years of Ngô Đình Diệm's tenure marked a critical turning point in the history of anticommunist nationalism. First, his decision to attack the Bình Xuyên and Hòa Hảo introduced an unprecedented level of violence *between* anticommunists. Prior to 1954, occasional skirmishes did erupt between the sects but never escalated to the level of civil war. But with the Battle of Saigon and subsequent pacification campaigns, including the attacks on the Đại Việt and VNQDĐ military zones, the violence that had previously troubled relations between communists and anticommunists also characterized relations among anticommunists. Like the outbreak of violence in 1947-1948 in the south, Ngô Đình Diệm's war on the sects was a competition between former allies over the control of southern Vietnam.

Second, Ngô Đình Diệm's consolidation of power marked the end of a political style that had dominated anticommunist nationalism since the 1940s. The many anticommunist coalitions that rose and fell before 1956 were broad and inclusive but also unstable and riddled with rivalry, like the United Front. Ngô Đình Diệm's preference for a narrow, loyalist government avoided the inherent weaknesses of coalition-building, but it also laid the foundation for the armed insurgency that would undermine his regime. While most critics have blamed him for failing to create a more representative government, other observers have argued that cooperation was impossible given how adamantly the sects defended their private armies and territories. But the division of the sects into opponents and supporters suggest that there was sufficient common ground for Ngô Đình Diệm to incorporate his sect allies, if not hardline opponents like Bảy Viễn. In the end, the president's decision to discard even his allies indicates that his narrow political style was one of choice rather than necessity. Third, and most important, the president permanently displaced the south's most important anticommunist nationalists. The religious sects, in particular, could have served as a bridge between Ngô Đình Diệm and the rural masses, but his aggression precluded any possibility of building support among anticommunist adepts and contributed to his regime's chronic weakness in the countryside.

The war against the sects in the mid-1950s also reflected much older tensions within southern society. Men such as Dương Văn Minh and Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ, the military and civilian leader of the antisectarian campaigns, respectively, belonged to the same social class as the SVN establishment. Both were French-educated and born into wealthy landowning families that had served the colonial administration for generations. In fact, Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ had briefly served as Minister of the Interior for the SVN. Although Ngô Đình Diệm sidelined the highest leaders of the SVN, his actions towards the sects aligned him with the same class of collaborationist colonial elites. Government officials in the First Republic were largely civil servants who had previously served the French colonial regime, and strict educational qualifications meant that those occupying the level of district chief and above were generally of elite origin.[166] In contrast, Trần Văn Soái, Lê Quang Vinh, and Trình Minh Thế were uneducated, self-made peasant leaders that came to prominence during the anti-French resistance. Indeed, Nhị Lang later complained

[164] Pentagon Papers, Book IV.A.5: Tab 4, 16, National Archives, accessed 27 Mar 2013, http://www.archives.gov/research/pentagon-papers.
[165] Pentagon Papers, Book IV.A.5: Tab 2, 21, National Archives, accessed 27 Mar 2013, http://www.archives.gov/research/pentagon-papers.
[166] David Elliott, *The Vietnamese War*, concise ed., 97; Race, *War Comes to Long An*, 251.

that certain tensions separated the French-trained generals of the VNA and the more humble Trình Minh Thế.[167] Many scholars have noted that, in areas once dominated by the Việt Minh, peasants perceived Ngô Đình Diệm's mass arrests of former Việt Minh cadres as an attack on patriotic resistance fighters by collaborationist government officials.[168] A similar dynamic likely took place in former sect territories, as French-trained VNA troops assaulted local sect armies, and the colonial-era security apparatus arrested sect leaders. Thus, in both Việt Minh and sect areas, the president persecuted the leaders of the southern resistance movement.

The Emergence of Anticolonial, Antifeudal Discourse

The Denounce the Communists Campaign gave rise to an antifeudal, anticolonial discourse that was thin, vague, and dominated by the government. It featured little more than a disparate collection of ideas similar to the accusations made by Ngô Đình Diệm and the Revolutionary Committee. The campaign never generated a substantial number of texts, unlike the voluminous anticommunist discourse, and what little was written was produced primarily by authors or publishers affiliated with the government. A small number of writers mentioned the sects, the SVN establishment, or the French in passing, and an even smaller number produced full-length publications focused specifically on colonialism or feudalism. As a result, these scattered references never formed a coherent narrative or achieved much conceptual clarity. The relative weakness of this discourse can be partially attributed to the priorities of the Denounce the Communists Campaign because the government prioritized anticommunism over the anticolonialism and antifeudalism. But the ultimate reason for the thin discourse was the lack of contribution from independent intellectuals. Not only did popular authors rarely polemicize against the sects or the SVN establishment, they barely ever wrote about the resistance movement in the south at all. This silence is particularly conspicuous given the large body of texts about the northern resistance. It appears that the anticolonial, antifeudal rhetoric championed by Ngô Đình Diệm silenced the voices of southern anticommunist nationalists who might otherwise have contributed to a more inclusive nationalism.

The relatively small number of antifeudal and anticolonial works can be divided into three groups: anticommunist publications, history textbooks, and miscellaneous tracts devoted to antifeudal or anticolonial themes. The first group formed a subset of the much larger body of anticommunist works. Like most anticommunist authors, the authors of these tracts were often émigré intellectuals. But unlike the majority of anticommunist writers, these authors worked directly for the government as propagandists, military officers, and specialists in psychological warfare. Although their criticism primarily targeted the communists, they also briefly mentioned the sects, the SVN, or the French. Typical was the example of Nguyễn Văn Châu's *Giòng lịch sử (The Current of History).* The author was a military officer and the Director of Psychological Warfare from 1956 to 1962.[169] *The Current of History* surveyed Vietnamese history to denounce communism but also castigated colonial and feudal oppression in passing.[170] The second group consisted of history textbooks for secondary school students. Written by secondary school teachers, these carried formulaic titles such as *Vietnamese History for the Fourth Form.* The

[167] Nhị Lang, *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế,* 251-252.
[168] Elliott, *Vietnamese War,* concise ed., 97.
[169] The dates for Nguyễn Văn Châu's tenure as the Director of Psychological Warfare are approximate. He was among Ngô Đình Diệm's earliest followers and joined the future president's movement in 1946. See Nguyễn Vy Khanh, introduction to *Ngô Đình Diệm, nỗ lực hòa bình dang dở,* by Nguyễn Văn Châu, trans. Nguyễn Vy Khanh (Los Alamitos, Calif.: Xuân Thu, 1989), 7-10, reference to 7-8.
[170] Nguyễn Văn Châu, *Giòng lịch sử* (Saigon: Văn chiến, 1961).

textbooks reflected both the authors' understanding of the past and the curricular guidelines established by the Ministry of Education. The guidelines included no reference to the triple enemy formula, yet every textbook featured a passionate condemnation of French colonialism and a perfunctory account of Ngô Đình Diệm's struggle against feudalists, colonialists, and communists. The extensive discussion of French colonialism compared with the brief mention of the crises of 1954-1956 suggests that the educators promoted anticolonialism more than antifeudalism. The anticommunist texts and textbooks reflected a government perspective, though to different degrees.

The third and least coherent group consisted of full-length publications whose main theme was the denunciation of French colonialists, the leaders of the SVN, or the sects. I have only been able to locate four such works. The paucity of extant anticolonial, antifeudal publications compared to the much large volume of anticommunist works from the same time period demonstrates just how little interest official anticolonialism and antifeudalism actually generated. The first two were anticolonial and focused mostly on northern Vietnam: Trực Ngôn's *Việt Nam đẫm máu vì Chiến tranh Thực dân (Vietnam is Soaked in Blood from the Colonial War),* an account of the First Indochina War that was highly critical of the French and the SVN,[171] and Thực Đức's *Ai gây nên tội (Who Caused the Crime),* a denunciation of the French and the rural elites for causing the famine of 1944-1945 in northern Vietnam. The remaining two were antifeudal: *Chánh nghĩa đã thắng (The Righteous Cause Has Triumphed),* a polemical booklet about the plebiscite against Bảo Đại, and Nguyễn Duy Hinh's *Vụ án Ba Cụt (The Trial of Ba Cụt),* about the life and career of the Hòa Hảo general. All four tracts were published in 1956 during the height of the antifeudal, anticolonial rhetoric. With the exception of *The Righteous Cause has Triumphed,* which was probably produced by the government, the remaining texts did not mimic the language of state propaganda, and their authors and publishers had no known connection to the government. Nguyễn Duy Hinh was the only identifiable southerner among the four authors, and, although he approved of Ba Cụt's execution, his account was more sympathetic to the sects than those written by northern propagandists and military authors.

The Political Vocabulary of Antifeudalism and Anticolonialism

The antifeudal, anticolonial political terminology reflected the weaknesses of the discourse. It is instructive to compare the terms *phong kiến,* or "feudal," and *thực dân,* or "colonial," with the anticommunist term, *Việt cộng*. The latter is inherently polemical and pejorative and specifically targets Vietnamese communists, while the former two are common vocabulary words that were only occasionally used as political epithets. In fact, many writers discussed the French, the sects, or individual leaders of the SVN without using political epithets at all. In contrast, the term *Việt cộng* was pervasive in discussions of Vietnamese communists. Not surprisingly, the anticolonial, antifeudal vocabulary never became integral to political discourse in the RVN as did anticommunist terms.

The most explicit form of the anticolonial, antifeudal vocabulary was the slogan, "Eliminate the Feudalists, Strike down the Colonialists, and Annihilate the Communists," which appears to have evolved from the description of the three enemies by the Revolutionary Committee and by Ngô Đình Diệm in the spring of 1955. The latter continued to invoke variations of the slogan in his speeches for the rest of the decade. In 1957, Ngô Đình Diệm's annual address for Double Seven Day, the holiday celebrating his assumption of power on 7 July 1954, argued that "resisting imperialists, eliminating feudalists, and annihilating communists"

[171] Trực Ngôn, *Việt Nam đẫm máu vì Chiến tranh Thực dân, 1945-1954* (Saigon: privately published, 1956).

was necessary for national and personal liberation *(kháng đế, bài phong, diệt Cộng).*[172] In his speech for the same holiday two years later, he reminded listeners of his decision to "advocate for the elimination of feudalists, striking down of colonialists, and annihilation of communists."[173] At other times, he used the abbreviated phrase, "Feudalist, Colonialist, and Communist" *(Phong Thực Cộng)*[174] or the compound term "Colonialist-Feudalist" *(Thực Phong).*[175] Propaganda material and history textbooks also featured the terms "feudalist," "colonialist," and sometimes "communist" in succession. During the mobilization for the election of the legislative assembly in 1959, lecture notes provided to Civic Action cadres instructed them to explain to potential voters that the elections "express[ed] the determination of the Vietnamese people to eliminate the feudalists, oppose the colonialists, and exterminate the communists."[176] In contrast, independent intellectuals like Nguyễn Duy Hinh and Thực Đức almost never referenced the triple enemy formula.

The term *thực dân* (Mandarin: *zhímín*) can be translated as "colonial" or "colonialist," and the literal meaning of its Sinitic roots means "to plant people." It referred to colonialism and colonization as general phenomenon, but Vietnamese intellectuals understandably identified the term mainly with French colonialism. Writers used the term *thực dân* to describe the government in Paris, the colonial government in Vietnam, and the entire period of French colonialism from the initial conquest to the Geneva Agreement.[177] Nationalists transformed the term into a political epithet and gave the word a harsher, more negative connotation. In the RVN, accounts such as Trực Ngôn's *Vietnam is Soaked in Blood from the Colonial War* and Trần Vũ's *Ngục tù thực dân gông cùm cộng sản (Colonial Prison, Communist Chains)* associated colonialism with war *(chiến tranh thực dân)* and imprisonment *(ngục tù thực dân),* respectively.[178] Propagandists, such as the anonymous author of *Thành tích Tố cộng, Giai đoạn I (Achievements of the*

---

[172] "kháng đế, bài phong, diệt Cộng": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Hiệu triệu Quốc dân nhận dịp kỷ niệm ba năm Chấp Chánh (7-7-1957)," in *CĐCN* ([Saigon?]: 1957), 3:135-144, citation on 137.

[173] "đề xướng bài phong, đả thực, diệt Cộng": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Hiệu triệu của Tổng thống nhân ngày Song thất (7-7-59)," in *CĐCN* (Saigon: Bộ Thông tin, 1959), 5:107-112, citation on 108.

[174] "Phong, Thực, Cộng": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Hiệu triệu của Tổng Tổng [*sic*] nhân ngày lễ Lao Động (1-5-1960)," in *CĐCN* (Saigon: Nha Tổng Giám Đốc Thông Tin, 1960), 6:101-104, citation on 103. For other uses of "Phong Thực Cộng," see Ngô Đình Diệm, "Huấn từ của Tổng thống trong cuộc lễ tuyên thệ của Thanh Niên Cộng Hòa toàn quốc (3-1-1961)," in *CĐCN* 7:103-104, reference to 103; Xây dựng, "Bài phong," *Xây dựng* 29 (1 Apr 1957): 17-18, 27, reference to 18;

[175] "tình-hình nước nhà thực là hỗn-độn và bi-đát: lãnh-thổ bị chia cắt; miền Bắc rơi vào tay Cộng-sản độc-tài, miền Trung và Nam bị Thực-Phong hoành-hành": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Hiệu triệu Quốc dân nhân dịp lễ Quốc khánh," *CĐCN* (Saigon: Bộ Thông tin và Thanh niên, 1958), 4:33-36, citation in 34.

[176] "nói lên ý chí cương quyết bài phong phản thực và diệt cộng của nhân dân Việt-Nam": "Dẫn ý bài nói truyện ý nghĩa mục đích của cuộc Tổng tuyển cử Quốc Hội," c. 1956, file 733, ĐICH.

[177] For a more neutral usage of the term *thực dân,* consider Nguyễn Văn Trung's *Chủ nghĩa thực dân Pháp ở Việt Nam: Thực chất và huyền thoại (French Colonialism in Vietnam: Myth and Reality),* a critique of French colonial ideology published in 1963, as well as Phan Khoang's *Việt Pháp bang giao sử lược (A Brief History of Franco-Vietnamese Relations),* a history of French colonialism in Vietnam published in 1950. Nguyễn Văn Trung used the word *thực dân* as a scholarly term to refer to colonial ideology and imperial economic and political arrangements. The subtitle of Phan Khoang's book was, "Lịch sử Nam kỳ thành đất thực dân và Trung, Bắc kỳ bị cuộc bảo hộ" ("The History of How Cochinchina Became Colonial Territory and Annam and Tonkin Were Made into Protectorates"). Phan Khoang used the term *thực dân* in the technical sense to describe the colony of Cochinchina in contrast to the two *bảo hộ* (protectorates) in northern and central Vietnam. See Nguyễn Văn Trung, *Chủ nghĩa thực dân Pháp ở Việt Nam: Thực chất và huyền thoại* (Saigon: Nam Sơn, 1963); Phan Khoang, *Việt Pháp bang giao sử lược* ([Saigon?]: Nguyễn Văn Bửu, 1950).

[178] Trần Vũ, *Ngục tù thực dân gông cùm cộng sản* (Saigon: Ủy ban Bảo trợ Phong trào Chống Cộng miền Bắc, 1957).

Denounce the Communists Campaign, Phase I), the proceedings from the campaign's national conference in spring 1956, routinely added pejorative classifiers to refer to the French as the "colonialist gang" *(bọn thực dân)* and the "colonialist clique" *(bè lũ thực dân).*[179]

Phong kiến was also a Sino-Vietnamese term and has meant "to ennoble and enfeoff" (Mandarin: *fengjiàn*) since the Warring States period of premodern China.[180] The term roughly translates as "feudal" or "feudalist," and Vietnamese scholars used it to describe feudalism as a historical phenomenon in both Europe and Asia.[181] Like "colonialist", the term *phong kiến* became derogatory when used as a political epithet, particularly in combination with pejorative classifiers, such as "the feudal gang" *(bọn phong kiến).*[182] But the label of "feudalist" was more polemical than informative. Not only did it exaggerate the traditional character of Ngô Đình Diệm's rivals, the epithet suffered from a lack of clarity and specificity because it encompassed such different groups. Whereas the Revolutionary Committee had used the term to refer to the SVN regime, later antifeudalists expanded it to include the sects and all of precolonial Vietnam. In *The Current of History,* Nguyễn Văn Châu drew upon the scholarly meaning of the term to assert that, prior to colonialism, "Vietnamese society lived completely within a feudal framework like the feudal societies of China and Japan before modernization."[183] Trần Quốc Bảo's *Cuộc di cư vĩ đại trong lịch sử thế giới cận kim (The Great Migration of Recent World History),* an account of the migration of 1954-1955, partially blamed the partition of Vietnam on a "gang of kings, lords, mandarins, and the feudalist clique."[184] The "gang of kings, lords, and mandarins" presumably referred to Bảo Đại and other leaders of the SVN. The "feudalist clique" must have referred to the sects because the author blamed the clique for "creating the conditions of 'Feuding Warlords,'" an obvious reference to the sect territories.[185] But Trần Quốc Bảo did not explain why the sects might be considered "feudal" and whether the "feudal clique" also included the "kings, lords, and mandarins." It is understandable that writers used the term "feudal" to refer both to Vietnam's dynastic period and the SVN, which was headed by a former emperor, but how did the meaning of *phong kiến* evolve to include the sects?

The existing evidence suggests that the epithet "feudal" was deeply influenced by the French usage of *féodalités* and *féodal,* which translates into Vietnamese as *phong kiến.* During the First Indochina War, French observers compared the sects to fiefs in medieval Europe because the sects commanded their own territories independent of the central government. Antoine Savani, the director of French military intelligence in Saigon and the foremost French expert on the sects, routinely referred to "Hòa Hảo feudalities" *(des féodalités Hoa Hao)* in his classified report on the religious group in 1951. He even characterized Trần Văn Soái as a "lord"

---

[179] *Thành tích Tố cộng,* 66.
[180] Hanyu da cidian bianji weiyuanhui, ed., *Hanyu da cidian,* fine print ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2009), s.v. "fēngjiàn."
[181] For example, see Phan Khoang, "Nguy-hại của phong-kiến," *Văn hóa Nguyệt san,* n.s., 22 (Jul 1957): 529-540.
[182] "Phát động chiến dịch Tố Cộng," *Xây dựng* 12 (31 May 1956): 11-12.
[183] "xã hội Việt Nam là một xã hội hoàn toàn sống trong khuôn khổ phong kiến như các xã hội phong kiến Trung Hoa, Nhật Bổn trước các giai đoạn duy tân vậy": Nguyễn Văn Châu, *Giòng lịch sử,* 36. The author described feudalism as a social hierarchy with a king at the apex, an educated literati class in the middle, and the peasant masses at the bottom.
[184] "bọn Vua-chúa, quan-quyền và bè lũ phong-kiến": Trần Quốc Bảo, *Cuộc di cư vĩ đại trong lịch sử thế giới cân kim,* 22.
[185] "gây nên những cảnh 'Sứ-quân tranh hùng'": Trần Quốc Bảo, *Cuộc di cư vĩ đại trong lịch sử thế giới cân kim,* 22.

(seigneur) and the territory of each Hòa Hảo general as a "fief" *(fief)*.[186] A later report on the Bình Xuyên similarly described the gang as one of many "armed groups with feudal structures" *(groupements armés, à structures féodale)*.[187] French journalists covering the First Indochina War shared Savani's description of the sects as "feudal,"[188] and educated, politically aware Vietnamese would have been familiar with such usage. One vector for the transference of *féodalité* from the French to the Vietnamese may have been the close ties between the FEC and the VNA. Military authors were some of the RVN's most aggressive antifeudalists, and they may have absorbed French attitudes since their early days in the VNA. In any case, Ngô Đình Diệm appears to have inherited the hostility of the French colonial government towards sectarian politics. The French influence was most apparent in the comparison of sect leaders to feudal warlords, discussed below.

The usage of *phong kiến* might also have reflected communist influence. Similar to Ngô Đình Diệm's supporters, contemporary scholars in the DRV frequently described Vietnam's entire dynastic period as "feudal"[189] and used the term as a pejorative for what they considered to be antiquated institutions, perspectives, or groups.[190] Indeed, the phrase "Colonialist-Feudalist" is reminiscent of communist analyses of many Asian countries as "semi-colonial, semi-feudal" states, and at least one historian in the DRV is known to have described Vietnam's colonial period as "feudal colonialism."[191] The academic concept of a "semi-colonial, semi-feudal" state describes a composite political and economic system that exhibits traditional features alongside changes wrought by western imperialism, but it came to have a have a more specific meaning during the resistance. In the south, the Việt Minh explained to peasants that their struggle was *phản đế bài phong*, or "anti-imperialism and eliminating feudalism."[192] That is, the Việt Minh wanted to overthrow both the French-controlled central government and local Vietnamese elites that carried out government functions in rural areas.[193] Ngô Đình Diệm appears to have absorbed this ethos, and he employed the phrase "Colonialist-Feudalist" to emphasize the alliance between two ruling groups, the French and supposedly traditional Vietnamese.[194] There are at least two possible explanations for the similarities between communist and anticommunist rhetoric. The first is their common past: the colonial and precolonial period were important for national identity among Vietnamese of all political persuasions. A second explanation is that certain concepts and terms may have been communist in origin but had already become part of mainstream Vietnamese politics and adopted even by anticommunists by the 1950s.

---

[186] "des féodalités HOA HAO": Savani, *Notes sur le PGHH,* 87, 106 (capitalization in original); "fief": Savani, *Notes sur le PGHH,* 48, 80, 82; "seigneur": Savani, *Notes sur le PGHH,* 92.
[187] Savani, *Notes sur les Binh-Xuyen,* 1.
[188] Ellen J. Hammer notes that French journalists commonly used the term "feudal" to describe different armed groups that supported Bảo Đại during the early 1950s. Hammer identified five such groups: the three sects in the south and the Đại Việt and armed Catholic bishoprics of Bùi Chu and Phát Diệm in the north. See Hammer, *Struggle for Indochina,* 284 n85a.
[189] For example, North Vietnamese historians described dynastic histories and the authors of these texts as "feudal." See Pelley, *Postcolonial Vietnam,* 29, 30.
[190] For example, North Vietnamese historians criticized the works of colonial-era historian Trần Trọng Kim as "feudal." See Pelley, *Postcolonial Vietnam,* 36-37.
[191] Pelley, *Postcolonial Vietnam,* 36.
[192] Race, *War Comes to Long An,* 40.
[193] Race, *War Comes to Long An,* 40.
[194] It should be noted that scholars in the RVN did not use the word *phong kiến* with the same frequency as their North Vietnamese counterparts, and the term never became a standard academic descriptor for the precolonial period.

Colluding Enemies

Anticolonialism and antifeudalism converged around a series of discrete themes rather than a single, systematic critique. Accusations of collusion, warlordism, and banditry aimed to attack the political legitimacy of the noncommunist enemies, while allegations of corruption and depravity undermined their moral credibility. Some, but not all, of the charges grew out of the accusations made during the crises of 1954-1956. The most prominent theme was the denunciation of French and Vietnamese collusion that first emerged during the Battle of Saigon, but later writers made far more sweeping allegations than the original accusations against the Bình Xuyên, Bảo Đại, and the French. Numerous authors criticized the collaborationist character of the entire SVN period and chose epithets such as "lackey" *(tay sai)* and "puppet" *(bù nhìn)* to caricature the alleged servility of the feudalists. In *Vietnam is Soaked in Blood by the Colonial War,* Trực Ngôn characterized the leaders of the SVN as a "gang of puppets" *(bọn bù nhìn)* and dismissed all those who supported the regime as mere sycophants: "The toadying, sycophantic lickspittles who supported the gang of puppets consisted only of some feudal mandarins, some veterans in the French military prior to the Japanese coup (9 Mar 1945), and a clique of opportunist politicians."[195] The author seems to have implied that even the nationalists who supported the SVN, such as the Đại Việt and the sects, were nothing more than scheming lackeys. In *The Current of History,* Nguyễn Văn Châu bluntly described the SVN as "a forced marriage between Vietnamese Feudalism and French Colonialism"[196] and portrayed the sects as the product of French policy: "the new colonial classes were exhausted from guerilla warfare, and they adopted the policy of creating numerous armed groups, nurturing the armed groups and sects, and pushing [the groups] to oppose each other in order to divide the resistance forces."[197]

Authors portrayed Ngô Đình Diệm's consolidation of power as a struggle against "colluding" feudalists, colonialists, and communists *(cấu kết).* Instead of acknowledging that the president had provoked his rivals by refusing to broaden the government, writers denounced opposition to his rule as rebellious, conspiratorial, and destructive. A typical example was the assertion found in *Achievements of the Denounce the Communists Campaign*: "The *Việt cộng* colluded with the Colonialists, divided the sects and incited the rebels, which has led to much bloodshed and caused numerous compatriots to die and their houses and property to burn."[198] Tăng Xuân An and Nguyễn Thị Hợp drew directly from official propaganda when they blamed the three enemies for "inciting rebellion" *(gay loạn)* in their history textbook for the fourth form: "Having failed politically, the Colonialists, Feudalists, and Communists incited rebellion in the Capital and the provinces."[199] Cited as evidence was the Hinh crisis, the attacks on the Bình Xuyên, and pacification campaigns to reclaim Việt Minh areas, but the textbook remained vague

---

[195] "A-dua, theo voi ăn bã mía, bợ đỡ bọn bù-nhìn chỉ có một số cựu quan-lại phong-kiến, một số cựu-binh của Pháp trước ngày Nhật đảo chính Pháp (9-3-1945) và một bọn chính-trị hoạt-đầu": Trực Ngôn, *Việt Nam đẫm máu vì chiến tranh thực dân,* 99. I have rendered the Vietnamese idiom *theo voi ăn bả mía* as "lickspittle." The idiom literally translates as, "to follow an elephant and eat the sugar cane pulp that is leftover," and refers to sycophantic behavior.
[196] "một cuộc hôn nhân gượng ép giữa Phong kiến Việt và Thực dân Pháp": Nguyễn Văn Châu, *Giòng lịch sử,* 103.
[197] "lớp thực dân mới đã mệt mỏi vì chiến tranh du-kích, nên chủ trương gây ra nhiều nhóm võ trang, nuôi dưỡng các nhóm, các giáo phái võ trang này, thúc đẩy cho chống đối lẫn nhau, đặng phân tán lực lượng kháng chiến": Nguyễn Văn Châu, *Giòng lịch sử,* 104
[198] "Việt-Cộng cấu kết với Thực-Dân, chia rẽ giáo phái xúi giục phiến-loạn nên bao cuộc đổ máu làm cho bao nhiêu đồng bào bị chết nạn, nhà cửa đồ-đạc bị thiêu hủy": *Thành tích Tố cộng,* 41.
[199] "Bị thất-bại về chính-trị, Thực-dân Phong-kiến và Cộng-sản gây loạn ở Đô-thành cũng như ở các tỉnh": Tăng Xuân An and Nguyễn Thị Hợp [bà Tăng Xuân An, pseud.], *Viet sử lớp đệ tứ* (Saigon: Tao Đàn, [1963?]), 151.

as to how each group was involved in the various incidents and who exactly was included in the term, "feudalists."

Yet authors disagreed on which enemy masterminded the alleged conspiracy. Phạm Văn Sơn, a historian in the ARVN, implied in *Việt Nam Tranh Đấu Sử (The History of Vietnamese Struggles)* that the French played a central role in the crisis by acting through the sects. He focused on the emergence of the United Front and the roles of Phạm Công Tắc and Trần Văn Soái to argue that the actions of the front undermined the religious sects' reputation as anticommunist nationalists: "Our southern countrymen once believed that this gang [the religious sects] was patriotic and anticommunist. In early 1955, they revealed their despicable true colors as the lackeys of the French by secretly presenting French requests [as their own] and demanding that Ngô Đình Diệm's government accede."[200] Phạm Văn Sơn was one of the only writers to specifically discuss a historical event in any detail rather than merely glossing over it with political epithets. The historian went on to explain that the French policy was to incite their "gang of bandit henchmen" *(bọn lâu la)* to transform Ngô Đình Diệm's government into a "puppet government" *(chánh phủ bù nhìn).*[201] In contrast, author Nguyễn Trân, who was the province chief of Định Tường province, claimed that the communists, not the French, commanded the loyalty of Ngô Đình Diệm's rivals.[202] In his anticommunist tract, *Chế độ cộng sản (Communist Regimes),* he shifted the discussion to the period after the plebiscite: "Hồ Chí Minh spoke out in support of Bảo Đại after this benighted king was overthrown by the entire people. Afterwards, the communist Việt Minh helped the rebels Nguyễn Văn Hinh, Bình Xuyên, Hòa Hảo, and Cao Đài oppose our government."[203]

Read together, the accusations portrayed a historical collusion between the French and servile Vietnamese spanning the entire SVN regime until 1956. But the discourse was so inconsistent and vague that it was difficult to trace a continuous sequence of events. In what ways did the feudalists serve the French under the SVN? When did the feudalists and French shift from fighting the communists to conspiring with them? Unlike the anticommunist discourse, there were no novels, monographs, or memoirs to add emotional depth and historical detail. Equally significant was that the authors chose to emphasize the period after 1947-1948, when the sects cooperated with the French and the SVN, but ignored their earlier participation in the anticolonial resistance. Neither did the authors acknowledge that the sects suffered violence at the hands of the Việt Minh, rallied to the French only to avoid fighting two enemies simultaneously, and, in some cases, were pushed into the arms of the communists by Ngô Đình Diệm's attacks. Instead, the president and his supporters launched simplistic accusations of collusion to imply that the sects were neither nationalist nor anticommunist. To a lesser extent,

---

[200] "Đầu năm 1955, họ đã để lộ chân tướng bỉ-ổi của họ là tay sai của Pháp qua các yêu-sách Pháp đã ngầm nêu ra để đòi chánh phủ Ngô-đình-Diệm phải thỏa-mãn": Phạm Văn Sơn, *Việt Nam tranh đấu sử,* 5th ed., 386-387.

[201] Phạm Văn Sơn, *Việt Nam tranh đấu sử,* 5th ed., 387.

[202] Nguyễn Trân served as chief of Định Tường province in the Mekong delta from 1956 to 1958. An outspoken anticommunist, the province chief orchestrated a public debate in 1958 between himself and fourteen captured communist cadres on the topic of Marxist theory and communist strategy. I would like to thank David Elliott and Edward Miller for their assistance in identifying the author. For a brief account of the debate, see Elliott, *Vietnamese War,* concise ed., 100; Nguyễn Trân, *Công và tội,* 225-239. For Nguyễn Trân's discussion of his own work, see Nguyễn Trân, *Công và tội,* 219-225.

[203] "Hồ-chí-Minh lên tiếng ủng-hộ Bảo-Đại sau khi tên hôn-quân nầy đã bị toàn dân truất-phế. Tiếp theo là sự V.M.C.S. giúp đỡ bọn phiến-loạn Nguyễn-văn-Hinh và Bình-Xuyên, Hòa-Hảo, Cao-Đai chống lại Chính-Phủ ta": Nguyễn Trân, *Chế độ cộng sản,* 63. I have translated the title, *Chế độ cộng sản,* as *Communist Regimes* rather than *A Communist Regime* because the volume linked the ideology of communism to the practice of communism in general rather than to a particular communist government.

the accusation of collusion was also an attempt to shore up the regime's anticolonial credentials. By continually denouncing groups that were allegedly allied with the French and communists, propagandists implicitly aligned the government with the anticolonial struggle.

Warlordism and Banditry

A particularly distinctive strand of antifeudalism focused exclusively on sectarian rule prior to 1954. It combined Ngô Đình Diệm's charges of banditry, Vietnamese history, and what appears to be a French-influenced interpretation of the sects as feudal. Similar to the French discussion of "lords" and "fiefs", a number of Vietnamese writers derisively described the sects as *sứ quân,* meaning "warlord," to imply that sect leaders were nothing more than local strongmen. In the anticommunist tract, *Một thế cờ lật ngược (Counter Strategy),* author Đoàn Đình Nhuệ alternated between the image of medieval warlords and common bandits, or "hooligans" *(bọn lưu manh),* to describe the religious sects. He described southern Vietnam during the resistance war as an anarchic region carved up by feudal strongmen: "In the south, the Warlords occupied different areas and enjoyed a free hand in enacting taxes to exploit the people."[204] He even insinuated that the Hòa Hảo and Cao Đài were religious charlatans and criminals. Of the Hòa Hảo, he claimed, "In southwestern Vietnam, unscrupulous hooligans posing as a religion conquered a region. They were imperious, exploitative, and murderous, 'executing first and reporting later,' like a Palatine from the height of the Feudal period in the Middle Ages."[205] The author's portrayal of the Cao Đài was equally vicious: "In Tây Ninh, an unscrupulous clique posing as a religion had a military at their disposal and carried out hooligan activities, exploitation, and murder just like the *hung thần* in the west."[206] *Hung thần,* meaning "unjust official," is a historical term describing officials in the service of the monarch who treated the population cruelly, and Đoàn Đình Nhuệ used it to refer to the Hòa Hảo. Words such as "Palatine" and "unjust official" emphasized the supposedly feudal character of the sects.

Some propagandists compared the south during the First Indochina War to the period of the Twelve Warlords at the end of the 10th century. The twelve warlords were Vietnamese strongmen that vied for power after the shaky reign of Ngô Quyền at the end of the millennium of Chinese rule. Vietnamese historians typically portray the period as a time of intense suffering for the people, and the usage of *sứ quân* was meant to suggest lawlessness as well as fragmentation.[207] Propaganda material by the Ministry of Foreign Relations compiled towards the end of the First Republic melodramatically compared sectarian domination to warlord rule: "different factions were trampling on our mountains and rivers, fighting for influence, occupying a territory and declaring themselves lords, no different than during the period of the Twelve

[204] "Tại miền Nam các Sứ-Quân chiếm đóng từng vùng tha hồ đặt ra mọi thứ thuế để bóc lột dân chúng": Đoàn Đình Nhuệ, *Một thế cờ lật ngược* ([Saigon?]: Chống Cộng, 1956), 23.
[205] "Miền Tây Nam-Việt, bọn lưu manh côn đồ đội lốt Giáo phái chiếm lĩnh một vùng, hống hách, bóc lột, tàn sát 'tiền trảm hậu tấ' như một Tiểu Vương Quốc trong thời kỳ Phong Kiến toàn thịnh thời Trung cổ": Đoàn Đình Nhuệ, *Một thế cờ lật ngược,* 23- 24.
[206] "Phía Tây-Ninh bọn lưu manh đội lốt Giáo phái có quân đội trong tay thi hành những thủ đoạn côn đồ, bóc lột, tàn sát nhân dân như bọn hung thần miền Tây": Đoàn Đình Nhuệ, *Một thế cờ lật ngược,* 24.
[207] For example, see "Lịch-sử Ngày 26 tháng 10," c. Oct 1958-Oct 1959, file 20184, ĐICH. For the portrayal of the Ten Warlords period in modern Vietnamese historiography, consider Trần Trọng Kim's classic, *Việt Nam sử lược,* which states that the Ten Warlords period was a time of intense suffering. *Việt Nam sử lược* was the first major Vietnamese-language, western-style history of Vietnam, written in 1920. The text was highly respected in the RVN and often used in public schools. See Trần Trọng Kim, *Việt Nam sử lược* (1919; repr. Thanh Hóa, Vietnam: Nhà xuất bản Thanh Hóa, 2006), 90-93. All citations refer to 2006 edition.

Warlords of ancient times."[208] In fact, one of the pacification campaigns against the Hòa Hảo was named Đinh Tiên Hoàng, the peasant leader that defeated the twelve warlords, unified the realm, and established the first independent Vietnamese dynasty.[209] If the sects were the contemporary counterpart to premodern warlords, then the RVN was the modern embodiment of the legitimate monarch that unified the country. Nguyễn Văn Châu's *The Current of History* created a narrative of unification based on the integration of the sect armies and the military operations against sect opponents: "From a chaotic region, splintered and divided by a feud between *'sectarian warlords,'* the South under the new regime has unified the separate, clashing armies into a single armed force" (italics in original).[210]

In contrast, Nguyễn Duy Hinh emphasized affinities between sect leaders and criminals. *The Trial of Ba Cụt* claimed that Ba Cụt's ambition was driven not by nationalism but the chivalrous culture of the *anh chị* underworld and his desire to emulate "the individualistic heroes found in novels and Chinese tales."[211] *Anh chị,* meaning "elder brother and elder sister," was a common term for the leaders of organized crime, often applied to the Bình Xuyên, and had a certain Robin Hood-like connotation.[212] According to Nguyễn Duy Hinh, "a minority of southerners, if they lack intellect and advisers, are easily pushed into righteous actions and individualistic heroism, commonly referred to as an *anh chị* character."[213] Ba Cụt fit into this character as an ignorant outlaw easily manipulated by others, the author explained: "The type of person who likes to be an *anh chị* but is ignorant of politics like Ba Cụt could hardly avoid being taken advantage of by others."[214] What pushed Ba Cụt into rallying to the French was meaningless praise from a puppet ruler, the journalist asserted: "A person like that is willing to risk death for a piece of paper 'conferring the worthless title of general' from the puppet Bảo Đại. (Bảo Đại himself awarded him [Ba Cụt] the title of lieutenant general)" (parenthesis in original).[215] Ba Cụt was given the rank of a military officer by the FEC or the SVN like all of the sect generals who rallied. In short, Ba Cụt was nothing more than a brave rebel leader, eager for praise, but too foolish to achieve national greatness. Nguyễn Duy Hinh was a native of the south, and his familiarity with *anh chị* culture lent the tract a certain indigenous flair. Unlike other authors, he acknowledged the bravery and populist heroism that sect leaders represented, even if he derided them as gullible bumpkins.

Propagandists never fully explained the relationship between warlordism, banditry, and collusion or how the sects could simultaneously be medieval strongmen, gangsters, and colonial

---

[208] "đảng phái dầy xéo non song, tranh giành ảnh-hưởng, chiếm đóng từng vùng, xưng hùng xưng bá, không khác thời-kỳ Thập Nhị Sứ Quân ngày xưa": *Thành tích chín năm hoạt động của chánh phủ* (Saigon: 1963), 288.
[209] The title of "tiên hoàng" is ususally conferred posthumously to the first monarch of a dynasty, so Đinh Bộ Lĩnh is remembered as Đinh Tiên Hoàng, meaning "Founding Emperor Đinh," or "First Emperor Đinh."
[210] "Từ một miền hỗn-độn, chia năm xẻ bảy giữa cuộc tranh hùng của các *'Sứ quân giáo phái,'* miền Nam trong chế độ mới, đã thống nhất được các lực lượng võ trang đơn lẻ, chống đối lẫn nhau, vào một khối võ trang duy nhất: Quân Đội Cộng Hòa Việt Nam": Nguyễn Văn Châu, *Giòng lịch sử,* 106.
[211] "anh hùng cá nhân loại truyện Tàu hay tiểu thuyết": Nguyễn Duy Hinh [Cồ Việt Tử, pseud.], *Vụ án Ba Cụt (phụ thêm 2 bản án của Bảy Viễn và Nguyễn Văn Thành)* (Saigon: Nguyễn Duy Hinh, 1956), 8.
[212] For more on *anh chị* culture, see Peter Zinoman, *Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862-1940* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 118-121.
[213] "một ít người miền Nam dễ bị xô đẩy vào những hành-động nghĩa-khí, cũng như những hành-động có tánh cách anh-hùng cá-nhân, nói nôm-na là tính-khí 'anh-chị'": Nguyễn Duy Hinh, *Vụ án Ba Cụt,* 10.
[214] "Hạng người thích làm anh chị nhưng dốt chính trị như Ba Cụt tránh sao khỏi bị lợi dụng": Nguyễn Duy Hinh, *Vụ án Ba Cụt,* 30.
[215] "Một kẻ như thế rất có thể dám liều chết về [*sic*] một mãnh giấy 'phong tướng vô giá trị' của bù-nhìn Bảo-Đại. (Chính Bảo-Đại đã phong cho y chức trung tướng)": Nguyễn Duy Hinh, *Vụ án Ba Cụt,* 31.

or communist lackeys. Instead, each of these was distinct accusation that questioned the political legitimacy of sectarian rule. But the antifeudalists failed to acknowledge that the sects were part of the religious, cultural, and political fabric of southern Vietnam. Thus, claims of charlatanism were ridiculous, though some sect leaders may have been part of the rough-and-tumble world of *anh chị* culture. Some Hòa Hảo generals did tax the population heavily and enrich themselves, but sectarian rule also protected adepts from the banditry and violence that was endemic during the First Indochina War.[216] Given these inaccuracies and vagueness, much of antifeudal discourse contradicted the historical experiences of millions of southerners.

Division and Debauchery

Another prominent accusation centered on the colonial strategy of "divide-and-rule" *(chia để trị)*. Though thematically similar to Ngô Đình Diệm's earlier complaints that sect leaders were divisive, the later discourse focused on the French. Many textbooks pointed to the colonial division of the Vietnam into three administrative areas as evidence of this strategy (See Map 1). Under the subheading of "The policy of dividing in order to conquer," Nguyễn Văn Mùi and Vũ Ngọc Ánh declared in their textbook, *Việt sử và thế giới sử lớp đệ tứ (Vietnamese History and World History for the Fourth Form)*, "[I]n order to govern more easily, the colonialists divided Vietnam into three separate regions. Each region had a separate system of government and legal code, almost like three countries."[217] The coauthors claimed that the division was intended to destroy Vietnamese identity and thwart unification: "The French colonialist gang implemented this divisive policy with the purpose of simultaneously annihilating our people's distinctive characteristics and diminishing the unity of the entire Vietnamese people."[218] None of the textbook writers pointed out that the tripartite division of Vietnam actually dated back to the Nguyễn dynasty of the 19th century, prior to the arrival of the French. An alternative interpretation of the divide-and-rule strategy focused on social differences. Bùi Quang Ly's *Việt sử Thế giới sử lớp đệ tứ (Vietnamese History and World History for the Fourth Form)* asserted that the French divided Vietnamese society by supporting Vietnamese elites while mistreating the rest of the population: "With this policy of 'divide and rule' and with economic monopolies, the French aimed to support a minority from the capitalist and mandarinal classes in order to use them and exploit the vast majority."[219]

Perhaps the most diffuse theme was a loosely related set of complaints about selfishness, greed, the corruption of traditional culture and morality, and the lack of patriotism among certain Vietnamese. What tied these accusations together was that writers usually blamed French policy or cultural influence. A common allegation was that colonial education, foreign cultural products, and the colonial vice trade corrupted Vietnamese youth and undermined their patriotism. Trần Hữu Quảng's *Việt sử và thế giới sử lớp đệ tứ (Vietnamese History and World History for the Fourth Form)* blamed French-language instruction and the colonial curriculum:

---

[216] Trần Mỹ-Vân, "Under the Japanese Umbrella," 80; Werner, *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism*, 33.
[217] "Chính sách chia để mà trị," "muốn tiện bề thống trị, thực dân đã chia V.N. thành ba xứ riêng biệt, mỗi xứ một chế độ cai trị riêng, luật pháp riêng, hầu như 3 nước vậy": Nguyễn Văn Mùi and Vũ Ngọc Ánh, *Việt sử và thế giới sử lớp đệ tứ,* 43.
[218] "Thi hành chính sách chia rẽ này, bọn thực dân Pháp có mục đích tiêu diệt dần cá tính của dân tộc, đồng thời làm giảm bớt lực lượng đoàn kết của toàn thể dân chúng Việt-Nam": Nguyễn Văn Mùi and Vũ Ngọc Ánh, *Việt sử và thế giới sử lớp đệ tứ,* 44.
[219] "Với chính sách 'chia để trị,' với những độc-quyền về kinh-tế, người Pháp chủ-tâm nâng đỡ một thiểu-số thuộc giới tư-sản quan-liêu để dùng họ mà bóc-lột đại-đa-số": Bùi Quang Ly, *Việt sử Thế giới sử lớp đệ tứ* ([Saigon?]: Nam Sơn, [1960?]), 30.

"Since primary school, [students] studied all in French, wrote and thought in French. The various subjects also took young people far from their homeland: they were taught French history and geography and brainwashed with the line, 'Our ancestors are the Gauls.'"[220] Teachers commonly taught the jingle to schoolchildren in France to remind them of their national heritage, but it was ironic when transposed to the colonial setting, where most students were not of Gallic ancestry. Fellow educators Tăng Xuân An and Nguyễn Thị Hợp singled out the importation of harmful cultural products in their textbook for the fourth form: "Books, magazines, and films that poisoned youth were easily imported or published, while political and historical books that stimulated patriotism were confiscated and forbidden."[221] They also fretted over colonial vice operations: "Numerous opium dens, nightclubs were allowed to operate, and youth were free to frequent them."[222] These policies created a young generation that was too selfish, greedy, or hedonistic to care about national independence, argued Nguyễn Văn Châu, in *The Current of History*: "Lost in the whirlpool of hedonism, they thought only of personal interest (career and status, fame, wealth) and slowly forgot about the collective interest of society (the nation)" (parenthesis in original).[223]

Many writers seized upon Bảo Đại as the foremost example of a Vietnamese youth corrupted by French influence. *The Righteous Cause Has Triumphed* claimed that the former emperor came of age in France, under the care of former governor general and resident superior Jean Charles, and it was Charles that chose a "romantic and dissolute" Frenchwoman to be the emperor's first sex partner.[224] Dissolution caused Bảo Đại to become indifferent to nationalist concerns, and the tract castigated the emperor as the symbol of the SVN's moral degeneracy and servility: "A puppet before, now he was still nothing but a puppet. He knew nothing but gambling all night and wanton pleasures year round, and he let the lackeys of the colonialists exploit and oppress the people."[225] The image of Bảo Đại as an apathetic, dissipated puppet king became the standard historical interpretation in the RVN. In *A History of Vietnamese Struggles*, Phạm Văn Sơn asserted, "[T]he cunning Colonialist clique did not forget to poison Bảo Đại with depraved pastimes. The City of Lights is always overflowing with alcohol and pretty girls, making it easy to become ensnared."[226] Textbook authors repeated the same allegations, though they avoided explicit discussions of sexuality.[227]

---

[220] "Từ tiểu-học đã học toàn tiếng Pháp, viết và suy-nghĩ bằng tiếng Pháp. Các môn học cũng dần đưa thanh-niên xa xứ-sở: học Sử-ký, Địa-lý nước Pháp để nhồi sọ 'tổ-tiên chúng ta là giống Gaulois'": Trần Hữu Quảng, *Việt sử và thế giới sử lớp đệ tứ* (Saigon: Nguyễn Du, 1962), 53-54. For similar complaints about the language of instruction and curriculum in colonial education, see Tăng Xuân An and Nguyễn Thị Hợp, *Việt sử lớp đệ tứ,* 36; Tăng Xuân An and Nguyễn Thị Hợp, *Việt sử lớp đệ nhất,* 52; Phan Khoang, *Việt Nam Pháp thuộc sử, 1884-1945* (Saigon: Khai Trí, 1961), 436.

[221] "Sách báo, phim ảnh có tinh-cách đầu-độc thanh-niên được nhập-cảng hoặc xuất-bản dễ-dàng còn các sách chính-trị, lịch-sử kích-thích lòng ái-quốc thì bị tịch-thu, cấm lưu-hành": Tăng Xuân An and Nguyễn Thị Hợp, *Việt sử lớp đệ tứ,* 37. For similar complaints about dangerous cultural products, see Nguyễn Văn Mùi and Vũ Ngọc Ánh, *Việt sử và thế giới sử lớp đệ tứ,* 49.

[222] "Các tiệm hút, tiệm khiêu-vũ được phép mở rất nhiều và thanh-niên được tự-do lui tới": Tăng Xuân An and Nguyễn Thị Hợp, *Việt sử lớp đệ tứ,* 37.

[223] "Quay cuồng trong chủ nghĩa khoái lạc, họ chỉ còn biết đến quyền lợi cá nhân (địa vị, danh vọng, tiền tài) mà quên dần những quyền lợi của tập thể xã hội (dân tộc)": Nguyễn Văn Châu, *Giòng lịch sử,* 43.

[224] "chơi bời, phong hoa tuyết nguyệt": *Chánh nghĩa đã thắng,* 19.

[225] "Bù-nhìn từ trước, nay y vẫn chỉ là bù-nhìn. Y chỉ biết bạc-bài thâu-canh, vui chơi đàng-điếm quanh năm, mặc cho bọn tay sai thực-dân bóc lột và hà-hiếp nhân-dân": *Chánh nghĩa đã thắng,* 18.

[226] "Thực-dân quỷ-quyệt không quên đầu độc con người Bảo-Đại bằng các thứ ăn chơi xa đọa, rượu ngon gái đẹp lúc nào cũng tràn ngập nơi kinh-thành ánh sáng để dễ bề thao-túng": Phạm Văn Sơn, *Việt Nam tranh đấu sử,* 5th ed., 265. It is interesting to note the drastic change in Phạm Văn Sơn's assessment of Bảo Đại between the first and fifth

Besides Bảo Đại, Bảy Viễn's association with the vice trade also made him a symbol of corruption and depravity. In *The Trial of Ba Cụt,* Nguyễn Duy Hinh claimed that the French were partly to blame for the emergence of Bảy Viễn: "With the purpose of using Bảy Viễn as a barrier against gangsters… the colonialists completely spoiled him and allowed him to occupy the entire area of Bình Xuyên, on the other side of the Y-shaped bridge, and left him to his own devices."[228] Nguyễn Duy Hinh explained that the basis for Bảy Viễn's wealth was protection rackets, the control of the SVN's gambling concessions, and a monopoly on the sex trade. "Alcohol, sex, money, opium… and blood were the ingredients out of which his enormous wealth was constructed," the journalist concluded.[229] It is within this larger discourse of corruption that Ngô Đình Diệm's moral reforms should be understood. He closed the Bình Xuyên's casinos and brothels in early 1955, and, in the following year, began a campaign against the "four social evils" of alcohol, illicit sex, gambling, and drugs (*tứ đổ tường*) that shut down numerous dancehalls, ballrooms, opium dens, and gambling houses. While some observers have suggested that Ngô Đình Diệm's Catholicism were behind the campaigns, these puritanical laws may also be seen as an expression of anticolonialism and antifeudalism.[230] As explained in the *Achievements of the Denounce the Communists Campaign*, "A campaign to 'eliminate the four social evils' was initiated in coordination with the Denounce the Communists Campaign to sweep away the vestiges of colonialism and feudalism."[231] It was thanks to moral reform that the "colonialists' attempt to mentally poison [our people] with debauchery and romanticism has been thoroughly eliminated," the booklet asserted.[232]

In contrast, Thực Đức's *Who Caused the Crime* offered a critique of colonialism that was largely independent of state propaganda. Instead of focusing on colonial education or the vice industry, he faulted French grain policies and the rural gentry for causing the famine of 1944-1945 in northern Vietnam. Although the author does not explicitly use the term "feudalist," his depiction of village elders conformed to the stereotype of corrupt collaborators who were indifferent to the common good. One vignette in the volume recounts a meeting of the village council in a village in Thái Bình province, during which wealthy village notables refuse to use the communal grain store for famine relief. Instead, they fret about their own financial situation and insist that the grain be used for the mandatory delivery required by the French colonial government. One council member complains that lending grain to the poor meant that he would never be paid back. "[I]f we lend it to them, and they die, who's going to pay it back?" he

---

editions of *Việt Nam tranh đấu sử,* published, respectively, in 1949 and 1959. In the earlier volume, he praised Bảo Đại's willingness to abdicate the throne in 1945 as evidence of the monarch's patriotism. See Phạm Văn Sơn, *Việt Nam tranh đấu sử,* 1st ed., 253.

[227] Nguyễn Văn Mùi and Vũ Ngọc Ánh, *Việt sử và thế giới sử lớp đệ tứ,* 168; Tăng Xuân An and Nguyễn Thị Hợp, *Việt sử lớp đệ tứ,* 149; Tăng Xuân An and Nguyễn Thị Hợp, *Việt sử lớp đệ nhất,* 273-4; Bùi Quang Ly, *Việt sử Thế giới sử lớp đệ tứ,* 74.

[228] "Với mục đích dùng Bảy Viễn làm cái hàng rào chống du kích ở vùng Gò-công, Chợ-lớn, thực dân hết sức nuông chiều hắn, cho hắn chiếm đóng cả một vùng Bình Xuyên phía bên kia cầu chữ 'Y', tha hồ cho hắn tự tung tự tác": Nguyễn Duy Hinh, *Vụ án Ba Cụt,* 77.

[229] "Tửu, sắc, tài, phiến và... máu đó là tất cả những nguyên liệu xây nên cái tài sản khổng lồ của hắn": Nguyễn Duy Hinh, *Vụ án Ba Cụt*, 78.

[230] For example, Seth Jacobs considers the antivice campaign to be an integral part of Ngô Đình Diệm's authoritarian and religiously biased regime. See Jacobs, *Cold War Mandarin: Ngo Dinh Diem and the Origins of America's War in Vietnam, 1950-1963* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 91.

[231] "Một Chiến dịch 'bài trừ tứ đổ tường' đã được phát động kết hợp với chiến dịch Tố-cộng nhằm quét sạch tàn tích thực-dân, phong-kiến": *Thành tích Tố Cộng,* 81.

[232] "sự đầu độc tư tưởng trụy lạc lãng mạn của thực-dân bị tẩy trừ một cách triệt để": *Thành tích Tố Cộng,* 81.

callously asks.[233] In another vignette, local elites embezzle large sums from the provincial fund for famine relief.[234]

The various accusations of divisiveness, depravity, and indifference primarily attacked the moral credibility of the sects and SVN establishment, though a number of texts posited a causal relationship between moral dissolution and political apathy. None of the authors discussed above tied the disparate constellation of accusations into a systematic critique, but the implication was that the French had brainwashed elite Vietnamese into hedonistic lackeys, uninterested in nationalism and willing to exploit the people for selfish gain. While Bảo Đại and Bảy Viễn may have deserved their reputations for gambling and running vice trades, propagandists focused exclusively on the latter's illicit activities without mentioning his years fighting the French or his successful capture of communist agents in Saigon. The critique concerning French administrative divisions and colonial education was probably not specific to Ngô Đình Diệm's state nationalism but likely reflected a broader anticolonial discourse shared by many Vietnamese. Even communist leaders in North Vietnam were anxious to correct the defects of colonial education and create a more nationalist educational system.[235]

Conclusion

Ngô Đình Diệm returned to Vietnam in 1954 as somewhat of an interloper in southern politics, but he managed to displace all of the noncommunists that had dominated the region's political scene during the previous decade. He permanently removed Bảo Đại, sidelined Nguyễn Văn Hinh, and disbanded the Bình Xuyên. His efforts also contributed substantially to the waning of French influence. He never destroyed the religious sects but did weaken them severely. Not until after the fall of the First Republic did the Hòa Hảo and Cao Đài once again engage in politics, though they never regained their former military strength or political prestige. Nonetheless, the survival of the religious sects was a testament to the endurance of indigenous mass movements. In contrast, the effort to popularize Ngô Đình Diệm's ideas in the form of antifeudalism and anticolonialism was largely unsuccessful due to the lack of participation by independent intellectuals. An analysis of the successes and failures of the rhetorical campaign provides insight into the regime's relations with the population.

A comparison between antifeudalism and anticommunism helps explain why the former was so weak. Anticommunism was rooted in a popular encounter with communism in northern Vietnam, as evidenced by the overwhelming response from purged Việt Minh activists and persecuted northern nationalists. In contrast, antifeudalism originated within Ngô Đình Diệm's government. Many of the accusations made against the sects and, to a lesser extent, the SVN establishment did not resonate with the southern population. No disillusioned sect soldier or self-proclaimed victim of the SVN ever published a denunciatory account of the resistance. Indeed, virtually none of the texts discussed above depicted personal experiences, and only one of the authors was a known southerner, Nguyễn Duy Hinh. This is not to suggest that the population had no grievances against the sects. During the long years of war between the sects and the Việt Minh, the former was just as violent as the latter, and the Hòa Hảo, in particular, were known for

[233] "vay rồi nó chết đi thì ai trả": Thực Đức [Trần Văn Mại], *Ai gay nên tội: Vụ hai triệu người chết đói năm Ất Dậu* ([Saigon?]: privately published, 1956), 17.
[234] Thực Đức, *Ai gây nên tội,* 37-38.
[235] Vasavakul Thaveeporn, "Schools and Politics in South and North Viet Nam: A Comparative Study of State Apparatus, State Policy, and State Power, 1945-1965," vol. 2 (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1994), 306.

their lack of discipline and brutal attacks.[236] But hatred of the sects would largely have come from southern communists, a group that Ngô Đình Diệm persecuted even more severely than his anticommunist rivals. Thus, those most likely to support antifeudalism had no opportunity to publicly air their views.

Similar reasons explain the relative unpopularity of anticolonialism. It would appear that Ngô Đình Diệm inadvertently silenced popular expressions of anticolonialism by suppressing the sects and the Việt Minh, that is, the primary champions of anti-French nationalism in the south. This goes far in explaining the dearth of contemporary writing about the southern resistance movement. The mass arrests and vicious propaganda created a hostile atmosphere for sectarian and communist nationalists interested in describing their memories of the anticolonial struggle. The decision of the religious sects to renounce politics further silenced southern voices. Another factor may have been the social composition of the Cao Đài, Hòa Hảo, Bình Xuyên, and Việt Minh. The sects and the southern Việt Minh drew the bulk of their membership from the poor and uneducated and may have had a smaller number of middle class members able to write and publish. But the lack of northern émigré voices denouncing colonialism is more difficult to explain. Northern writers did criticize colonialism but usually in works that were primarily dedicated to anticommunism. Why were northerners so much more vocal in lambasting the Việt Minh than the French? Perhaps the answer was that anticolonialism no longer held the same urgency as anticommunism, and the latter largely absorbed their creative energies. After all, many émigré authors described communism as a new form imperialism.

The ultimate consequence of anticolonialism and antifeudalism is that the First Republic never created a broad form of anticommunist nationalism that could appeal to a broader range of the population. Sectarian intellectuals like Nguyễn Văn Hầu and Dật Sĩ could have easily shaped the history of sect relations with the Việt Minh into a narrative of communist betrayal. The history of the southern resistance contained many of the same elements as the northern experience, including ruptured alliances, widespread violence, and a difficult decision to abandon the resistance. Indeed, the anticommunist orientation of the south's mass movements suggests that the potential support for an anticommunist, nationalist state below the 17th parallel was significant. But Ngô Đình Diệm chose not to incorporate southern anticommunists into the RVN. His attitude towards the sects contrasted with his treatment of the Đại Việt and VNQDĐ. The president sidelined the secular parties and attacked their bases, but he never sought to publicly defame them, and a large volume of publications detailing their suffering under communist oppression reached the reading public. The Hòa Hảo and Cao Đài have preserved their histories of anticommunism and nationalism within their religious communities, but southern anticommunist nationalism never dominated the mainstream discourse in the RVN like its northern counterpart. In effect, the triple enemy formula marginalized all of the south's major nationalist movements, both communist and noncommunist, and left Ngô Đình Diệm without a populist southern base.

[236] Elliott, *Vietnamese War*, concise ed., 74.

Chapter 3

Anticommunist Internationalism and the Third World

In March 1957, Minister of Information Trần Chánh Thành inaugurated an exhibition entitled, "Triển lãm Quốc tế Chống cộng" ("International Exhibition on Anticommunism"), at the Office of Information in downtown Saigon.[1] The governments of Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, and the RVN jointly organized the event along with the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations, a coalition of anticommunist Russian and Eastern European groups. Each country had a separate exhibit documenting the conflict between communists and anticommunists in their area of the world. The Taiwanese display featured a letter allegedly written by a sibling of Zhou Enlai's wife in which the letter writer accused the Chinese premier of killing the letter writer's father.[2] The South Korean exhibit included scenes from the Korean War, a diorama of communist-style public denunciations, and celebratory images of various anticommunist Asian leaders. During the inauguration ceremony, Phạm Quốc Bảo, a representative of the organizing committee, stressed the importance of international cooperation in the anticommunist struggle: "We believe that this exhibition is an opportunity for different nations to share their experiences of opposing Communism in a more effective and practical manner."[3] As if to underscore the point, representatives of each country served as guides for their respective exhibits, and many international guests attended, including representatives of Korea and Taiwan, the anticommunist Belgian priest Raymond de Jaegher, and the foreign press.

The exhibition was typical of the Republican engagement with the Cold War. The displays promoted anticommunism as the basis for international unity, affirmed the desirability of foreign knowledge and assistance, and portrayed the RVN as a contributor to the global struggle against communism. The exhibit depicted the Cold War as a genuinely international endeavor that welded together the homegrown anticommunism of various nations. Indeed, Vietnamese anticommunists did not view the Cold War as a conflict between the US and USSR. If anything, the dominant theme of the exhibition was the Republic's Asian allies, not its relations with the US.

The exhibit highlights a lacuna in the existing historiography. Most research on the Republic belongs to the field of American diplomatic history and emphasizes relations between Saigon and Washington,[4] but there is barely any scholarship that examines the RVN's interaction with other foreign countries. Furthermore, the tendency to treat the RVN as a site for American decision-making creates the impression that the US was the sole source of foreign ideas. In this view, the Vietnamese accepted or rejected American influence but did not develop their own ideas. In *America's Longest War,* George Herring attributes Ngô Đình Diệm's democratic rhetoric to the Americans rather than the president's own notions about politics: "To please his American advisers, Diem paid lip service to democracy, but in practice he assumed absolute

---

[1] "Đã khai mạc tại Saigon Triển lãm Quốc tế Chống Cộng," *Tự do* 70 (10 Apr 1957): 1, 4.

[2] The original text describes the letter writer as *em vợ,* meaning "wife's younger sibling." The term does not specify the gender of the sibling, and it may be translated as either sister-in-law or brother-in-law. See "Đã khai mạc tại Saigon Triển lãm Quốc tế Chống Cộng," *Tự do* 70 (10 Apr 1957): 4.

[3] "Chúng tôi tin tưởng rằng cuộc triển lãm này là một dịp để [*sic*] các dân tộc có thể trao đổi những kinh nghiệm chống Cộng một cách có hiệu quả và thực tế hơn": "Đã khai mạc tại Saigon Triển lãm Quốc tế Chống Cộng," 4.

[4] A notable exception is Edward Miller, "The Diplomacy of Personalism: Civilization, Culture, and the Cold War in the Foreign Policy of Ngo Dinh Diem," in *Connecting Histories: Decolonization and the Cold War in Southeast Asia, 1945-1962*, ed. Christopher Goscha and Christian Ostermann (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 376-402.

powers."[5] Likewise, George Kahin's *Intervention* implies that Ngô Đình Diệm's land reform originated with the Americans, not the Vietnamese: "When, after continued prodding by US officials, Diem finally introduced a program of land distribution, it was far less in scope and actual practice than they had proposed."[6] John Ernst's *Forging a Fateful Alliance*, a study of the Michigan State University Group (MSUG) and its advisory role in the First Republic, depicts the Americans as the primary agent of change in the RVN's archaic administration. Explaining the success of refugee resettlement program, he praises the MSUG's astute recommendations and Vietnamese receptivity to them. But when analyzing the failures of the foreign training program, he blames the Vietnamese for being too old fashioned: "Most of the professors who came to America were older and too set in their ways to profit from classroom experience."[7] For these authors, the US dominated the Republic's interaction with foreigners and exposure to external ideas.

This chapter challenges the one-dimensional view of the RVN's foreign relations. It argues that anticommunists perceived and engaged with the international world through the framework of the Cold War and the idea of the Third World. The bipolar division of the globe into communist countries and the so-called Free World fostered an imagined sense of anticommunist internationalism among Republican anticommunists. This shared anticommunism shaped the regime's membership in international organizations and its response to global events. It also filtered the information about foreign places available in the popular press in the form of translations and reports on communist countries. In the early 1960s, the government replaced the triple enemy formula with a new slogan that reflected both anticommunism and a sense of membership in the Third World. Government officials drew upon dependency theory and modernization theory, both associated with decolonizing countries, to justify the suppression of the NLF. But the Cold War remained the dominant framework in the regime's propaganda against the southern insurgency. Government officials began asking anticommunist and neutralist governments to condemn the NLF as an external invader controlled by Hanoi. Saigon used the assassination of Colonel Hoàng Thụy Năm, the RVN's liaison officer to the International Control Commission (ICC), to condemn the NLF, win international sympathy, and bolster its legitimacy at home.

Imagined Fraternities of Anticommunist Internationalism

Republican anticommunists conceived of foreigners as ideological friends or foes according to Cold War boundaries. With its friends, the regime engaged in a sort of anticommunist internationalism that was the anticommunist equivalent to the DRV's international proletarianism. Although Saigon viciously denounced the close relationship between the PRC, the Soviet Union, and the DRV, Republican nationalists also engaged in imagined friendships with Cold War allies and claimed that their regime was a contributing member of the Free World. Anticommunists conceived of anticommunist internationalism as the natural response to communist imperialism. If all communist regimes were identically oppressive because they belonged to a single empire ruled from Moscow, then all populations living under communism secretly hated the ideology. It also followed that anticommunists throughout the world needed unite with these unfortunate populations to combat communism.

[5] Herring, *America's Longest War,* 77.
[6] Kahin, *Intervention*, 99.
[7] John Ernst, *Forging a Fateful Alliance: Michigan State University and the Vietnam War* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998), 101.

One the earliest institutional expressions of anticommunist internationalism was the establishment of the Asian People's Anti-Communist League (APACL). In 1954, the RVN joined Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and other Asian countries to establish a regional alliance against communism, particularly the PRC. Saigon hosted at least two of the League's conferences, a small one in September 1956 and then the third annual conference April 1957. At the latter conference, Trần Chánh Thành gave the opening remarks in his capacity as the chairman of the People's Central Steering Committee of the Denounce the Communists Campaign. He claimed that the APACL was the vanguard of a global movement against fanatical communists: "We are certain that all peoples, like the peoples of Asia, will sooner or later realize the necessity of tightly joining hands in order to block and halt the mad illusions of fanatics."[8]

According to Trần Chánh Thành, the global movement extended to the populations of communist countries, and the anti-government disturbances throughout the communist world in 1956 and 1957 were all manifestations of the same sentiments. In a single breath, he listed the Hungarian Revolution, the Poznan protests in Poland, workers' protests in Romania, Tibetan demands for autonomous rule from the PRC, and the revolt in Wuchang, China.[9] He then followed with a litany of anti-government movements in the DRV: the Quỳnh Lưu uprising, the Nhân văn – Giai phẩm Affair, rebellions by ethnic minority highlanders, and student protests in Hanoi.[10] The speech demonstrates that the Saigon regime supported all anticommunists, whenever and wherever they might emerge. The Minister of Information never questioned whether the various protests were anticommunist or merely revisionist and did not explain how the scattered events actually constituted a unified trend. A propaganda tract published the following year more explicitly argued that the various revolts represented a universal aversion to communism. *Sửa sai của Việt cộng (The Việt Cộng's Rectification of Errors)* claimed that all dissident movements in the DRV and throughout the communist world were motivated by the same causes: they were the "necessary consequences of conditions common to all countries in the communist bloc."[11]

In some instances, the government went so far as to celebrate foreign anticommunist holidays to demonstrate solidarity. In 1961, the Free Pacific Association, a foreign anticommunist news agency, organized a small commemoration of World Freedom Day on 23 January in Saigon. World Freedom Day was a Taiwanese holiday commemorating the defection of communist Chinese and Korean soldiers to, respectively, Taiwan and South Korea at the end of the Korean War. The Allies allowed the prisoners of war to choose their country of return, and most chose noncommunist countries rather than the PRC or North Korea. The Taiwanese

[8] "Chúng ta chắc rằng các dân tộc khác không sớm thì muộn cũng sẽ nhận thấy như các dân tộc Á-Châu sự cần thiết phải nắm chặt tay nhau để ngăn cản và chặn đứng ảo vọng điên cuồng của những con người mù quáng": [Trần Chánh Thành], "Diễn-văn Khai-mạc của ông Chủ-tịch Hội-đồng Nhân-dân Chỉ-đạo Chiến-dịch tố Cộng nước Việt-Nam Cộng-Hòa đọc tại lễ khai mạc Hội-nghị Liên-Minh chống Cộng họp lần thứ III tại Saigon ngày 27-3-1957," *Xây dựng* 30 (15 Apr 1957): 5-7, citation from 5.

[9] "Chúng ta đều biết vụ thợ-thuyền và sinh-viên nổi dậy ngày 28 tháng 6 năm 1956 tại Poznan (Ba-Lan) đòi bánh mì và tự-do, cuộc khởi-nghĩa vô cùng anh-dũng của nhân-dân Hung-gia-Lợi, ngày 23-10-56 và vẫn còn tiếp-tục đòi độc-lập và trung-lập, vụ thợ-thuyền ở Transylvanie (Roumanie) đòi tăng lương xẩy ra tháng 8 năm 1956, vụ nhân-dân Tây-Tạng nổi dậy đòi tự-trị tháng 3 năm 1956, vụ nỗi loạn của dân-chúng Wuchang (Hoài-bắc Lục-địa Trung-Hoa) ngày 14-2-57, và những vụ xẩy ra tại Bắc Việt-Nam...": [Trần Chánh Thành], "Diễn-văn Khai-mạc của ông Chủ-tịch Hội-đồng Nhân-dân Chỉ-đạo Chiến-dịch tố cộng," 6. I have been unable to identify the revolt in Wuchang.

[10] [Trần Chánh Thành], "Diễn-văn Khai-mạc của ông Chủ-tịch Hội-đồng Nhân-dân Chỉ-đạo Chiến-dịch tố cộng," 5-7. I have been unable to identify the ethnic rebellions and student protests in the DRV.

[11] "đều là hậu quả tất nhiên của tình hình chung của các nước trong khối cộng-sàn": *Sửa sai của Việt Cộng* ([Saigon?]: Bộ Thông tin, 1958), 7-8.

government declared 23 January 1954, the day the Chinese prisoners arrived in Taiwan, to be World Freedom Day. Seven years later in Saigon, Minister of Foreign Affairs Vũ Văn Mẫu and the ambassadors from South Korea and Taiwan attended the commemoration.[12] Ngô Đình Diệm and the South Korean Prime Minister John Chang sent official messages of support to Chiang Kai Shek, which were read aloud at the ceremony in Taipei.[13]

The Hungarian Revolution, the Quỳnh Lưu Uprising, and the Tibetan Revolution

The most dramatic expression of anticommunist internationalism was the Republican response to the disturbances of 1956 and 1957 and, to a lesser extent, the Tibetan Revolution of 1959. Upon receiving news of any unrest in the communist world, the government immediately declared support for the dissenters and celebrated them as popular, anticommunist movements. Like Trần Chánh Thành, Ngô Đình Diệm and other government officials rarely considered that the dissenters might have targeted specific policies or leaders rather than communist ideology in general or that their views might have reflected only a sector of the population. Instead, the regime promoted imagined friendships between Vietnamese and foreigners and used the events to rally support for its crusade against the DRV. The Cold War shaped the RVN's engagement with the outside world so greatly that the regime often declared intimate friendship for foreign societies with which Vietnam had no historical contact.

The Hungarian Revolution and antigovernment demonstrations in Poznan captured international attention in 1956. Less well known was the DRV's suppression of the uprisings in Quỳnh Lưu, Nghệ An province, which took place in the same year. The RVN exploited the timing of the uprisings to declare anticommunist solidarity with the Hungarians. On 6 November 1956, before the Hungarian Revolution had even ended, Saigon issued an official statement condemning Soviet repression of the Eastern European movements.[14] Three days later, the National Revolutionary Movement (NRM), Ngô Đình Diệm's political party, staged a demonstration to protest the Soviet crackdown in the Hungary. Over 200,000 people congregated in front of the colonial-era Opera House in Saigon, now functioning as the seat of the National Assembly. The crowd observed a moment of silence in memory of the slain Hungarians, listened to speeches, and compiled petitions. The petitions expressed support for the Eastern Europeans, condemned Soviet aggression, and requested that the UN intervene on behalf of the Hungarian people.[15] Meanwhile, inside the Opera House, the president addressed the National Assembly and praised the heroism of the Hungarians and Poles.[16] Upon concluding their deliberations, the deputies joined the demonstrators in the march through downtown.[17] The marchers waved banners blazoned with expressions of sympathy, such as, "The Peoples of Asia support the Hungarian People in their heroic struggle against the invading Soviet gang."[18]

---

[12] "Lễ Kỷ niệm 'Ngày Tự Do' tại Saigon," *Tự do* 1150 (25 Jan 1961): 1, 4.
[13] "Công cuộc chống cộng ở Đài Bắc: Thống chế Tưởng giới Thạch đã khai mạc Ngày Tự Do," *Tự do* 1150 (25 Jan 1961): 1, 4.
[14] Ngô Đình Diệm, "Lời tuyên bố của Chính Phủ Cộng Hòa Việt Nam về tình hình Hung Gia Lợi và Ai Cập (6-11-1956)," *CĐCN* 3:36-37.
[15] "Hôm qua, tại thủ đô Sàigòn, cuộc biểu tình vĩ đại chống đế quốc Nga," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 408 (10 Nov 1956): 1, 4.
[16] Ngô Đình Diệm, "Diễn văn đọc tại phiên nhóm khai mạc Quốc hội lập pháp đầu tiên, 9-11-1956," *CĐCN* 3:14-16, reference to 15.
[17] "Cuộc biểu tình vĩ đại phản đối Nga và ũng [*sic*] hộ nhân dân Hung-Gia-Lợi tranh đấu giành tự do," *Tiếng chuông* 1695: (10 Nov 1956): 1, 6; "Biểu tình chống Nga," *Tiếng chuông* 1695 (10 Nov 1956): 1, 6.
[18] "Hôm qua, tại thủ đô Sàigòn, cuộc biểu tình vĩ đại chống đế quốc Nga," 4.

Just over a week after the demonstration, news of the Quỳnh Lưu uprising hit headlines.[19] The underlying cause of the revolt was the resentment of the local Catholic population over religious discrimination and abuses in the land reform program. On 9 November, a group of peasants approached the Canadian representatives of an ICC team and presented petitions asking to relocate to the South. When the local militia tried to disperse the crowd, the farmers attacked the soldiers, and violence erupted. On 13 November, an even larger crowd, possibly up to several thousand peasants and mostly Catholic, angrily marched on the district seat. The authorities in Hanoi allegedly sent an entire division of soldiers to crush the uprising and soon reoccupied the area.[20] News of the event did not reach Saigon until several days later. Ngô Đình Diệm immediately issued a statement to announce Vietnam's own Hungarian Revolution to the world. Saigon's statement directly compared the DRV to Hungary: "The communist gang has shown themselves to be just like their masters. In North Vietnam, as in Hungary, human life is cheap, just as long as the communist regime achieves its total victory."[21] On 2 December, another demonstration was held in front of the Opera House, most likely orchestrated by the NRM. Again, it began with a moment of silence, continued with speeches, and concluded with a petition that supported the revolutionaries, condemned the DRV, and requested intervention from the UN.[22] On 16 December, the Phong Trào Liên Đới Phụ Nữ (Women's Solidarity Movement, WSM) organized another demonstration. Trần Lệ Xuân, better known as Madame Nhu, the wife of Ngô Đình Nhu and sister-in-law to the president, headed the WSM. At the demonstration, speakers repeatedly declared their sympathy for the Hungarian resistance fighters and claimed that their Vietnamese compatriots in Quỳnh Lưu were "in rhythm with the conditions in Eastern Europe."[23] Upon orders from the central government, numerous organizations and municipalities throughout the country held similar rallies and passed analogous resolutions, many of which mentioned both the Hungarian Revolution and Quỳnh Lưu.[24]

When a few eyewitnesses from Quỳnh Lưu managed to escape across the seventeenth parallel, anticommunists lauded the newest batch of meridian crossers as heroes, and the press published their accounts of the uprising in books and newspapers.[25] In early 1957, an organization known as the Sponsoring Committee for the Anticommunist Movement of the North, likely affiliated with the government, erected a memorial for the fallen Quỳnh Lưu rebels

---

[19] "Đêm 13 rạng 14 tháng 11 vừa rồi nhân dân Nghệ an khởi nghĩa quyết chiến chống quân đội VC," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 415 (19 Nov 1956): 1, 4; Associated Press, "Dân chúng miền Bắc nỗi [*sic*] loạn chống lại Việt Minh cộng sản," *Tiếng chuông* 1702 (19 Nov 1956): 1, 4.

[20] Scholars disagree on the cause and scope of the Quỳnh Lưu uprising. Most authors acknowledge that the rebels were largely Catholic and that the revolt was a response to the land reform campaign. But while Carlyle Thayer states that the local Catholic community experienced religious discrimination, Edwin Moise claims that the leaders of the revolt were "reactionaries" that had been plotting for a long time. See Thayer, *War By Other Means,* 92-93; Fall, *Two Viet-Nams,* 156-157; Edwin Moise, *Land Reform in China and North Vietnam,* 258-260; Buttinger, *Vietnam,* 915-916.

[21] "Bọn Việt-Cộng đã tỏ ra là chúng không kém gì bọn chủ chúng. Tại Bắc-Việt cũng như tại Hung-Gia-Lợi, mạng người coi rẻ miễn là chế-độ cộng-sản toàn-thắng": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Lời tuyên bố của Tổng Thống với các Dân tộc trong Thế giới Tự do về cuộc khởi nghĩa Quỳnh Lưu (Nghệ an) (29-11-1956)," *CĐCN* 3:39-42, citation on 41.

[22] "Ủng hộ cuộc khởi nghĩa của đồng bào Quỳnh Lưu (Nghệ An)," *Tiếng chuông* 1726 (17 Dec 1956): 1, 4.

[23] "Ăn nhịp với tình-thế ở Đông-Âu": "Diễn-văn của Đại-Biểu các đoàn-thể chính-trị," in *Quỳnh Lưu khởi nghĩa* (N.p.: Liên minh Á Châu Chống Cộng Việt nam, [1957?]), 56-57, citation from 57. See also "Diễn văn đọc trước tòa Đô-Sảnh ngày chúa-nhựt 16-12-1956 của Phụ-Nữ Việt-Nam," in *Quỳnh Lưu khởi nghĩa,* 53-55.

[24] "Kiến nghị ủng hộ cuộc khởi nghĩa của nhân dân Nghệ An," "Kiến nghị phản đối Liên sô tàn sát nhân dân Hung Gia Lợi," *Nội san quốc hội* 1 (Jan 1957): 5-6; "Những kiến nghị," in *Quỳnh Lưu khởi nghĩa,* 58-76.

[25] "Tôi đã dự cuộc khởi nghĩa Quỳnh Lưu," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 418 (22 Nov 1956): 1, 4; "Phát biểu của một đồng bào mới vượt tuyến ngày 24-12-56," *Tự do* 9 (22 Jan 1957): 2; *Quỳnh Lưu khởi nghĩa,* 79-85.

and invited a Quỳnh Lưu meridian crosser to address the audience.[26] The ceremony concluded with anticommunist chants: "Down with communism!," and "Long live the heroic fighting spirit of our anticommunist compatriots in Quỳnh Lưu!"[27] Even independently authored political tracts linked the two rebellions. Bùi Anh Tuấn's *Seeds of Revolt in North Vietnam?* argued that Quỳnh Lưu was "a completely spontaneous revolt" like the Hungarian Revolution *(một biến cố hoàn toàn có tính chất tự động).*[28] Quỳnh Lưu was a sudden explosion of peasant anger, not a planned conspiracy organized by specific leaders, according to Bùi Anh Tuấn. The author claimed that this sort of the rebellion was the most threatening to the communists: "The *Việt cộng*'s greatest fear is popular resistance in the style of Hungary and Poznan (Poland)."[29]

The coincidence of events in Eastern Europe and Vietnam inspired intense, though short-lived, sentiments of Vietnamese-Hungarian friendship, an imagined relationship that the government renewed annually during the anniversary of the uprisings. One of the first foreign works used as anticommunist propaganda in the Republic was "Hungary's Fight for Freedom," a special report compiled in late 1956 by the American magazine, *Life*. An unknown Vietnamese distributor – most likely connected to the regime – compiled a condensed version of the report that included translated articles and selected photographs. But the propaganda pamphlet also included a few new pictures. The front cover sported a photograph of Diệm appearing to hand the issue of *Life* towards the reader, as if to underscore the state's didactic role in educating its citizens. Similarly, the last few pages and back cover featured pictures of Vietnamese rallies and functioned to inform the reader how citizens of the RVN should respond to the event. The latter photograph provided pictorial proof of popular support for the defeated Hungarians.[30] Within a few months of the event, Saigon began inviting representatives of the Hungarian Revolution to visit the RVN to encourage ideological fraternity between the two peoples. In the spring of 1957, a Hungarian student visited Saigon, where he was greeted by representatives of the Tổng hội Sinh viên Việt Nam Quốc gia (Vietnamese National General Student Association). As if to reinforce Vietnamese-Hungarian cooperation, the Hungarian revolutionary told the Saigon press that four North Vietnamese students studying at the university in Budapest had joined the anti-Soviet student movement.[31]

A different delegation of Hungarian student activists visited the RVN in the fall of that year, and Ngô Đình Diệm welcomed them by again expressing Vietnamese solidarity with the Hungarian people.[32] He recounted the incident at Quỳnh Lưu and concluded: "Our northern compatriots, like the Hungarian people, demand the restoration of freedom... They have spilled their blood together with the Hungarian people to confirm the decision to oppose

[26] "Phát biểu của một đồng bào mới vượt tuyến ngày 24-12-56," *Tự do* 9 (22 Jan 1957): 2.
[27] "Đả đảo Cộng sản," "Hoan hô tinh thần chiến đấu anh dũng của đồng bào Quỳnh Lưu chống Cộng": "Đài tưởng niệm các chiến sĩ Quỳnh Lưu," *Tự do* 9 (22 Jan 1957): 2.
[28] Bùi Anh Tuấn, *Mầm biến động ở Bắc Việt?,* 13.
[29] "Việt cộng sợ nhất những cuộc khởi nghĩa quần chúng tự động theo kiểu Hung gia Lợi và Poznan (Ba Lan)": Bùi Anh Tuấn, *Mầm biến động ở Bắc Việt?,* 14.
[30] *Cuộc chiến đấu dành tự do của Hung-Gia-Lợi: phóng sự đặc biệt bằng tranh ảnh do các biên tập viên báo Life* (N.p.: [1956?]).
[31] "Đại biểu sinh viên Hung tự do tới Saigon đã xác nhận 4 sinh viên Hànội theo cách mạng Hung chống lại thực dân Nga Sô," *Tự do* 40 (6 Mar 1957): 1, 4.
[32] Ngô Đình Diệm, "Tuyên bố về cuộc tiếp kiến ba Sinh viên Hung Gia Lợi (1-10-1957)," *CĐCN* 4:53-56, reference to 53.

Communism."[33] In late October, the Sponsoring Committee for the Anticommunist Movement of the North organized a demonstration in Saigon that began with a salute to both the RVN and Hungarian flags. Afterwards, Quỳnh Lưu meridian crossers and visiting Hungarian revolutionaries addressed the audience. Garbed in traditional Vietnamese attire, one Hungarian publicly affirmed Vietnamese-Hungarian unity: "The Vietnamese and the Hungarians are one... We are no longer fighting alone because, under a distant sky, we have the Vietnamese people as our comrades and fellow travelers."[34] In fact, 4 November, the day that Soviet troops invaded Budapest, became International Denounce the Communists Day in the RVN, an annual event that commemorated the twin uprisings. Even in subsequent years, the program for International Denounce the Communists Day continued the tradition of saluting both flags and drafting petitions in support of both rebellions.[35] At the National Cultural Conference in early 1957, participants expressed support for the Hungarian revolutionaries in their resolution protesting Hanoi's handling of the Nhân văn – Giai phẩm Affair.[36]

Such official declarations of friendship must have surprised many Vietnamese. To the majority of the population, even in educated circles, Hungarians were strangers living in an unknown country on a faraway continent. Prior to the Cold War, Vietnamese society had no significant cultural contact with Eastern Europe. From the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries, many Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, and French traders and missionaries visited Vietnam, but no Hungarians. Throughout the colonial period, western thought was primarily filtered through French, and Eastern European ideas and works never achieved any currency in intellectual Vietnamese discourse. Indeed, Vietnamese-Hungarian friendship must be seen a unique product of the Cold War. The Cold War cut across ethnic, cultural, and geographical boundaries to encourage some relationships and discourage others. In the case of the RVN, it entailed an imagined fraternity with Hungarian revolutionaries but the rejection of Vietnamese communists.

In the spring of 1959, the Tibetan Revolution sparked another outpouring of anticommunist empathy. The anti-Chinese uprising began on 10 March but was put down within a week. During the revolt, the Dalai Lama, the political and religious leader of Tibet, fled into exile. Vietnam had few historical ties with Tibet, but the cultural similarities were stronger than with Hungary. The population of both countries was predominantly Buddhist, though they belonged to different religious schools. Some Vietnamese Buddhists might have privately respected the Dalai Lama in the late 1950s, but veneration of the Dalai Lama was never a popular devotional practice, and less educated or less religious Buddhists may have never even

---

[33] "Đồng bào ngoài Bắc, cũng như nhân-dân Hung đòi phục-hồi sự tự-do... Họ đã đổ máu cùng với nhân dân Hung-Gia-Lợi để xác-nhận quyết-định chống Cộng": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Tuyên bố về cuộc tiếp kiến ba Sinh viên Hung Gia Lợi (1-10-1957)," *CĐCN* 4:54.

[34] "Việt và Hung là một… Chúng tôi không còn lẻ loi chiến đấu vì ở phương trời xa lạ chúng tôi đã có những người bạn đường là dân tộc V.N.": "Những tiếng nói chân thành 'Diệt Cộng' đã được các chiến sĩ Hung và Việt bộc lộ trước cuộc biểu tình vĩ đại sáng hôm qua," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 699 (24 Oct 1957): 1, 4, citation from 4.

[35] In 1958, the program began with a salute to both flags, as it did at the demonstration by the Sponsoring Committee, and then followed the formula of a moment of silence, speeches, and petitions concerning both Hungary and Vietnam. "Chương trình Ngày Quốc tế Tố Cộng 4-11-58," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 71 (4 Nov 1958): 1; "100.000 dân chúng và các đoàn thể dự ngày Quốc tế Tố Cộng 4-11-1958 tại Đại lộ Ng. Huệ," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 72 (5 Nov 1958): 1.

[36] *Đại hội văn hoá toàn quốc 1957*, 391.

heard of the Buddhist leader. When news of the incident reached Saigon, the government immediately declared support, and the press anointed it a second Hungarian Revolution.[37]

Despite the pro-Catholic reputation of Ngô Đình Diệm's administration, the regime did not hesitate to exploit the Buddhist dimension of anticommunist internationalism. Years before the rise of the oppositionist Buddhist movement, the government actually encouraged Buddhist demonstrations. Demonstrators displayed the Buddhist flag, which would play such a critical role in Saigon's relations with the Buddhist movement in the early 1960s. In May, several large demonstrations took place throughout the country, and Buddhist monks and believers filled the ranks of the marchers.[38] The proximity of the Tibetan Revolution to Vesaka, the most important Buddhist holiday of the year, usually celebrated in May, heightened the sense of religious solidarity. But these demonstrations also appear to have been organized by the NRM: they followed a similar formula as the earlier protests and usually concluded with petitions addressed to the UN.[39] Half a year later, during the rally for International Denounce the Communists Day in 1959, demonstrators drafted a petition that mentioned Hungary, Tibet, and Quỳnh Lưu and their respective struggles against the USSR, the PRC, and North Vietnam.[40] But despite stronger cultural affinities to the Vietnamese, Tibet was clearly overshadowed by the earlier rebellions, as most petitions received by the National Assembly praised the two other revolts without mention of Tibet.[41] As public commemorations of the rebellions declined, the Tibetan Revolution fell from memory the quickest. International Denounce the Communists Day continued to renew the sense of global anticommunist solidarity, but the commemoration involved fewer people and less publicity with each passing year.[42] Even so, the regime did not abandon its ideologically-driven internationalism. Half a decade after the Hungarian Revolution, Saigon invited one of the leaders of the movement to speak at the Saigon Municipal Hall, the general Bela Kiraly. Addressing an audience of over two thousand people, Kiraly emphasized the common plight of all peoples living under communism and proclaimed no communist regime had ever come to power through popular elections.[43]

State Sponsorship and Public Response

Throughout the 1950s, anticommunist internationalism clearly bore the mark of state involvement, despite the veneer of mass participation. The government understandably

[37] "Trang sử đẫm máu của Tây Tạng," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 202 (13 Apr 1959): 3, 4; "Tây Tạng, một vụ Hung Gia Lợi ở Á Châu," Lập trường column, *Tự do* 667 (24 Mar 1959): 1, 4; "Tuyên cáo của chánh phủ Việt Nam Cộng Hòa về biến cố ở Tây Tạng," *Tự do* 689 (18 Apr 1959): 1, 4.

[38] "40 ngàn Phật tử và tín đồ Công giáo biểu tình tại Phú Vinh để phản đối Trung Cộng và Việt cộng mưu toan phá hoại hòa bình," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 223 (19 May 1959): 1, 4; Thanh Tao, "Trên 50.000 đồng bào đại biểu các giới ở Gia Định biểu tình ủng hộ Tây Tạng và phản đối vụ tàu *Lidice* chở võ khí cho Việt Cộng," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 230 (15 May 1959): 1, 4; "Các tu sĩ và Phật tử Việt Nam công khai ủng hộ cuộc thánh chiến Tây Tạng," *Tự do* 706 (9 May 1959): 1, 4.

[39] "Các tu sĩ và Phật tử Việt Nam công khai ủng hộ cuộc thánh chiến Tây Tạng," *Tự do* 706 (9 May 1959): 1, 4. Buddhist flags were displayed at the demonstration.

[40] B.B.P.V., "Một cuộc 'mít-tinh' khổng lồ kỷ niệm các chiến sĩ chống cộng và lên án hành động khát máu của Cộng Sản," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 379 (5 Nov 1959): 1, 4.

[41] "Kiến nghị," *Nội san quốc hội* 35 (Nov 1959): 142-144.

[42] B.B.Đ.P.V., "Lễ Kỷ niệm cuộc khởi nghĩa chống Cộng của đồng bào Quỳnh Lưu và nhân dân Hung Gia Lợi," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 998 (5-6 Nov 1961): 1, 4; "Kỷ niệm Quỳnh Lưu khởi nghĩa tại Tòa Đô Sảnh," *Tự do* 1388 (5 Nov 1961): 1, 6.

[43] A number of Saigon dailies serialized Bela Kiraly's speech. See "Trên 2.000 người dự cuộc nói chuyện của Trung tướng Bela Kiraly," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 926 (13-14 Aug 1961): 1, 2, 3; "Không có 1 chế độ cộng sản nào do dân chúng bầu ra," *Tự do* 1316 (13 Aug 1961): 1. See also "Diễn thuyết," *Xây dựng* 13 (Sep 1961): 189-192.

considered international relations, official statements, and the designation of commemorative holidays its rightful prerogatives, but the state also orchestrated the mass rallies and petitions. The groups that organized rallies were almost always government organs, including the NRM, the WSM, and, most likely, the Sponsoring Committee for the Anticommunist Movement of the North. The origins and composition of the Sponsoring Committee are unknown, but the group's rallies conformed suspiciously closely to the NRM's formula. Indeed, it is doubtful that Saigon would ever trust independent associations with politically potent events like the commemoration of the Quỳnh Lưu uprising or the Hungarian Revolution. The riots against the ICC led by the Revolutionary Committee were likely the last public demonstration organized by an autonomous, pro-government entity. By the late 1950s, the state controlled virtually all forms of public pageantry and mandated that civil servants, students, and private organizations attend, whether the event was a parade, national holiday, or presidential inauguration.[44] Since the government required all civil servants to join the NRM, the marchers that filled the rank and file of the NRM contingents at the rallies generally consisted of career civil servants and schoolteachers, not voluntary marchers. Provincial and municipal governments also organized local celebrations, which similarly entailed mandatory participation.[45] Therefore, the large turnout and petitions did not indicate popular support. Most petitions were probably prepared in advance, and rally organizers directed the audience to shout their approval at appropriate moments. Of course, heavy government involvement does not necessarily mean that all participants at the rallies rejected anticommunist internationalism, only that their presence did not correlate with their opinions.

In fact, the evidence suggests that anticommunist internationalism enjoyed some degree of popularity. Many educated urbanites and particular interest groups were genuinely interested in the foreign dissidents, and there appears to have been a spontaneous but shallow support for the Hungarians and Tibetans. While the Hungarian Revolution resonated with northern émigrés, the Tibetan uprising inspired the sympathy of the Buddhist faithful. Within a month of the

[44] The National Archives Center II does not allow researchers to examine files regarding anticommunist rallies. However, the Saigon government clearly demanded compulsory attendance by many participants for rallies and major holidays. For student attendance, see minutes to the preliminary meeting of the Organizing Committee for the Commemoration of the Trưng Sisters and Vietnamese Woman's Day 1959, 27 Feb 1959, file 16870, ĐICH; minutes from the meeting *(hội nghị thảo luận)* on the commemoration of the Trưng Sisters and Vietnamese Woman's Day, 6 Mar 1959, file 16870, ĐICH. For obligatory attendance by private organizations and civil servants, see Quách Tòng Đức on the Day of Prayer for Warriors *(lễ cầu nguyện chiến sĩ)*, memorandum no. 3-TTP/VP/NL, 31 Oct 1955, file 15980, ĐICH; "Danh sách các đoàn thể mời dự meeting 18.3.56," c. 16 Mar 1956, file 16043; Quách Tòng Đức to the various cabinet ministers, General Commissariat of Dinh Điền Settlements, director of the National Bank, Southern Regional Delegate, and the mayor of Saigon regarding invitations to attend the commemoration of the Trưng sisters, correspondence no. 28-TTP/ĐL, 18 Mar 1958, file 16536, ĐICH; "Sơ đồ các phái đoàn dân quân chính tới chúc mừng Tổng thống nhân dịp nhậm chức nhiệm kỳ 1961-1966," c. 29 April 1961, file 2584, ĐICH.

[45] The central government routinely ordered provincial and local governments to hold parades and rallies modeled on the national celebration in Saigon during all major holidays and commemorations. See letter from the province chief of Bà Rịa to the Southern Regional Delegate regarding the commemoration of Confucius, correspondence no. 3529-HCSV/I, 1 Jan 1956, file 16051, ĐICH; "Dự thảo chương trình kỷ niệm đệ nhất chu niên Việt Nam Cộng hòa," c. 26 Oct 1956, file 16054, ĐICH; Lưu Bá Châm, province chief of Bình Thuận, to the Minister of the Interior and the Chief of Cabinet of the Office of the President regarding the commemoration of the Trưng sisters, correspondence no. 346-VP, 9 March 1957, file 16268, ĐICH; Nguyễn Đình Thuần to the various province chiefs and mayors regarding expenses for the celebration of Republic Day in the provinces, correspondence no. 24344-B/26036-TTP/NSNV/CT, 29 Sep 1958, file 16545, ĐICH; Province Chief of An Xuyên to Chief of Cabinet at the Office of the President regarding the commemoration of the Trưng sisters, correspondence no. 671-VP, 13 Mar 1962, file 17665, ĐICH.

Hungarian Revolution, a Vietnamese student sent an open letter to the Saigon daily, *Cách mạng quốc gia (National Revolution),* to express solidarity with the distant foreigners. The student acknowledged that he and the Hungarian revolutionaries were separated by geographical distance, but the "paths of our hearts" *(đường lòng)* were close because both opposed communism.[46] Without ever meeting a Hungarian revolutionary, the student expressed sentimental attachment for the foreigners based on ideological agreement. *National Revolution* was the mouthpiece of the NRM, and the letter was probably carefully screened and selected, but there is no self-evident reason to doubt its authenticity.

The literary journal *Sáng tạo (Creation)* also ran several pieces about the Hungarian Revolution. Perhaps the most powerful one was a poem by the young émigré poet, Thanh Tâm Tuyền, entitled, "Hãy cho anh khóc bằng mắt em, Những cuộc tình duyên Budapest" ("Let me cry with your eyes, the love stories of Budapest"). It is unclear in the poem whether the speaker participates in the Hungarian Revolution or is merely a sympathizer, and his ethnicity is unclear. But he seeks to share the experience of a Hungarian protestor by asking to experience the uprising through the Hungarian's body and claiming that that they are united by a common cause. The speaker addresses the Hungarian as *em* and calls himself *anh,* pronouns that suggest an intimate acquaintance, possibly a romantic relationship, between a male speaker and a listener of unspecified gender. The first few lines of the poem establish the commonality between the two in spite of their distinct identities:

Let me cry with your eyes
The love stories of Budapest
Me with a heart you with a heart
They fill the streets with tanks and canons.[47]

While the speaker suggests a sense of bodily unity with the Hungarian, the two still have separate hearts. But as the poem progresses, the speaker desires a psychological and physical fusion with the protester:

Let me scream with your throat
Tomorrow's sky flies radiantly
Drunk with murder, they kill humans like bricks and tiles
Just as our hearts thirst for the future.[48]

For the remainder of the poem, the speaker repeatedly begs to suffer through the protester's body, with lines such as: "Let me experience anger inside your chest," "Let me tremble with your cheeks," and "Let me die with your skin."[49] The "love stories" that bind the speaker and the protester appear to be not so much romantic love but empathy and a similar respect for human dignity. The two are also united by their opposition to a common oppressor, which the poem alludes to only by the vague pronoun "they" *(chúng).* The pronoun could refer to the Soviet troops and Hungarian police that put down the Hungarian Revolution, but it also

[46] Thanh Tiến, "Tâm thơ của một học sinh Cộng hòa Việt Nam gởi người chiến sĩ Hung Gia Lợi," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 416 (20 Nov 1956): 2.
[47] "Hãy cho anh khóc bằng mắt em / Những cuộc tình duyên Budapest / Anh một trái tim em một trái tim / Chúng kéo đầy đường chiến xa đại bác": Thanh Tâm Tuyền, "Hãy cho anh khóc bằng mắt em những cuộc tình duyên Budapest," *Sáng tạo* 4 (Jan 1957): 23.
[48] "Hãy cho anh la bằng cổ em / Trời mai bay rực rỡ / Chúng nó say giết người như gạch ngói /Như lòng chúng ta thèm khát tương lai": Thanh Tâm Tuyền, "Hãy cho anh khóc bằng mắt em những cuộc tình duyên Budapest," 23. I have translated "trời mai" to mean "tomorrow's sky," but it could be alternately translated as "the morning sky."
[49] "Hãy cho anh khóc bằng mắt em," "Hãy cho anh giận bằng ngực em," "Hãy cho anh run bằng má em," "Hãy cho anh chết bằng da em": Thanh Tâm Tuyền, "Hãy cho anh khóc bằng mắt em những cuộc tình duyên Budapest," 23.

leaves open the possibility that the true oppressor was communists as a group. The poet uses the Hungarian Revolution to suggest that the sympathy between Hungarians, Vietnamese, and all anticommunists was more profound than mere political alliance. Instead, anticommunist internationalism was an empathetic union that could transcend geographical, cultural, and linguistic differences. In that spirit, the speaker promised the dead protestor, "I will live by your breath / Oh, those of you who follow."[50]

Another émigré writer on the staff of *Creation,* Mạc Đỗ, also adopted the Hungarian cause as his own. Mạc Đỗ began his article with the description of a photograph from the Revolution: a body of a dead protestor on a damaged street. A note pinned to the dead man's body read, "Nem hiaba haltak meg!" ("He has not died in vain!"). The inspiring Hungarian phrase became the title of Mạc Đỗ's commentary, in which the author declares the protestor's death meaningful because he had the courage to risk his life to fight for freedom.[51] *Tự do (Freedom),* another Saigon daily, also praised the leaders of the Hungarian uprising in its editorial column.[52] Both *Creation* and *Freedom* were émigré publications. The former was dominated by young anticommunist writers and known for its experimental literature.[53] The latter was a respectable pro-government paper and the RVN's longest running daily headed by émigrés. Although *Freedom* had close ties to Trần Kim Tuyến, head of Ngô Đình Diệm's intelligence, it was not a mouthpiece for the regime and survived the collapse of the First Republic, in contrast to *National Revolution* and other government organs.[54] The preponderance of émigrés in the response to the Hungarian Revolution suggests that the event especially inspired anticommunist northerners. Similarly, the Tibetan Revolution also generated strong but short-lived interest among writers and readers of these periodicals. According to *Freedom,* over a hundred young men petitioned Saigon to form a voluntary resistance force to fight with the Tibetans.[55] Besides the more overt street demonstrations, many Buddhist temples held special services to pray for the Tibetan people and the Dalai Lama.[56] Although it is hard to determine the actual sentiments behind staged demonstrations, the predominantly Buddhist composition of the pro-Tibet marches suggest genuine sympathy, and the incident probably generated more interest among religious Buddhists than the rest of the population.

Beyond their immediate reception, these events marked the internationalization of anticommunist nationalism. Just as anticommunists linked the communist betrayal of the resistance with the global spread of communism, they internationalized Vietnamese anticommunism by associating their own struggle with dissident movements across the globe. Anticommunist internationalism required affective sentiments to conform to the ideological boundaries of the Cold War. The government encouraged citizens to sympathize with Hungarian and Tibetan anticommunists but despise Vietnamese communists, and émigré writers and journalists declared deep empathetic connections with foreign revolutionaries. Thus, solidarity

---

[50] "Anh sẽ sống bằng hơi thở em / Hỡi những người kế tiếp": Thanh Tâm Tuyền, "Hãy cho anh khóc bằng mắt em những cuộc tình duyên Budapest," 23.
[51] Mặc Đỗ, "Nem hiaba haltak meg!," *Sáng tạo* 6 (Mar 1957): 41-43. I have been unable to locate this photograph.
[52] "Chào mừng chiến hữu Hung-gia-Lợi," Lập trường column. *Tự do* 42 (8 Mar 1957): 1, 4.
[53] For more on the journal *Sáng tạo,* see Võ Phiến, *Hai mươi nam văn học miền Nam,* 183-185.
[54] "Despatch from the Ambassador in Vietnam (Durbrow) to the Department of State," 2 Mar 1959, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 1, *Vietnam,* by US Department of State (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1986), 153.
[55] Hiếu Chân, "Chí nguyện quân sang Tây Tạng," Nói hay đừng column, *Tự do* 676 (3 Apr 1959) 3; "Đại diện các hãng thông tấn ngoại quốc tiếp xúc với thanh niên Việt Nam tình nguyện đi Tây Tạng," *Tự do* 681 (9 Apr 1959): 1, 4; "Gần 100 thanh niên Việt Nam tình nguyện đi giúp nghĩa quân Tây Tạng," *Tự do* 683 (11 Nov 1959): 1.
[56] "Hội họp của các Phật tử phản đối hành động bạo tàn ở Tây Tạng," *Tự do* 679 (7 Apr 1959): 1.

with ideologically similar foreigners was a logical corollary to the exclusion of Vietnamese communists. The imagined fraternities of the 1950s ultimately laid the foundation for even stronger ties with a powerful, foreign ally with whom the RVN would side against its Vietnamese enemies: the Americans.

Foreign Inspirations

Even when not caught up in the fervor of the Eastern European uprisings, the Cold War politicized Republican portrayals of foreign countries. The global conflict framed much of the information about the international world available in the popular and government-controlled press. Writers introduced readers to faraway lands, like Hungary and Germany, as the site of Cold War conflicts, and journalists and intellectuals covered international developments such as the Sino-Soviet split, reform communism in Eastern Europe, Titoism, and collectivization in the PRC and USSR.[57] Communist countries, especially the communist superpowers, proved particularly fascinating, and many authors deplored living conditions in the PRC, criticized Soviet agriculture, and analyzed Soviet diplomacy.[58] In the early 1960s, scholarly journals published numerous studies of communist literature and art. Whether discussing Soviet painting or Chinese theater, the articles usually followed one of two formulas: they either dismissed all communist art as propaganda or celebrated dissident art condemned by in its home country.[59] The latter was praised as courageous examples of anticommunist protest. Particularly famous was Boris Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago,* awarded the Nobel prize in literature in 1958. Soviet opposition to the novel ensured that Pasternak would be widely discussed in the Republic.[60] *National Revolution* translated and serialized the novel over a period of almost six months, from

[57] For example, *Bách khoa* ran a number of articles on the Cold War and current conditions in communist countries. See Vũ Thừa Chi, "Vết nứt rạn đầu tiên của cộng sản quốc tế: Vụ Ti-tô," *Bách khoa* 16 (1 Sep 1957): 15-25; ibid., *Bách khoa* 17 (15 Sep 1957): 10-15; ibid., *Bách khoa* 18 (1 Oct 1957): 11-15; Triều Lương Chế, "Chế độ tập-sản tại Liên-Xô đang đi dần đến chỗ suy sụp," *Chỉ đạo* 19 (1 Aug 1958): 28-29; Song An Cư sĩ, "Tito: cộng sản quốc tế hay quốc gia," *Bách khoa* 52 (1 Mar 1959): 59-64; ibid., *Bách khoa* 53 (15 Mar 1959): 35-38; Hoàng Minh Tuynh, "Chế độ công xã nhân dân Trung hoa Cộng sản," *Bách khoa* 63 (15 Aug 1959): 3-7; ibid., *Bách khoa* 64 (1 Sep 1959): 9-16; Hoàng Minh Tuynh, "Liên ban Xô-viết và Trung Hoa Cộng Sản: Đồng tình hay tương khắc?" *Bách khoa* 66 (1 Oct 1959): 9-14; ibid., *Bách khoa* 67 (15 Oct 1959): 10-16. See also Nguyễn Kiên Trung [Nguyễn Mạnh Côn], "Công xã nhân dân: một vấn đề văn hóa trọng đại," *Văn hữu* 1 (Jun 1959): 9-20.

[58] Tiểu Dân, "Thực trạng của Trung Hoa Địa lục," *Bách khoa* 43 (15 Oct 1958): 5-11; Hoàng Minh Tuynh, "Phương thuật điều hành ngoại giao của Liên-xô," *Bách khoa* 60 (1 Jul 1959): 9-14; Hoàng Minh Tuynh, "Tinh thần tôn giáo tại Liên bang Xô-viết," *Bách khoa* 69 (15 Nov 1959): 9-16; Thy Lệ Khanh, "Đế quốc thực dân lớn nhất thế giới: Nga sô," *Văn hữu* 8 (Oct 1960): 174-178; Đức Hạnh, "Trung Hoa sau 12 năm dưới chế độ cộng sản," *Văn hữu* 15 (Nov 1961): 159-172; H.A., "Cuộc sống đau thương của mấy trăm triệu người trên lục địa Trung Hoa," *Văn hữu* 16 ([1961 or 1962?]): 20C-24C; Vũ Thụy Hoàng, "Những nhược điểm trong nền nông nghiệp Nga Sô," *Văn hữu* 16 ([1961 or 1962?]): 24C-31C.

[59] Chế Vũ, "Đảng với thế hệ nhà văn Nga hiện đại: Luận và phân tích về một giai đoạn đấu tranh văn học," *Văn hữu* 4 (Mar 1960): 147-154; Chế Vũ, "Giai đoạn cao độ của các nhà văn Nga sô chống Đảng," *Văn hữu* 5 (May 1960): 112-123; Chế Vũ, "Mặt trận văn học các nhà văn Nga chống chính sách cưỡng bách văn nghệ của Đảng," *Văn hữu* 6 (Jun 1960): 165-180; Lê Hữu Khải, "Kịch nghệ Nga sô," *Đại học* 22 (Aug 1961): 32-50; Cô Liêu, "Nghệ sĩ và sân khấu Trung hoa đỏ," *Văn hữu* 17 (1962): 9-17; Trọng Khang, "Một vụ Pasternak thứ 2 bùng nổ," *Văn hữu* 17 ([1962?]): 18-23; Nguyễn Hữu Dung, "Văn nghệ với chánh trị tại Liên Xô," *Bách khoa* 159 (15 Aug 1963): 57-61; ibid., *Bách khoa* 160 (1 Sep 1963): 21-26.

[60] "Bị Hội Văn-sĩ C.S. đàn-áp nhà văn Pasternak từ chối giải thưởng Nobel," *Tiếng chuông* 2297 (31 Oct 1958): 1, 4; Lưu Nguyễn ĐTT, "Boris Léonidovitch Pasternak hay là nhà văn đối với mình, đối với chính quyền," *Bách khoa* 46 (1 Dec 1958): 48-58; Hoàng Văn Chí, "Nhận định về vụ Boris Pasternak và tác phẩm *Bác sĩ Zhivago,*" *Văn hóa Á châu* 10 (Jan 1959): 13-30.

the fall of 1958 through the spring of 1959.[61] In the fall of 1960, the Vietnamese chapter of the Congress for Cultural Freedom published the Vietnamese-language edition of the novel to make it more widely available.[62]

Such politicized coverage encouraged Vietnamese readers to conceptualize the DRV as a Vietnamese variant of a universal, uniform communism. Ongoing press coverage of art in communist countries and popular interest in the Nhân văn – Giai phẩm Affair joined to create the impression that all communist regimes suppressed artistic freedom. Another issue that attracted particular attention was Cold War partitions and the plight of refugees,[63] and some writers even applied the term "meridian crosser" *(vượt tuyến)* to describe East German students who crossed into West Germany.[64] The term "meridian crosser" was originally coined to describe a Vietnamese situation, but its application to Germany transformed the tragedy of partition into an international experience. Anticommunists implied that the partition of Vietnam at Geneva and the consequent flight of northern émigrés were part of a larger pattern that accompanied communist expansion everywhere.

As the 1950s came to a close, the Vietnamese-language press slowly began to include foreign anticommunist texts, though most Vietnamese had limited exposure to these anticommunist ideas and experiences. At the time, few works were available in translation in their entirety, and those that were rarely achieved wide currency. *Dr. Zhivago* was not available for at least two years after *National Revolution* began serializing it, and the special report by *Life* was an incomplete translation. But educated intellectuals would have been familiar with internationally known anticommunist works, such as Victor Kravchenko's *I Chose Freedom* (1946), Valentín Gonzalez's *El Campesino* (1952), Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* (1941) and other novels, and Milovan Djilas' *The New Class* (1955).[65] These foreign authors were disillusioned European communists whose influential accounts focused mostly on the Soviet Union.[66] Of these, *Darkness at Noon, The New Class,* and portions of *El Campesino* were

[61] The series ran from 5 November 1958 to 7 April 1959. For the first day of the series, see Trần Phúc, "Bác-sĩ Jivago lột trần mặt nạ cộng sản," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 72 (5 Nov 1958): 2.
[62] "*Bác sĩ Zivago* của Boris Pasternak, bản dịch Việt văn của Văn Tự và Mậu Hải," *Tin sách* 1, no 9 (Sep 1960): 3-4.
[63] "Làn sóng trốn tránh hỏa ngục đỏ: 15 triệu người tỵ nạn C.S.," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 930 (18 Aug 1961): 3, 4; *Cách mạng quốc gia* 931 (19 Aug 1961): 1, 3.
[64] "Mỗi ngày 6 sinh viên Đông Đức vượt tuyến," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 784 (3 Mar 1961): 2, 3; "Dân chúng Đông Đức vẫn tiếp tục tìm tự do," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 937 (26 Aug 1961): 2, 3.
[65] Victor Kravchenko was a Soviet engineer who defected during WWII while he was serving in the Soviet army. He later wrote about Soviet prison camps and collectivization in his memoir, *I Chose Freedom* (1946). Valentín Gonzalez was a Spanish communist who became disillusioned with communism after moving to the USSR, which he retells with ghost writer Julian Gorkin in *El Campesino* (1952). Arthur Koestler was a Hungarian-born writer educated in Austria. He resigned his membership in the German communist party during WWII before authoring his most famous work, the anticommunist novel *Darkness at Noon* (1940). Milovan Djilas was a Yugoslavian politician and anticipated successor to Tito but fell from power for his criticisms of the communist system, which he expressed most fully in *The New Class* (1957). For contemporary American editions of these works, see Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon* (New York: Macmillan, 1941); Victor Kravchenko, *I Chose Freedom: The Personal and Political Life of a Soviet Official* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1946); Valentín Gonzalez and Julian Gorkin, *El Campesino: Life and Death in Soviet Russia,* trans. Ilsa Barea (New York: GP Putnam's Sons, 1952); Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (New York: Praeger, 1957).
[66] These authors are specifically mentioned in Nghiêm Xuân Việt's lecture for the anniversary of the International Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December 1964. Nghiêm Xuân Việt also referenced Robert Loh, a Chinese student educated in America who returned to the PRC to help the Revolution, only to become disillusioned. Loh's *Escape from Red China,* an account of life under Mao, was not published until 1962. See "The Significance of the

translated into Vietnamese during the 1950s, but they were not widely reviewed in the press and do not appear to have been very popular.[67] Only Raymond de Jaegher's *The Enemy Within* (1952), an anticommunist account of the Chinese Revolution by a Belgian missionary, was at all well known, and Jaegher's account was not translated until the late 1950s.[68] The government also began to invite prominent international anticommunists (or perceived anticommunists) to speak in Saigon, such as the Hungarian revolutionaries discussed above or Russian émigrés, like philosopher Roman Redlich.[69] The audience at such gatherings likely consisted of civil servants and schoolchildren who were required to attend. Saigon dailies covered these speaking engagements but summarized the speeches and did not discuss them in any depth. As a result, foreign ideas were rarely presented in full-length books but instead came in the form of short snippets tucked into the pages of large, ephemeral newspapers, and their impact was necessarily limited. Without being widely distributed by a commercial press, they could only reach a restricted audience.

The circulation of foreign ideas increased significantly within the span of a few short years. In the early 1960s, journalists increasingly made use of materials by foreign governments and international organizations, and many more foreign works were translated into Vietnamese for the first time. *National Revolution* journalist Minh Tâm regularly used reports by the US State Department and the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) as source material for his articles on communist countries.[70] SEATO was an American-led alliance dedicated to defending Southeast Asia from communist incursion. *Văn hữu (Literary Friends),* the official organ of the Office of Cultural Affairs, and *Bách khoa (Encyclopedic),* the RVN's leading scholarly journal, translated and serialized unflattering accounts of the Chinese Revolution by French and Taiwanese writers.[71] In 1961, *National Revolution* published interviews with the anticommunist French journalist Suzanne Labin.[72] After Labin's month-long lecture tour in Saigon that summer, *Literary Friends* translated critical segments of her speeches.[73] Afterwards, the publishing house of the daily *Freedom* translated and published Labin's book, *Il est moins*

International Declaration of Human Rights," lecture by Nghiêm Xuân Việt, 10 Dec 1964, file 29573, PThTVNCH; Robert Loh and Humphrey Evans, *Escape from Red China* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1962).

[67] I have only been able to locate two works that were translated in their entirety: Arthur Koestler, *Đêm hay ngày [Darkness at Noon]* (Saigon: Tân Á, 1952); Milovan Djilas, *Giai cấp mới [The New Class],* trans. Chính Tâm and Trương Tiến (Saigon: Ánh Việt, 1958). *Chỉ đạo* translated a portion of *El Campesino:* Valentino Gonzalez, "Mười năm ở Nga-Sô (1939-1949)," trans. Dương Hoài, *Chỉ đạo* 33 (1 Dec 1959): 33-38.

[68] "Kinh nghiệm de Jaegher," *Chỉ đạo* 17 (1 Jun 1958): 1-3.

[69] "1 người Nga nói chuyện với người Việt Nam về hiện tình nước Nga," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 345 (29 Aug 1956): 2, 4.

[70] See Minh Tâm, "Vấn đề Bá Linh," Hái lượm column, *Cách mạng quốc gia* 1342 (14 Dec 1962): 3; ibid., *Cách mạng quốc gia* 1348 (21 Dec 1962): 3; Minh Tâm, "Phật giáo, Hồi giáo, Thiên chúa giáo sau bức màn sắt," Hái lượm column, *Cách mạng quốc gia* 1366 (11 Jan 1963): 3.

[71] *Bách khoa* translated Charles Couturier's article, "Typhons sur la Chine," in two parts: Charles Couturier, "Bảo tố trên lục địa Trung Hoa," trans. Tiểu Dân, *Bách khoa* 34 (1 Jun 1958): 27-36; Charles Couturier, "Bảo tố trên lục địa Trung Hoa," trans. Tiểu Dân, *Bách khoa* 35 (15 Jun 1958): 24-28. For the original articles, see Charles Couturier, "Typhons sur la Chine," *Études* 1 (Jan 1958): 42-57; Charles Couturier, "Typhons sur la Chine," *Études* 2 (Feb 1958): 175-192. *Văn hữu* translated an account by a young Chinese woman whose family fled to Taiwan but did not provide the original Chinese title or author: Vi Huyền Đắc, "Gái thời loạn," *Văn hữu* 9 (Feb 1961): 45-62.

[72] "Phỏng vấn bà Suzanne Labin: 'Việt Nam là tượng trưng cuộc chiến đấu chống Cộng,'" *Cách mạng quốc gia* 886 (28 Jul 1961): 3; ibid., *Cách mạng quốc gia* 887 (29 Jun 1961): 3.

[73] "Diễn thuyết," *Văn hữu* 12 (Jul 1961): 153-162.

cinq (There Is Less Than Five Minutes Left, 1959), about Soviet propaganda.[74] Three years after the Tibetan Revolution, the Catholic publisher Dziên Hồng offered Vietnamese readers Lowell Thomas' *The Dalai Lama,* a biography of the Tibetan leader by an American journalist, but Dziên Hồng chose a far more militant title, *Tây tạng kháng chiến (The Tibetan Resistance),* to emphasize the anticommunist aspects of the Dalai Lama's story.[75]

Disparaging accounts of the DRV by foreigners were particularly prominent among foreign anticommunist texts, especially Thomas Dooley's *Deliver Us From Evil* (1956).[76] Dooley was an American naval doctor who had cared for northern émigrés during the migration. Dziên Hồng's Vietnamese translation of the book in the 1960s immediately won the hearts of Republican readers. Dooley's interest in humanitarianism inspired many Vietnamese to express a sort of fraternity akin to the Vietnamese-Hungarian solidarity. One admiring critic praised Dooley for his contribution towards building "genuine friendship between peoples based on a foundation of altruism and mutual affection."[77] The critic did not mention the ideological basis of Vietnamese-American friendship, but anticommunism was clearly critical in the Republican response to Dooley as well as Dooley's affection for the Vietnamese people. Dooley's anticommunism pervaded *Deliver Us From Evil*, and the highly politicized context of the migration of 1954 could have left no one in doubt that Republican readers and Dooley shared the same fervent hatred for communism. After the doctor's death, a Vietnamese journalist mourned Dooley as the "manifestation of human compassion" *(hiện thân của tình yêu nhân loại).*[78] *Deliver Us From Evil* was useful for Republican anticommunists precisely because of its foreign authorship. Dooley was far removed from Saigon's propaganda apparatus, and his gruesome descriptions of alleged communist atrocities served as an independent source that validated the regime's charges against the DRV.

Gérard Tongas' *J'ai vécu dans l'enfer communiste au Nord Viêt-Nam et j'ai choisi la liberté (I Lived in the Communist Hell of North Vietnam and I Chose Liberty)* was another important text.[79] Tongas was a French professor who voluntarily remained in the DRV throughout the 1950s until he became disillusioned with communism. His eyewitness account of domestic conditions north of the seventeenth parallel was published in France in 1960. The following year, Vietnam Press, the RVN's official news agency, translated the opening passages of the book, and several dailies carried the report.[80] Vietnam Press used Tongas' foreign status to

---

[74] Suzanne Labin, *Nước đã đến chân [Il est moins cinq],* trans. Hải Chi (Saigon: Tự do, 1962); "Nước đã đến chân, do Hải Chi dịch," *Tin sách* 3 (Sep 1962), 24; Suzanne Labin, *Il est moins cinq* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1960).

[75] Lowell Thomas, *Tây tạng kháng chiến [The Dalai Lama],* trans. Lê Hùng Tâm and Tạ Quốc Tuấn (Saigon: Dziên Hồng, 1962); "*Tây Tạng kháng chiến* do Lê Hùng Tâm và Tạ Quốc Tuấn dịch," *Tin sách* 2 (Aug 1962), 26; Lowell Thomas, *The Dalai Lama* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1961).

[76] Thomas Dooley, *Deliver Us From Evil: The Story of Viet Nam's Flight to Freedom* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Cudahy, 1956).

[77] "việc xây-dựng một mối tình thân-hửu chân-thành giửa các dân-tộc đặt trên căn-bản bác-ái, tương-thân": "*Thoát ly hỏa ngục,* do Lê Hung Tâm và Vũ Phương Minh dịch," *Tin sách* 2, no 6-7 (Jun-Jul 1961): 49.

[78] Vũ Anh Tuấn, "Cố bác sĩ Thomas A. Dooley, hiện thân của tình yêu nhân loại," *Sáng dội miền Nam* 46 (Apr 1963): 20-21; ibid., *Sáng dội miền Nam* 47 (May 1963): 23, 34.

[79] Gérard Tongas, *J'ai vécu dans l'enfer communiste au Nord Viet-Nam et j'ai choisi la liberté* (Paris: Debresse, 1960).

[80] Both *Cách mạng quốc gia* and *Tự do* serialized the report from Việt Nam Thống Tấn Xã (Vietnam Press, VTX). See Gérard Tongas, "Tôi đã sống trong hỏa ngục cộng sản ở Bắc Việt," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 813 (5 Apr 1961): 2, 7; ibid., *Cách mạng quốc gia* 814 (6 Apr 1961): 2; ibid., *Cách mạng quốc gia* 815 (7 Apr 1961): 2; Gérard Tongas, "Tôi đã sống trong hỏa ngục Cộng Sản ở Bắc Việt và tôi đã chọn tự do của Gérard Tongas," trans. VTX, *Tự do* 1205 (6 Apr 1961): 3; ibid., *Tự do* 1206 (7 Apr 1961): 2, 3.

suggest the existence of an international consensus on the DRV's misrule. The report claimed that people throughout the Free World, as well as Republican readers, were informed of Hanoi's oppression thanks to eyewitness accounts by foreigners. Furthermore, Tongas' reaction was by no means unique. The news agency claimed that many westerners had become similarly disgusted after personally witnessing conditions in the DRV. Republican responses to *Deliver Us From Evil* and *I Lived in the Communist Hell* indicated the growing importance of international opinion that would later become critical in Saigon's denunciation of the insurgency and its justification for its own legitimacy.

New Enemies: Underdevelopment and Disunity

An alternative framework that shaped the Republican engagement with foreign ideas was the regime's identity as a Third World nation. In the 1960s, state nationalism reflected a combination of both influences in the revision of the triple enemy formula from "feudalism, colonialism, and communism" *(phong kiến, thực dân, cộng sản)* to "communism, underdevelopment, and disunity" *(cộng sản, chậm tiến, chia rẽ).* Although anticommunism dominated the new formula, the economic discourse that helped inspire the ideological change came from Third World colleagues as well as Free World allies. But the importance of the Third World did not mean that Saigon wavered in its ideological commitments. Indeed, the regime's new formula combated communism using economic theories shaped by the Third World and borrowed from the US.

The ideological transformation was a part of a larger government response to changing political conditions. Saigon's early struggles against French colonialists, Bảo Đại, and the sects had concluded by 1957, and anticolonialism and antifeudalism became increasingly irrelevant. With the emergence of the communist-led insurgency in about 1958-1959, anticommunism became the undisputed focus of state rhetoric. The growing threat demanded changes in rhetoric, and Saigon introduced a new set of enemies that prioritized the communist menace above all others. Ngô Đình Diệm never promoted the new slogan as consistently as the original version. His administration alternatively identified the last enemy as disunity *(chia rẽ)*, colonialism *(thực dân)*, or feudalism *(phong kiến)* and complained about the vestiges left by the old trio of adversaries.[81] Just as the old formula were the precepts of the Denounce the Communists Campaign, the new slogan became the guide for Saigon's most ambitious nation-building project, the Strategic Hamlet program launched in 1960. The government intended the project to be an all-encompassing plan that would simultaneously increase military security, promote community development, construct democracy at the local level, and spur economic growth. In theory, the program was based on citizen volunteerism and the fortification of existing villages, but, in practice, it often involved compulsory labor and forced relocation. It is difficult to trace the origins of the theoretical innovation, but the language of the new formula as well as the economic dimension of the Strategic Hamlet program suggest the influence of development theory, specifically dependency theory from the Third World and modernization theory from the US.[82]

[81] For example, see Ngô Đình Diệm, "Đại ý bài diễn văn của Tổng Thống đọc trong lễ khánh thành Khu Trù Mật Vị Thanh-Hỏa Lựu (12-3-1960)," *CĐCN* 6:93-98, reference to 94.

[82] This is not to suggest that the Strategic Hamlet program was primarily an expression of economic theory, only that the new formula of enemies that accompanied the program reflected economic theory. In fact, Catton has argued persuasively that the nation-building program was based on Ngô Đình Diệm and Ngô Đình Nhu's understanding of Personalism, a French Catholic philosophy. See Catton, *Diem's Final Failure,* 25-50.

The new terms, "underdevelopment" and "disunity," were even less ideologically developed than antifeudalism and anticolonialism, and they certainly never achieved the same currency as their predecessors. Mentioned only in a handful of official speeches and propaganda pamphlets, they apparently did not inspire any novels, poems, or political tracts. "Underdevelopment" did attract the interest of economists and policymakers who hoped to strengthen Vietnam's newly decolonized economy, but neither economists nor propagandists turned development theory into a historical narrative or coherent ideology.[83] Partly, this was because the new formula was merely a variation on existing ideas. In the 1950s, the regime had argued that colonialism and feudalism violated national unity *(thống nhất)* and that colonialists and feudalists collaborated in carrying out the France's "divide-and-rule policy" *(chính sách chia để trị)*. Clearly, the idea that "disunity" was a legacy of the regime's old enemies was well established by the 1960s. The new formula updated the argument by explicitly blaming colonialists and feudalists for present disunity rather than just past divisiveness. The term shifted the focus from the defeated enemies to their continuing effect on contemporary Vietnam. Saigon's rhetoric against disunity was not as forceful as against colonialism, but the government nonetheless considered it a significant problem. The regime designed the Strategic Hamlet program partly to combat divisiveness and build communal solidarity, and the project relied heavily on the willingness of the rural residents to unite and volunteer their labor in response to the regime's mass mobilization campaigns.[84] Thus, government officials refashioned the concept of "disunity" to become an impediment to Republican nation-building.

"Underdevelopment" was also a vestige of past enemies, but the term added novel ideas to state nationalism. Whereas anticommunists in the 1950s emphasized the cultural and social effects of French colonialism, government officials now added an economic critique that blamed the French for Vietnam's weak economy. Nguyễn Văn Châu's *Giòng lịch sử (The Current of History)* offered the clearest explanation of underdevelopment. The Director of Psychological Warfare claimed that colonial economic policies prioritized the extraction of natural resources and the exploitation of native labor, so the French never established heavy industry in its colonies. As a result, the native economy remained rudimentary. According to the author, this extractive policy betrayed sinister calculation: "Because if Vietnam ever had heavy industries, it would one day become an industrialized country that could compete with France's industry."[85] Thus, "underdevelopment" as a concept made the French directly responsible for the Republic's present problems. Like "disunity," it tied old enemies to Saigon's new challenges.

---

[83] The evidence suggests that government officials may have used modernization theory to heighten the sense of urgency with which it pushed through nation-building programs, but the importance of modernization theory beyond discussions of economic development was limited. For example, Ngô Đình Nhu cited W.W. Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth* when explaining the process of industrialization in his speech to the eighth graduating class of the National Institute of Administration. For Rostow, the most critical moment in the process was economic take-off, when a country definitively breaks with the traditional past and transitions into industrialization. Ngô Đình Nhu argued that take-off was so critical and difficult for undeveloped countries that it required state intervention and popular participation. He used modernization theory to justify state policies and encourage citizen compliance in bringing about economic change. However, it appears that the regime rarely used modernization theory to assert political legitimacy or ideological superiority in relation to the DRV. See Ngô Đình Nhu, "Industrialization: Pre-Requisite to Self-Sufficiency," *Times of Vietnam Magazine* 5, no. 18 (5 May 1963): 4-5. For the usage of modernization theory by economists, see Nguyễn Cao Hách, ed., *Hiện tượng chậm tiến* (Saigon: Hoài Bảo, 1960).

[84] Catton, *Diem's Final Failure,* 38, 44.

[85] "Vì nếu Việt Nam có được kỹ nghệ nặng tất sẽ có một ngày kia Việt Nam trở nên một quốc gia kỹ nghệ cạnh tranh với kỹ nghệ của Pháp": Nguyễn Văn Châu, *Giòng lịch sử,* 45.

The most innovative aspect of the new formula was the causal relationship between colonialism and communism. The French were now responsible for communism because they created the pre-conditions for it. Nguyễn Văn Châu claimed that underdevelopment and disunity enabled the spread of communism:

> the underdevelopment and disunity carefully created by colonialists in our country, have led Vietnamese people – good, simple, poor, unlettered Vietnamese people – to easily accept the deceptions of communist doctrine. The communist doctrine is one that always grows on poverty and ignorance, that is always dependent on disunity to worm its way in.[86]

Thus, disunity and underdevelopment were simultaneously the consequences of colonialism and feudalism as well as the precursor to communism, and fighting the two new enemies translated into a struggle against the entire trio of old antagonists. More importantly, attacking underdevelopment and disunity would undermine the strength of Vietnamese communists. In short, every element in the new slogan targeted the communists.

Development Theory and Modernization Theory

International economic discourse, which was then dominated by development theory, seems to have inspired the innovation behind the new formula. Two strains of development theory can be identified in Republican nationalism: dependency theory and modernization theory. Each strain reflected transformations in international politics. In the mid-20th century, two intersecting events profoundly shaped the world: the Cold War and decolonization. As the Third World emerged out of the disintegrating European empires, the US and USSR vied for influence among the newly independent nations. Many Third World countries remained neutral during the Cold War, and a few joined to form the Non-Aligned Movement in hopes of remaining independent from American and Soviet influence. As a poor, newly independent state, the RVN identified strongly with its Asian and African colleagues. At the same time, Saigon was devoted to the Free World alliance rather than neutralism. This twin identity is evident in the state nationalism of the early 1960s, when the importance of foreign ideas increased markedly within the Republic.

Given the importance of anticommunism, the Cold War predictably shaped the RVN's reception of economic theory. Nguyễn Văn Châu drew upon American modernization theory to attribute the success of communism to underdevelopment and disunity. One variant of modernization theory argues that societies are most susceptible to communism during the transition to modernity.[87] Transitional societies are generally characterized by underdevelopment, poverty, and the absence of mass education.[88] A number of thinkers also emphasized the social dislocation, societal fragmentation, and alienation that resulted from colonialism or the breakdown of traditional culture.[89] Nguyễn Văn Châu's terminology differed from social scientific vocabulary but referred to the same causes: "ignorance" instead of inadequate education, and "disunity" rather than social dislocation or fragmentation. Although the government specified the same pre-conditions as American academics, it did not disseminate

---

[86] "tình trạng chậm tiến, tình trạng chia rẽ do thực dân đã khéo tạo nên tại nước ta, đã làm cho người dân Việt thuần lương, chất phác, nghèo và dốt dễ [*sic*] tin theo sự mê hoặc của chủ thuyết Cộng-Sản, một chủ thuyết luôn luôn dựa trên nạn nghèo và dốt mà nẩy nở, nhờ chia rẽ để ma chen chân": Nguyễn Văn Châu, *Giòng lịch sử,* 51.

[87] Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 190-197.

[88] Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future,* 148, 176-177.

[89] Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future,* 168, 182.

modernization theory in its original form but applied the foreign concepts to serve Saigon's interests. Read against the growing insurgency, Nguyễn Văn Châu's argument shifted blame away from Ngô Đình Diệm's administration by employing abstract explanations of poverty and dislocation. In reality, the insurgency was driven by both the DRV and the very real grievances of the southern population. Indeed, it was the Republic's unpopular nation-building projects that often pushed farmers into the arms of the insurgency. Manipulating foreign ideas allowed the director to lay responsibility on social and economic conditions, rather than at Saigon's feet.

More surprising is that the concept of the Third World also framed his appropriation of development theory. Nguyễn Văn Châu's argument that extractive, exploitative colonial policies caused underdevelopment bore clear affinities to dependency theory. Dependency theory arose in the 1950s among Latin American economists trying to account for underdevelopment in Latin America, and American thinkers later developed a Marxist variant. Dependency theory explained the inequality between rich and poor nations by arguing that the wealthy, industrialized countries enriched themselves through the impoverishment of unindustrialized, undeveloped ones. Historically, poor nations were former colonies whose economies were intentionally designed to serve their colonial masters as a market for the mother country's manufactured goods and a source of raw materials and cheap labor. Even after decolonization, the undeveloped economies of poor countries kept them dependent on the industrialized world, and wealthy nations maintained the unequal relationship through foreign policy and economic and cultural influence.[90] By the 1960s, dependency theory was widely perceived as a distinctively Third World perspective, and economists, political scientists, and sociologists applied diverse strains of it to countries throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Like other poor countries and former colonies, the RVN faced similar economic problems, and Nguyễn Văn Châu invoked underdevelopment to blame the Republic's current economic woes on the French rather than Saigon's failed policies. Because underdevelopment was also a pre-condition for communism, Nguyễn Văn Châu was also implying that the communist insurgency was not an indictment of Republican shortcomings but a consequence of historical exploitation prior to the regime's existence. By combining anticommunist aspects of modernization theory and the anticolonial critique from dependency theory, Saigon created a new explanation that absolved the regime of any culpability, claim legitimacy in the face of the rising insurgency, and focused sharply on the communists.

Significantly, Nguyễn Văn Châu's arguments selectively adopted elements of the contrasting theories rather than fully embrace either one and avoided aspects of the theories that did not serve the regime's interests. Modernization theory argued that all societies followed the same developmental path to modernity, and poor countries had failed to modernize due to internal conditions. Many modernization theorists, especially W.W. Rostow, even credited colonialism with initiating traditional societies towards economic change, though they did acknowledge that profit motives drove imperial powers to develop colonies as import and export markets rather than centers of economic production.[91] Nguyễn Văn Châu borrowed from modernization theory to account for the communist insurgency but ignored theorists who praised the economic benefits of colonialism.[92] The proponents of dependency theory criticized

[90] Matias Vernengo, "Technology, Finance and Dependency: Latin American Radical Political Economy in Retrospect," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 38, no. 4 (fall 2006): 551-568, reference to 552-555.
[91] W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, 2nd ed. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 26-31, 108-112.
[92] Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*, 182.

modernization theory by arguing that economic imperialism and other external factors were the real culprits behind underdevelopment; colonialism resulted in stagnation, not industrialization or modernity. Nguyễn Văn Châu chose dependency theory to explain the Republic's economic problems but eschewed its potentially subversive strains, which accused elites in poor countries of collaborating with foreign capitalists to exploit their own people. Although such arguments would have strengthened antifeudal accusations of collaborationism, their Marxist promoters also called for the overthrow of elite-led regimes and their replacement by socialist, Soviet-style governments.[93] This would have been especially threatening to the RVN, which was a prime example of an elitist regime closely allied with a foreign capitalist power.

How international economic theories entered Vietnam or Nguyễn Văn Châu's own thinking is unclear, but Vietnamese economists were fully engaged with the contemporary intellectual currents and fascinated by development theory. In 1960, Nguyễn Cao Hách, a respected professor of law and economics, edited *Hiện tượng chậm tiến (Underdevelopment),* a collection of previously published journal articles by leading Vietnamese scholars that analyzed contemporary economic problems in Asia and Africa and explored possible solutions.[94] The essays in *Underdevelopment* were far more sophisticated than Nguyễn Văn Châu's superficial treatment of the economic development. One of the main channels through which the RVN received international economic theories was through American advisors. As early as the Marshall Plan, introduced in 1947, the US government began employing economic aid to steer societies away from communism, and Kennedy's administration in the early 1960s embraced development as a preventive measure against communism. In Vietnam, the Michigan University Advisory Group helped develop the curriculum of the Học viện Quốc gia Hành chánh (National Institute of Administration), where Nguyễn Cao Hách and many contributors to *Underdevelopment* taught.[95]

The early 1960s also marked increased exposure to non-American foreign influences, as demonstrated in the discussion of foreign anticommunism above. After all, most Vietnamese intellectuals of the First Republic were educated in French and were generally not American-oriented in their interests.[96] Even a quick perusal of *Underdevelopment* bears out this point: contributors rarely referenced works by American advisors and organizations, and most English-language sources were by prominent economists with international careers, such as Arthur Lewis, Ragnar Nurkse, Gunnar Myrdal, Harvey Leibenstein, and Paul Rosenstein-Rodan. Similarly, when professors at the NIA lectured on Rostow at the beginning of the 1963-1964 academic year, their lecture notes freely cited many authors in addition to the American economist, including Richard Eckaus, J.H. Boeke, C.N. Vakil, P.R. Brahmanand, Paul Baran,

---

[93] John Bellamy Foster, "The Imperialist World System: Paul Baran's *Political Economy of Growth* After Fifty Years," *Monthly Review* 59, no. 1 (May 2007): 1-16, reference to 6, 9.

[94] For an overview of the theories and issues discussed in the collection, see Nguyễn Cao Hách, introduction to *Hiện tượng chậm tiến,* ed. Nguyễn Cao Hách (Saigon: Hoài Bảo, 1960).

[95] Unfortunately, there has been no scholarship on the relationship between Republican intellectuals and American intellectual trends. For a case study on the introduction of modernization theory into another anticommunist Asian ally of the US, see Gregg Brazinsky, "Koreanizing Modernization: Modernization Theory and South Korean Intellectuals," in *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War,* ed. David Engerman, et. al. (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 251-273. For the relationship between the MSUG and the NIA, see Ernst, *Forging a Fateful Alliance,* 41-61.

[96] Interestingly, Republican intellectuals were wary of adopting modernization theory without any adjustments. A number of the contributors to *Hiện tượng chậm tiến* flatly rejected the idea that all societies were obligated to follow the same path towards modernity. See Vũ Quốc Thúc, "Vấn đề kinh tế thiếu mở mang," *Hiện tượng chậm tiến,* ed. Nguyễn Cao Hách (Saigon: Hoài Bảo, 1960), 25-49, reference to 27.

and those mentioned in *Underdevelopment*.[97] Although Vietnamese economists were certainly familiar with American thinkers and fluent in modernization theory, economic thought was not exclusively derived from the Americans.

If any body of sources was overrepresented in *Underdevelopment*, it was reports produced by the UN and its subsidiary agencies and organizations, such as the Economic Mission for Asia and the Far East. Although the evidence is merely suggestive, it would appear that the UN was far more important to Republican economic thought than the US. In fact, dependency theory began with two papers produced by economists Hans Singer and Raúl Prebisch, who were then working for the UN.[98] Like scholars elsewhere in the world, Vietnamese economists and propagandists did not think of economic theories as belonging to any one nation and quoted freely from prominent thinkers regardless of nationality. Rather than any specific source, it would seem that development theory colored mid-century political rhetoric throughout the world. Interest in development theory even transcended Cold War boundaries. Only two years after Nguyễn Cao Hách published *Underdevelopment*, a press in Hanoi also issued a volume on underdevelopment.[99] Given the Republican interest in Asian and European anticommunism and the country's exposure to multiple intellectual currents, it would be difficult to identify the specific route by which any given idea entered Vietnam. Thus, no single framework exclusively determined the RVN's engagement with foreign ideas. Instead, Republican intellectuals participated in a global discourse and appropriated useful ideas from competing flows of foreign influence.

Local Bandits or Hanoi's Servants?

Regardless of the alternative theories, the communist character of the insurgency ensured that the Cold War would dominate Republican understanding of its new enemy. The southern insurgency of the late 1950s represented a conceptual problem for the RVN. On the one hand, the movement was rooted in the local countryside. The rank and file of the insurgency was southern, and their most visible activities were the assassination of local officials, attacks on local pro-government residents, and the sabotage of municipal government installations. The insurgency won the support of the peasantry and some educated urbanites. On the other hand, most government officials and many intellectuals believed that Hanoi directed the insurgency, even though the movement was not openly communist and consistently claimed to be independent from the DRV. In 1960, the NLF emerged as the mouthpiece and organizational head of the movement.

---

[97] Nguyễn Như Cương, "Lý thuyết của W.W. Rostow và vấn đề phát triển tại các nước kém mở mang," *Nghiên cứu hành chánh* 7, no. 5-6 (May-Jun 1963): 105-153.

[98] Thaveeporn Vasavakul has examined the influence of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) on the educational system of the RVN, but few other scholars have recognized the importance of the UN for Republican intellectual and cultural life. UNESCO promoted adult education programs and common schools, and the Ministry of National Education housed a special liaison office to UNESCO. The ministry's official periodical, *Văn hóa Nguyệt san (Cultural Monthly)*, frequently translated materials produced by the international agency. For the influence of UNESCO in the educational system, see Vasavakul Thaveeporn, "Schools and Politics in South and North Viet Nam," vol. 1, 243-267. For examples of translated materials from UNESCO in *Văn hóa Nguyệt san,* see N.H. Loper, "Vấn đề giáo dục và bản chương trình của UNESCO năm 1959-60," trans. Nghi Ba, *Văn hóa Nguyệt san,* n.s., 35 (Oct 1958): 1211-1214; Jacques Havet, "UNESCO và việc thẩm định hỗ tương giá trị Văn hóa Đông Tây," trans. Thiện Phước, *Văn hóa Nguyệt san,* n.s., 38 (Jan-Feb 1959): 150-156.

[99] Nguyễn Khắc Viện, *Kinh nghiệm Việt Nam và những con đường tiến bộ của các nước chậm tiến* (Hanoi: NXB Sự Thật, 1962).

Throughout the war, the NLF's relationship with Hanoi remained highly controversial, and it remained an open question whether the insurgency was an extension of Hanoi or an autonomous, homegrown revolution against Saigon. Defining the character of the NLF was critical for the credibility of Ngô Đình Diệm's government: an internal revolt undermined Republican legitimacy, while an external invasion was proof of Hanoi's deception and aggression. The RVN responded to the dual character of the insurgency with contradictory rhetoric. To account for the local violence, leaders in the RVN dismissed the movement as provincial banditry and terrorism rather than the military actions of a rival government. But Saigon also denounced the NLF as a puppet of foreign, communist powers and depicted the war against the insurgency as an extension of the global Cold War.

In many ways, the description of NLF violence recalled the charges made against the sects. Government officials never explicitly compared the insurgency to the Hòa Hảo or Bình Xuyên, and it did not apply the terms "warlords" or "rebels" to the NLF (*sứ quân, phiến loạn).* But just as propagandists once denied that the sects served as mini-states during the First Indochina War and dismissed them as village bandits, the government now refused to acknowledge that the insurgency constituted an alternative political authority and instead referred to it as organized crime. The early 1960s witnessed the publication of several books on insurgent crimes. One of the earliest accounts was Quốc Anh's *Thực chất của Mặt trận Giải phóng Miền Nam (The True Nature of the National Liberation Front,* 1962), with an introduction by a deputy from the National Assembly. Quốc Anh mocked the NLF as the "Thuggish Front for the Sabotage of the South" *(Mặt trận côn đồ phá hoại miền Nam),* a pejorative label commonly employed by government. The words "thuggish" and "sabotage" connoted hoodlums committing vandalism rather than an organized revolution. Quốc Anh asserted that the NLF "caused countless families to suffer and mourn, massacred countless innocent lives, burned and destroyed countless homes, villages, temples, and churches, and robbed and murdered people, from naïve young children to the elderly."[100] Like the sects, the NLF was accused of creating chaos, low level violence, and widespread insecurity.

In the same year, an unknown author offered the reading public a compilation of NLF crimes under the title of *Những tội ác của Việt Cộng tại miền Nam Việt Nam (Việt cộng Crimes in South Vietnam).* The author began with the usual repertoire but added that villagers were forced to

> pay high taxes, contribute money and grain every day, and dig up roads and destroy bridges. They [the insurgents] force young men to act as scouts and human shields during *Việt cộng* robberies and massacres.[101]

Taxation and conscription are typical demands made by most political states, but the tract considered them crimes when instituted by the NLF. Similarly, phrases like "robberies and massacres" reduced insurgent attacks to mere banditry. The passage even ignored the military significance of destroying roads and bridges. The description of exploitative taxes was reminiscent of the same charges made against the sects, who propagandists accused of plundering the population. Through selective description and omissions, anticommunists refused

[100] "gây tang tóc đau thương cho bao gia đình, tàn sát bao sinh mạng của dân lành, đốt phá bao nhiêu nhà cửa, xóm làng, đình chùa, nhà thờ cướp của giết người tự một em bé còn thơ ngây đến những ông bà cụ già": Quốc Anh, *Thực chất của Mặt trận giải phóng miền Nam* (Saigon: 1962), 108.

[101] "phải đóng thuế cao, góp nhiều tiền của, lúa gạo hàng ngày cho Việt Cộng, thường xuyên bị Việt Cộng bắt đi đào đường, phá cầu, thanh niên phải đi dẫn đầu làm bình phong đỡ đạn cho Việt Cộng trong các vụ cướp phá tàn sát dân làng": *Những tội ác của Việt Cộng tại miền Nam Việt Nam,* 13-14.

to recognize that the NLF was a legitimate power structure. The passage quoted above also assumed that the NLF enjoyed no political support and could only mobilize for warfare through coercion. In truth, the insurgency was popular in some areas of the country, and many civilians voluntarily contributed food, funds, and labor.

The government consistently accused the insurgents of the same repertoire of offenses, including murder, robbery, kidnapping, and arson. The most distinguishing feature of the repertoire was specific bodily violations, especially slitting throats and slicing open abdomens. In response to the growing strength of the insurgency, the government issued law 10/59 on 6 May 1959, which established special military courts to prosecute insurgents. According to the official justification, the legislation was a response to the increasing incidents of murder, robbery, arson, sabotage, and terrorism.[102] Compared to similar charges against the sects, accusations against the insurgency were often more gruesome, specific, and empirical. Quốc Anh referred the reader to black and white photographs of dismembered corpses and claimed that "the demonic *Việt cộng* have committed the most horrific crimes, like cutting open people's abdomens and eating their livers, cutting open the abdomens of pregnant women, raping women and girls and then disfiguring their breasts."[103] The bulk of *Việt Cộng Crimes in South Vietnam* was a catalogue of specific incidents, categorized according to the type of crime and listed chronologically. Photographs of maimed bodies added to the book's empirical weight. In 1963, Literary Friends of Asia, the publishing arm of the Office of Cultural Affairs, published another collection of insurgent atrocities. *Những trang hồi ký (Autobiographical Pages)* was an anthology of eyewitness accounts presumably written or retold by ordinary civilians. Following the standard litany of crimes, the publisher's introduction stated, "In areas where they [the NLF] are secretly active, incidents of kidnapping, arson, robbery, slitting throats, and slicing open abdomens are frequently inflicted upon the population."[104] The repeated imagery of mutilation and corporeal violence cast the insurgency as aggressors who violated the integrity of the Vietnamese body.

But Republican descriptions of the insurgents differed in several important respects from earlier antisectarian rhetoric. First, authors accused the insurgents of being anti-Vietnamese, an accusation not generally made against the southern sects. The author of *Việt Cộng Crimes in South Vietnam* denounced the NLF's "violations of our people's traditional morality."[105] In response to insurgent terrorism, the National Assembly proposed a bill that would make communism illegal. Deputy Cao Văn Tường argued that the insurgent communists were "germs that will erode and destroy the foundation of the Nation, the foundation of the family, religion, and the basic, necessary freedom of human beings."[106] Such rhetoric recalled anticommunist accusations that the Việt Minh had betrayed the nation by destroying national unity and Vietnam's historical tradition.

---

[102] *Bình giải về những điểm chính của Luật số 10/59 lập Tòa án Quân sự Đặc biệt* (Saigon: Văn hữu Á châu, 1959), 1.

[103] "bọn hung thần Việt-cộng còn gây những tội ác cực kỳ kinh khủng như mổ bụng ăn gan, mổ bụng đàn bà có chửa, hãm hiếp xong lại còn rạch vú đàn và con gái": Quốc Anh, *Thực chất của Mặt trận giải phóng miền Nam,* 108. Interestingly, these offenses are similar to alleged French atrocities during the First Indochina War. See Shawn McHale, "Understanding the Fanatic Mind? The Việt Minh and Race Hatred in the First Indochina War," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 4, no. 3 (fall 2009): 98-138.

[104] "Những vụ cắt cổ, mổ bụng, bắt cóc, đốt nhà, cướp của dân lành thường xuyên diễn ra ở những nơi chúng lén lút hoạt động": *Những trang hồi ký* ([Saigon?]: Văn hữu Á châu, 1963), 5.

[105] "xâm phạm đến thuần phong mỹ tục cổ truyền của dân tộc ta": *Những tội ác của Việt Cộng tại miền Nam Việt Nam,* 153.

[106] "những vi-trùng đục-khoét, phá-hoại cơ-sở Quốc-Gia, cơ-sở gia-đình, tôn-giáo, tự-do cần-thiết căn-bản của con người": *Nội san quốc hội* 40 (Apr 1960): 32 (statement of Cao Văn Tường).

Second, and more importantly, anticommunists argued that the insurgents were considered external invaders rather than internal rebels, even if both carried out local violence. Or, more precisely, government officials and propagandists dismissed the NLF as the DRV's puppet. From the beginning, anticommunists identified the insurgents with the Hanoi leadership under the single label of *Việt cộng.* Quốc Anh's *The True Nature of the National Liberation Front* offered the pithiest statement of the official position: the NLF was "born of the *Việt cộng,* nourished by the *Việt cộng,* and led by none other than the *Việt cộng."*[107] Since anticommunists believed that the DRV was a satellite of the USSR and PRC, it followed that the NLF was also a puppet of the communist superpowers. Petitions solicited by the government (and most likely prepared in advance by government officials) in support for law 10/59 linked both the southern insurgency and North Vietnam to the communist superpowers. The implication was that the NLF belonged to the communist bloc and was therefore too foreign to be genuinely nationalist. A petition from Kiên Giang province complained that the "*Việt cộng* are a treasonous, bloodthirsty gang and the eager lackeys of imperial Russia and China. They intend to destroy our Free South, so they have incited the undercover cadres [in the South] to rob and murder."[108] Hanoi was the real culprit behind the local violence, but behind the DRV were Soviet and Chinese puppet masters. Residents of Darlac province explicitly blamed the insurgency on Hanoi and international communism: the violence in the south constituted "savage, inhuman acts of the Ho Chi Minh gang of executioners and the communist Russian and Chinese cliques."[109] Other petitions echoed these accusations of foreign subservience and urged the government to punish the insurgents in strict accordance with the new legislation.[110] By placing the NLF within the framework of the Cold War, government officials cast the struggle as one between Vietnamese nationalism and global communism, not a central authority suppressing a local rebellion or a competition between rival nationalists.

The new rhetoric grafted the insurgency onto the existing anticommunist narrative as the most recent example of communist treachery. Quốc Anh argued that the NLF was merely the latest front in the communists' unchanging strategy. Like its predecessor, the Việt Minh, the NLF hid its communist character to dupe the Vietnamese people and the rest of the world.[111] The author explained that violence and terrorism in the south were part of two larger plans: the Vietnamese communist plan to reduce Vietnam into a satellite state and the international communist program of world domination.[112] For Quốc Anh, the NLF was merely a façade that masked external invasion by the DRV *(bình phong).*[113]

When the insurgency continued to grow despite the passage of law 10/59, the National Assembly considered new legal strategies for excluding communists from the nation. In early 1960, the assembly began receiving petitions requesting that the "*Việt cộng* be placed outside of

---

[107] "Do Việt-cộng khai sinh, Được Việt-cộng nuôi dưỡng, Chính Việt-cộng lãnh đạo": Quốc Anh, *Thực chất của Mặt trận Giải phóng miền Nam,* 42.

[108] "bọn Việt-cộng là bọn khát máu phản dân, phản nước làm tay sai đắc lực cho bọn đế-quốc Nga-Tàu luôn toan phá-hoại miền Nam tự-do của chúng ta, nên xúi-giục cán-bộ nằm vùng cướp của giết người": "Kiến nghị của nhân dân xã Long Thạnh, quận Kiên Bình (Kiên Giang)," *Nội san quốc hội* 30 (Jun 1959): 11.

[109] "Cực-lực phản-đối và tố-cáo trước công-luận trong và ngoài nước "những hành-động dã-man vô nhân-đạo của bọn đao-phủ Hồ-chí-Minh và bè lũ Cộng-sản Nga, Tàu": "Kiến nghị của cấp bộ dân quân chính tỉnh Darlac," *Nội san quốc hội* 32 (Aug 1959): 245-246, citation on 246.

[110] "Kiến nghị của nhân dân xã Hòa Thuận, quận Kiên Bình, tỉnh Kiên Giang," *Nội san quốc hội* 30 (Jun 1959): 13; "Kiến nghị của cấp bộ dân quân chính tỉnh Darlac," *Nội san quốc hội* 32 (Aug 1959): 246.

[111] Quốc Anh, *Thực chất của Mặt trận Giải phóng miền Nam,* 7-12.

[112] Quốc Anh, *Thực chất của Mặt trận Giải phóng miền Nam,* 41.

[113] Quốc Anh, *Thực chất của Mặt trận Giải phóng miền Nam,* 42.

the law."[114] By spring, many more petitioners asked the legislative body to purge communists from political parties, commercial organizations, and all forms of associational life.[115] In Cao Văn Tường's speech mentioned above, he suggested that the NLF's internal subversion of the Republic required that communists be eliminated from the national body and proposed the criminalization of communism. If the legislation passed, the principles behind the denunciation campaigns would be permanently enshrined into law.[116] In the end, Ngô Đình Diệm fell from power before the assembly approved such a law.

The Assassination of Colonel Hoàng Thụy Năm and the Plea for International Support

The government's need to shore up its legitimacy ensured that the Cold War framework would trump more parochial understandings of the insurgency. As the movement successfully competed for the loyalty of the population, the government searched for additional ways to strengthen its credibility. It began lobbying the international community to confirm that the NLF was a communist puppet and used foreign condemnation of the insurgency to boost domestic support for the regime. Since the start of insurgency in the late 1950s, the government had assiduously tried to convince the ICC to recognize that the movement was directed by Hanoi rather than a homegrown resistance. But the commission was ambiguous as to whether the Geneva Agreement actually prohibited subversive activity and steadfastly refused to investigate the allegations.[117] At issue was Saigon's legitimacy and security. For Saigon, unmasking the NLF would discredit the insurgency as a bogus resistance, confirm that the DRV was violating the Geneva Agreement, and crown the RVN the sole legitimate government south of the seventeenth parallel.[118]

Anticommunists aimed their efforts at the ICC as a representative of the international community and a vehicle to influence foreign opinion. The Geneva Agreement established the commission to supervise the implementation of the agreement, and both communist and anticommunist powers promised to respect its mandate. The commission was intentionally designed to be neutral and consisted of three delegations: one from Canada representing pro-Western sympathies, one from Poland representing the communist countries, and a presiding member from India, a leader of Third World neutralism.[119] Thus, the commission had the aura of an objective body that transcended Cold War animosities, which only made its refusal to acquiesce to Saigon's wishes all the more infuriating. The government finally succeeded in pressuring the commission to investigate subversive activities after the assassination of Colonel Hoàng Thụy Năm, the RVN's liaison officer to the ICC.[120]

---

[114] "Kiến nghị," *Nội san quốc hội* 38 (Feb 1960): 11.

[115] "Kiến nghị của Đảng Xã Hội Việt Nam," "Kiến nghị của Lực lượng Thợ thuyền Việt Nam," "Kiến nghị của Hội Phật giáo Nguyên thủy Việt Nam," "Kiến nghị của Hội Phụ nữ Việt Nam," *Nội san quốc hội* 40 (Apr 1960): 33-36.

[116] The National Assembly did not pass the legislation under Ngô Đình Diệm, and communism was not legally criminalized until 1964, after the fall of First Republic.

[117] Ramesh Thakur, *Peacekeeping in Vietnam: Canada, India, Poland and the International Commission* (Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 1984), 98.

[118] An attempted invasion by the DRV would also justify Saigon's own violation of the agreement, especially its acceptance of American military assistance.

[119] India was a leader of the neutralist movement, but the Non-Aligned Movement as a distinct organization that did not formally come into existence until September 1961, long after the ICC was created by the Geneva Agreement.

[120] There have only been a handful of scholarly accounts of this incident. See Howard Jones, *Death of a Generation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 101-102; Victor Levant, *Quiet Complicity: Canadian Involvement in the Vietnam War* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1986), 160-162.

A respected military officer, Hoàng Thụy Năm's official title was Chief of the Vietnamese Mission in Charge of Relations with the ICC,[121] a position he held continuously from the creation of the commission in 1954 until his death in 1961. One of his main tasks as the liaison officer was to investigate and compile evidence of North Vietnamese violations of the Geneva Agreement. The work of the mission was vital to the RVN's sense of legitimacy because it provide justification for the government's accusation that the NLF was a puppet of Hanoi. The growth of the insurgency increased Hoàng Thụy Năm's prominence, and his kidnap and murder deeply shocked anticommunists. On 1 October 1961, insurgents abducted the colonel during his visit to his farm in the countryside. Minister of Foreign Affairs Vũ Văn Mẫu immediately contacted the ICC and pleaded with the commission to intervene to save the colonel's life.[122] When the commission failed to act, Vũ Văn Mẫu wrote again to the ICC to denounce the incident as evidence of North Vietnamese involvement in the insurgency.[123]

Weeks later, Hoàng Thụy Năm's dismembered body was discovered floating on the Saigon River.[124] Anticommunists hailed the colonel as a national martyr and used the incident to denounce North Vietnamese subversion. The daily *Tiếng chuông (Sound of the Bell)* praised Hoàng Thụy Năm him for his fearlessness. The paper claimed that, upon capture, the colonel adamantly refused to offer any intelligence to his captors and ordered them to kill him.[125] The editorial opined that the colonel's brave declaration embodied anticommunist nationalism: "Those heroic words manifest the national ideal. The indomitable anticommunist spirit in Hoàng Thụy Năm's thought will always be a shining example! To the heroic soul of Hoàng Thụy Năm: be assured that there are lines and lines of nationalist warriors ready to rise up and wash away the insult done to you!"[126] Echoing the official line, the *Sound of the Bell* argued that the assassination proved that the DRV was trying to sabotage the Republic, which it considered a violation of the ceasefire. In another editorial published ten days later, the paper argued, "killing Colonel Hoàng Thụy Năm means that the *Việt cộng* have willfully disregarded the stipulations to which they themselves pledged at Geneva in 1954."[127] The accusations added a new variation to the theme of communist treachery.

The government exploited the murder of Hoàng Thụy Năm to foment domestic and international outrage against the ICC's fecklessness and to pressure the commission to conduct investigations of North Vietnamese infiltration. After the discovery of the colonel's body, Vũ Văn Mẫu renewed his demand that the commission investigate the murder and the broader accusation of subversion. The government also orchestrated public demonstrations and press campaigns against the ICC. Particularly dramatic was the government-sponsored funeral for

---

[121] The Vietnamese Mission in Charge of Relations with the ICC was originally housed in the Office of the President before being transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs some time between 1958 and 1963.

[122] Vũ Văn Mẫu to the ICC, 3 Oct 1961, in Republic of Vietnam, *The Murder of Colonel Hoang Thuy Nam* (Saigon: 1962), 9-10.

[123] Vũ Văn Mẫu to the ICC, 17 Oct 1961, in Republic of Vietnam, *The Murder of Colonel Hoang Thuy Nam,* 11-12.

[124] Levant, *Quiet Complicity*, 160.

[125] "Tinh-thần Hoàng-Thụy-Năm bất diệt," Ý kiến chúng tôi column, *Tiếng chuông* 3209 (21 Oct 1961): 1, 4.

[126] "Anh hùng thay những lời nói thể hiện cho cả một lý tưởng của Dân Tộc. Tinh thần bất khuất, diệt Cộng đến cùng ấy ở trong đầu óc Hoàng-thụy-Năm luôn luôn là một gương sang chói! Anh hồn Hoàng-thụy-Năm hảy tin chắc còn những lớp lớp chiến sĩ quốc gia sẵn sang đứng lên để rửa hận cho đại tá!": "Tinh-thần Hoàng-Thụy-Năm bất diệt," Ý kiến chúng tôi column, *Tiếng chuông* 3209 (21 Oct 1961): 1, 4.

[127] "giết chết Đại-tá Hoàng-thụy-Năm tức là Việt Cộng đã ngang nhiên không kể gì đến những điều mà tự chúng đã cam kết tại Genève hồi năm 1954": T.Ch., "Cái chết của Đại tá Hoàng-Thụy-Năm, 1 bài học vô giá cho những ai..." Ý kiến chúng tôi column, *Tiếng chuông* 3216 (29-30 Oct 1961): 1, 4. See also "Việt-Cộng đã giết Đại-tá Hoàng-Thụy-Nam," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 983 (19 Oct 1961): 1, 4.

Hoàng Thụy Năm, most likely organized by pro-government organizations, including the civil servants' union known as the National Revolutionary League of Civil Servants (NRLCS), the Women's Solidarity Movement (WSM), and the Thanh Niên Cộng Hòa (Republican Youth), the government-controlled youth group. The official procession began at ICC headquarters, where marchers waved anti-ICC banners calling for the deportation of the Polish delegation and praising the colonel's indomitable spirit.[128] At the cemetery, Minister of Foreign Affairs Vũ Văn Mẫu gave the eulogy, followed by speeches by Minister of Finance Nguyễn Lương, in his capacity as chair of the NRLCS, Madame Nhu on the behalf of the WSM, and several other government officials. Conflicting accounts claim that the Polish delegation failed to attend the funeral, or that the government deliberately blocked the Poles from taking part in the funeral, but the press vilified the Polish delegation for its absence.[129] After the burial, the funeral attendants held a rally at the gates of the cemetery and passed a resolution that promised to avenge Hoàng Thụy Năm's death, protest the ICC's inaction, and rally behind the president in the fight against communism.[130] The ICC eventually agreed to consider allegations of subversion, though the Polish representative dissented, and the Saigon press lost no time in denouncing Polish partiality towards Hanoi. [131] Once the ICC began the investigation, the RVN continued to campaign for a desirable ruling, not so much because the commission could halt the flow of material and personnel into the South but because a public report could sway international and domestic public opinion against the NLF and North Vietnam.[132]

The government presented its official position in the English-language tract, *The Murder of Colonel Hoang Thuy Nam.* The publication was written for an international audience, but the arguments resembled those written by the newspaper editorials discussed above. Saigon argued that the murder amounted to an admission by the DRV that Hanoi was actively trying to overthrow the southern government. The government claimed that communists killed the colonel because he had been revealing their secret: Hoàng Thụy Năm had proven that the insurgency was part of a communist master plan for global expansion. According to the tract, "Colonel Nam never ceased to denounce innumerable acts of terrorism and repeated violations of the Geneva Accords committed by the Hanoi authorities, nor had he hesitated to unmask the Machiavellian plan of International Communism to extend its domination not only to South Viet-Nam but also to all Southeast Asia."[133] The tract claimed that the murder showed disrespect for international law: "The Hanoi authorities wanted to attack not only the person of the victim but also the very prestige and authority of the International Commission for Control, an organization created by the 1954 Geneva Accords on the ceasefire in order to maintain peace in Viet-nam."[134] In keeping with Republican accusations of communist cruelty, the tract condemned the torture and

[128] "Biểu-tình vĩ đại phản-đối Ủy-hội Quốc-tế và đòi trục-xuất phái-đoàn Ba-Lan về nước," *Tiếng chuông* 3209 (21 Oct 1961): 1, 4.
[129] "Tang lễ Đại tá Trưởng phái đoàn Giao dịch với Ủy hội Quốc tế đã tránh được một vụ Majestic thứ hai nhờ kỷ luật của Thanh niên Cộng Hòa," *Tự do* 1375 (21 Oct 1961): 1, 4; Peter Busch, *All the Way with JFK?: Britain, the U.S., and the Vietnam War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 47.
[130] "Tang lễ Đại tá Trưởng phái đoàn Giao dịch với Ủy hội Quốc tế đã tránh được một vụ Majestic thứ hai nhờ kỷ luật của Thanh niên Cộng Hòa," *Tự do* 1375 (21 Oct 1961): 1, 4; "Biểu-tình vĩ đại phản-đối Ủy-hội Quốc-tế và đòi trục-xuất phái-đoàn Ba-Lan về nước," *Tiếng chuông* 3209 (21 Oct 1961): 4.
[131] Levant, *Quiet Complicity,* 161.
[132] Thakur, *Peacekeeping in Vietnam,* 101.
[133] Republic of Vietnam, *The Murder of Colonel Hoang Thuy Nam,* 5.
[134] Republic of Vietnam, *The Murder of Colonel Hoang Thuy Nam,* 4.

disfigurement of the victim.[135] A short collection of critical documents concerning the assassination provided further evidence.

While pressuring the ICC, anticommunists intensified their campaign to win international sympathy and celebrated any sign of foreign support to bolster the regime's legitimacy in the eyes of the population. The search for international approval represented a reorientation in anticommunist internationalism. During the late 1950s, anticommunists directed their empathy outward towards likeminded foreigners, but, in the early 1960s, they sought a similar support from outsiders in the face of a domestic insurgency. On 31 March 1962, Ngô Đình Diệm notified all foreign countries with which the regime had diplomatic ties that the RVN faced increased communist aggression from the North. Major Saigon dailies faithfully reprinted the official message in its entirety.[136] After a number of countries responded warmly, the press praised the foreign reception as international solidarity.[137] An editorial from the *Sound of the Bell* proclaimed a global alliance using language that recalled the Hungarian-Vietnamese friendship of the 1950s: "The cry for help of the South Vietnamese people has been heard and warmly answered. Yes, in the West, and in Asian and African capitals, the first reaction of freedom-loving peoples and governments has been an outpour of goodwill and support. The Vietnamese people do not struggle alone."[138] Many governments even promised to send soldiers when needed, the article claimed.[139] Although the author only vaguely described the reactions of foreign governments, the editorial encouraged readers to believe that people throughout the world were sympathetic to their plight, similar to the sympathy that the Vietnamese had once offered Hungarian and Tibetan dissidents half a decade earlier. But unlike in the 1950s, the new sense of solidarity was not based only on ardent anticommunism but a reaction to an innocent RVN whose sovereignty had been violated by external aggressors. This internationalism was not limited to societies struggling against communism in their own midst but included all "freedom-loving" countries, a vague phrase that could encompass even neutralist nations.

In late May, the Vietnamese Mission in Charge of Relations with the ICC organized an exhibition for foreign and domestic journalists. The displays featured weapons and documents captured from insurgents, including Soviet and mainland Chinese weapons, pharmaceuticals from Eastern Europe, and Marxist-Leninist political indoctrination materials. Reporting on the exhibition for the newspaper, *Freedom,* journalist Văn Thanh wrote an article entitled, "The Vietnamese and Foreign Press Has Clearly Seen Material Evidence of the Invasion by the *Việt Cộng* in the RVN."[140] Văn Thành did not quote any journalists, Vietnamese or foreign, but simply assumed that the exhibition had successfully persuaded all viewers that the DRV was

---

[135] Republic of Vietnam, *The Murder of Colonel Hoang Thuy Nam,* 5.

[136] "Tổng-thống Việt-Nam CH lưu ý 92 vị Tổng-Thống và Quốc-Trưởng Thế-gới về hiểm-họa cộng-sản trầm-trọng đang đe-dọa VNCH," *Tiếng chuông* 3364 (28 Apr 1962): 1.

[137] William Henderson and Wesley Fishel, "The Foreign Policy of Ngo Dinh Diem," *Vietnam Perspectives* 2, no. 1 (Aug 1966): 3-30, reference to 15.

[138] "Tiếng kêu cứu của người Việt miền Nam đã được nghe lắng và đáp lại một cách nhiệt tình. Thậy vậy, ở Tây phương, hay trong các thủ phủ Á-Phi, phản ứng đầu tiên của các chánh phủ và dân tộc yêu chuộng hòa bình đều chứa chan thiện cảm và khích lệ. Nhân dân Việt Nam hiện không chiến đấu lẻ loi": "Nhân dân Việt Nam hoan nghinh sự sáng suốt của toàn thế giới!," Ý kiến chúng tôi column, *Tiếng chuông* 3365 (29-30 Apr 1962): 1, 4, citation from 1.

[139] "Nhân dân Việt Nam hoan nghinh sự sáng suốt của toàn thế giới!," Ý kiến chúng tôi column, *Tiếng chuông* 3365 (29-30 Apr 1962): 1, 4.

[140] Văn Thanh, "Báo giới Việt Nam và ngoại quốc đã thấy rõ những bằng chứng cụ thể về hành động xâm lăng của Việt Cộng tại VNCH," *Tự do* 1558 (31 May 1962): 1, 4.

using the southern insurgency to attack the southern regime. The exhibition and Văn Thanh's account of it implied that any reasonable person who viewed the evidence would instantly recognize North Vietnam's treachery and the Republic's legitimacy. In short, all that was needed for the RVN to win these allies was evidence.

The ICC's Special Report

On 2 June 1962, that evidence came. After months of deliberation, the ICC issued a special report that found Hanoi in violation of the Geneva Agreement. The commission contended that "in specific instances there is evidence to show that armed and unarmed personnel, arms, munitions and other supplies have been sent from the Zone in the North to the Zone in the South with the object of supporting, organising and carrying out hostile activities."[141] The report conceded that the murder of Hoàng Thụy Năm may have been part of the Hanoi's campaign of subversion, but further investigation was required to determine the issue conclusively.[142] Again, the Polish representative dissented.[143] The report was the international confirmation for which Saigon had long awaited. It did not add any new arguments to the RVN's existing anticommunist discourse, but it endowed old accusations with the halo of objectivity. Exploiting the ICC's supposed impartiality as an international observer, the government used the report to persuade its own citizens that the war against the insurgency was indeed a battle between Vietnamese nationalism and foreign communism.

Anticommunists often portrayed the document as more incriminatory than it actually was. On 27 June 1962, the government issued an official declaration praising the ICC's "definitive and irrefutable" findings *(chung quyết và không thể chối cải được)*. Going beyond the ICC's cautious description of smuggling and infiltration, the statement claimed that the report "clearly confirmed" that Hanoi was directing an invasion *(minh thị xác nhận)* and depicted the document as the triumph of truth over duplicity: "the communists try their best to conceal their invasive and subversive activities, in order to deceive domestic and international public opinion regarding current conditions in Vietnam."[144] The declaration concluded by calling upon the Free World to condemn the DRV.[145] All of the major Saigon dailies reported the news of the ICC's findings on their front pages, accompanied by the RVN's declaration and extended analysis of the event.[146] Ngô Đình Diệm's annual address for Double Seven Day, the commemoration of his assumption

---

[141] International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam [hereafter, ICC], *Special Report to the Co-Chair of the Geneva Conference on Indochina, Saigon, June 2 1962* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1962), 7.

[142] ICC, *Special Report to the Co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference*, 7.

[143] Edelgard Mahant and Graeme Mount, *Invisible and Inaudible in Washington: American Policies Towards Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999), 51-52; Vivienne Brosnan, "The International Control Commission for Vietnam: The Diplomatic and Military Context" (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1975), 97; Poeliu Dai, "Canada's Role in the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam," *Canada Year Book of International Law* 4, tome 4 (1966): 161-177, reference to 169-170.

[144] "cộng sản đã hết sức cố gắng che đậy các hoạt động xâm kích và khuấy rối của chúng, nhằm mục đích đánh lừa dư luận trong nước và quốc tế về tình hình hiện tại ở Việt Nam": "Tuyên ngôn của chánh phủ VNCH về phúc trình của UHQT," *Cách mạng quốc gia* 1196 (27 Jun 1962): 1, 4, citation from 1.

[145] "Tuyên ngôn của chánh phủ VNCH về phúc trình của UHQT," 4.

[146] For the declaration, see "Tuyên ngôn của Chánh-phủ Việt Nam Cộng Hòa về bản phúc trình đặc biệt của Ủy Hội Quốc Tế liên quan đến tình hình ở V.N.," *Tự do* 2581 (27 Jun 1962): 1, 4; "Tuyên-ngôn của chánh-phủ VNCH về bản phúc trình đặc biệt của Ủy-hội Quốc-tế liên quan đến tình-hình ở VN," *Tiếng chuông* 3415 (27 Jun 1962): 1, 4. For analysis of the ICC's report, see "Bản phúc trình của Ủy Hội Quốc Tế lên án Việt Cộng có 3 phần quan trọng," *Tự do* 1582 (28 Jun 1962): 1, 4; ibid., 1583 (29 Jun 1962): 1, 3.

of the premiership, similarly exaggerated the report's limited conclusions. Whereas the ICC had focused exclusively on the two Vietnams, Ngô Đình Diệm claimed that the commission accused the DRV of being a puppet of the communist superpowers: "The Commission has publicly denounced the *Việt cộng* for violating the Geneva Treaty and accused the lackeys of red imperialism in Hanoi of directing the invasion of the South."[147] He bluntly added, "the [National Liberation] Front that claims to liberate the South is nothing but a puppet propped up by the dictatorial gang in the North."[148] The reference to the Cold War with the phrase "lackeys of red imperialism in Hanoi" and the accusation that the NLF was a puppet combined to imply that the NLF was a loyal servant of the USSR and PRC, with Hanoi as an intermediate proxy. But anticommunist interpretations of the report were highly selective. None of the official declarations acknowledged that the ICC had also found the RVN to be in violation of the Geneva Agreement: the report accused the Republic of accepting inappropriately high levels of American military assistance and entering into a de facto military alliance with the US.[149]

The ICC's perceived objectivity and international stature strengthened the RVN's claims, and anticommunists now switched to praising the once-maligned commission. In Ngô Đình Diệm's speech mentioned above, the president declared that the commission's "impartial attitude illuminates and clarifies our principles and our righteousness."[150] A few days earlier, the editorial column of the *Sound of the Bell* reminded readers that the ICC was chaired by India, "a neutralist superpower" *(một cường quốc trung lập),* to imply that the ICC's findings were accurate and fair.[151] Although the commission's report did command international attention, Ngô Đình Diệm and the Saigon press treated it like an infallible document capable of convincing all foreign governments and populations to support the RVN against the insurgency and the DRV. The president claimed that the report had enlightened the world, which would henceforth understand the true character of the insurgency.[152] The state-controlled radio station interviewed Đỗ Mạnh Quát, chair of the Committee for Territorial Reunification in the National Assembly. The deputy explained that, while knowledgeable foreigners had always recognized the communist strategy behind the NLF, the ICC's report was critical for persuading ignorant countries who could be fooled by communist propaganda.[153] Neither the president nor the deputy considered that some countries might not readily accept the report or that acceptance might not translate into actual support. Ultimately, government officials tried to convince a wavering citizenry of the regime's legitimacy by arguing that the world sided with the RVN.

The press largely reinforced the government's claims. Following the official declaration of 27 June, newspapers carried celebratory headlines of favorable responses by England, Canada,

---

[147] "Ủy-Hội đã công khai lên án Việt-Cộng vi-phạm Hiệp-định Genève và tố-cáo các tay sai đế-quốc đỏ ở Hà-Nội điều-khiển cuộc xâm-lăng miền Nam": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Thông điệp của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa nhân ngày 'Sông Thất 1962,'" *CĐCN* ([Saigon?]: Nha Tổng Giám Đốc Thông tin, 1962), 8:117-120, citation on 117.

[148] "cái Mặt trận giả danh là giải-phóng miền Nam, chỉ là một cơ-quan bù-nhìn do bọn độc-tài miền Bắc đã dựng đứng lên mà thôi": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Thông điệp của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa nhân ngày 'Sông Thất 1962,'" *CĐCN* 8:117.

[149] ICC, *Special Report to the Co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference,* 10.

[150] "thái-độ vô-tư đó càng sáng tỏ lập trường và chính nghĩa của chúng ta": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Thông điệp của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa nhân ngày 'Sông Thất 1962,'" 117.

[151] "Việt Cộng vi phạm Hiệp định Genève!" Ý kiến chúng tôi column, *Tiếng chuông* 3417 (29 Jun 1962): 1, 4, citation from 4.

[152] Ngô Đình Diệm, "Thông điệp của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa nhân ngày 'Sông Thất 1962,'" 117.

[153] "Đài Phát thành Saigon phỏng vấn luật sư Đỗ Mạnh Quát, Chủ tịch Ủy ban Thống nhất Lãnh thổ tại Quốc hội," *Nội san quốc hội* 67 (Jul 1962): 72-75, reference to 73.

Australia, and the US.[154] An editorial in the *Sound of the Bell* explained that the world finally understood that outsiders led the insurgency: "This gunfire is from invaders who are on the outside shooting in. Who the invaders are, the public opinion of the five continents knows, thanks to the clear-sighted report by the International Commission."[155] On the anniversary of the Geneva Agreement on 20 July 1962, the paper cited the ICC's report and Ngô Đình Diệm's international appeal from a few months earlier to suggest that the RVN had finally won foreign sympathy for its plight: "The governments of the world, in their replies to the message by the President on 31 March 1962, have confirmed the VC's [*Việt cộng's]* dark designs against peace in South Vietnam and Southeast Asia."[156] The repeated references to international opinion were clearly aimed more at a domestic audience than a foreign one. After all, foreigners were not reading Republican newspapers or listening to the Saigon radio. While the anticommunist internationalism inspired by the ICC's report never approached the emotionalism of the 1950s, it enhanced Saigon's credibility by acknowledging anticommunist claims concerning the NLF. The anticommunist internationalism that began as an outpour of empathy had turned into a grasping plea for support.

Conclusion

The dual frameworks that shaped Republican engagement with foreign countries reflected the different ways in which anticommunists defined the regime's identity. As avowed anticommunists, government officials and independent intellectuals claimed that the RVN was a participating member of the Free World, which they depicted as a global fraternity linked through anticommunist internationalism. But many Vietnamese also identified their country as a newly independent state that had shaken off the shackles of western imperialism, and government officials looked to the Third World for economic theories and anticolonial critiques to account for the RVN's current political and economic conditions. Self-proclaimed membership in the Free World and Third World opened up a diverse international community, to whom anticommunist Vietnamese turned to for ideas and alliances. But the strategic manipulation of dependency theory and modernization theory implies that the attitude of government officials towards foreign influences was as much utilitarian as ideological. The regime did not espouse external doctrines as an act of imitation but selective appropriation to serve its own political purposes: strengthening state legitimacy and defeating Vietnamese communists.

In fact, the anticommunism of the late 1950s and early 1960s reflected a combination of global influences and local anticommunism. Even as anticommunists responded to contemporary events and incorporated diverse foreign influences, the narrative of communist betrayal from the mid-1950s served as a template for the later discourse. Government officials and independent intellectuals employed the familiar themes of oppression and communist imperialism to interpret

---

[154] Trần Anh Tuấn, "Luân-đôn công-bố bãn [*sic*] phúc trình của UHQT tố-giác VC đang tìm cách lật đổ Chánh-phủ Việt-Nam CH bằng vỏ [*sic*] lực," *Tiếng chuông* 3415 (27 Jun 1962): 1; "Nhiều nước hoan nghênh bản phúc trình của Ủy Hội Quốc Tế Kiểm soát đình chiến ở Việt Nam," *Tự do* 1582 (28 Jun 1962): 1.

[155] "Tiếng súng nầy là do những kẻ xâm lược từ ngoài bắn vào. Ai xâm lược, công luận năm châu đã biết, nhờ bản phúc trình sáng suốt của Ủy hội Quốc tế.": "Việt Cộng vi phạm Hiệp định Genève!" Ý kiến chúng tôi column, *Tiếng chuông* 3417 (29 Jun 1962): 1, 4, citation from 1.

[156] "Các chánh phủ trên thế giới, phúc đáp bức thông điệp ngày 31-3-62 của Tổng thống VNCH, đã xác nhận âm mưu đen tối của VC, đối với hòa bình ở miền Nam và hòa bình ở Đông Nam Á": "Nhân ngày kỷ-niệm chia đôi đất nước: Phất cao lá cờ chiến đấu để thống nhứt trong tự do và hòa bình!" Ý kiến chúng tôi column, *Tiếng chuông* 3435 (20 Jul 1962): 1, 4, citation on 4.

the twin uprisings in Quỳnh Lưu and Budapest. Their complaints that the NLF was concealing its communist character recalled similar arguments about the Việt Minh, and the charge of insurgent banditry echoed old accusations of sectarian hooliganism. Thus, the depiction of the insurgency became the newest chapter of the existing anticommunist narrative.

Furthermore, the evidence presented above suggests that the adoption of foreign ideas was often self-initiated and not imposed by foreigners. Government officials, like Nguyễn Văn Châu, chose aspects of different economic theories to serve the regime's political interests, and many anticommunist intellectuals passionately supported the struggles of foreign anticommunists. Indeed, one remarkable characteristic of the anticommunist discourse was the relatively minor role of the US. Anticommunists drew inspiration from Tibetan revolutionaries, Hungarian dissidents, Polish strikers, French writers, and Russian exiles in addition to American anticommunists like Thomas Dooley. American modernization theory helped inspire the new slogan but it was coupled with dependency theory from the Third World. The limited presence of the Americans in the anticommunist discourse contrasts sharply with the significant popular interest in the US. Republican journals regularly published articles on American literature, political system, racism, and journalism.[157] Other common topics included the relationship between Vietnam and the US, the historical contact between the two countries, possible Asian influences on American culture, and American assistance to the RVN.[158] The juxtaposition of journalistic interest and ideological absence points to the unremarkable position of the US in Republican intellectual and political thought. Intellectuals appear to have regarded their country's powerful patron as they did any other foreign place: interesting, but not the preeminent source of anticommunist ideas.

More broadly, the analysis of anticommunist nationalism and anticommunist internationalism calls for a reinterpretation of the RVN's relationship with the Cold War. The conventional interpretation of the Republic is an American creation, an argument that implies that the US brought the Cold War to Vietnam. But for many leaders and intellectuals in the RVN, it was Vietnamese anticommunism that led them to embrace the Cold War rather than the reverse. Anticommunist nationalists claimed that their struggle originated during the resistance in northern Vietnam, and they joined the APACL and championed the cause of foreign revolutionaries out of shared anticommunism. From the perspective of the RVN, the Cold War was an extension of anticommunist struggles at home. This finding supports Tuong Vu's reinterpretation of the Cold War. In *Dynamics of the Cold War in Asia,* Vu argues that the Cold

---

[157] For articles on American literature, see Văn Quý, "Văn chương nước Mỹ," *Bách khoa* 1 (15 Jan 1957): 59-62; Trần Phong, "William Faulkner," *Bách khoa* 134 (1 Aug 1962): 21-32; Sỹ Trung, "Nhìn qua nền văn chương nước Mỹ từ năm 1896 đến nay," *Văn hữu* 19 (1962?): 7-16. For articles on the American political system, see Hoàng Minh Tuynh, "Chế độ dân chủ cổ điển: Hiệp chủng quốc Mỹ Châu," *Bách khoa* 21 (15 Nov 1957): 1-4; ibid., *Bách khoa* 22 (1 Dec 1957): 1-4; ibid., *Bách khoa* 23 (15 Dec 1957): 12-13; ibid., *Bách khoa* 24 (1 Jan 1957): 11-14; ibid., *Bách khoa* 28 (1 Mar 1958): 10-14; ibid., *Bách khoa* 29 (15 Mar 1958): 7-10; Tiểu Dân, "Bàn về chức vụ Tổng thống Hoa Kỳ," *Bách khoa* 103 (15 Apr 1961). For articles on race relations in the US, see Thu Thủy, "Vấn đề da đen ở Hoa Kỳ," *Bách khoa* 107 (15 Jun 1961): 97-101; Tiểu Dân, "Vấn đề kỳ thị chủng tộc tại Hoa Kỳ và vụ Alabama," *Bách khoa* 155 (15 Jun 1963): 3-11. For articles on American journalism, see Phan Sơn Vũ, "Vấn đề báo chí tại Hoa Kỳ," *Bách khoa* 35 (15 Jun 1958): 57-64; ibid., *Bách khoa* 36 (1 Jul 1958): 25-40; ibid., *Bách khoa* 39 (15 Aug 1958): 36-41.

[158] For articles on historical contact between Americans and Vietnamese, see Thái Văn Kiểm, "Người Mỹ đầu tiên tới Việt Nam," *Bách khoa* 33 (15 May 1958): 35-40; Song An Cư Sĩ, "Người Mỹ đầu tiên đến Việt Nam," *Văn hóa Á châu* 4 (Jul 1958): 28-44. For Asian influences on American culture, see "Ảnh hưởng văn hóa Á châu tại Hoa Kỳ," *Minh Tân* (79 (25 Feb 1961): 20-22. For economic assistance, see Người Thời Cuộc, "Chánh sách viện trợ của Mỹ phải được sửa chữa?" *Nhân loại* 8 (16 Jun 1956): 4; ibid., *Nhân loại* 9 (23 Jun 1956): 4.

War represented an "intercontinental synchronization of hostilities," in which local conflicts throughout the world aligned simultaneously through the coordinated actions of local actors and the superpowers.[159] Vu's model accurately captures the Republican understanding of the Cold War as a cooperative effort between independent anticommunist movements around the world. For Republican nationalists, the Cold War was important because it aligned with their own conflict.

[159] Tuong Vu, "Cold War Studies and the Cultural Cold War in Asia," in *Dynamics of the Cold War in Asia: Ideology, Identity, and Culture,* ed. by Tuong Vu and Wasana Wongsurawat (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1-16.

Chapter 4

Ethnic Identity, State Power, and Cultural Policy

On 4 May 1957, Nguyễn Hữu Ba inaugurated the National Conservatory of Music with a lecture entitled, "The Path to Restoring the National Music."[1] A professor of traditional music at the school, he argued that music expressed a nation's distinctive identity, which a national conservatory should preserve and promote:

> Every nation in the World has its own national music. To protect their independent character and traditional civilization, many countries have long had music schools to teach the National music to the population, just as the people are taught the National language and the National literature. The Vietnamese nation possesses a traditional National music that originated in the language and voice of the Vietnamese and has risen with the civilization of our people.[2] [capitalization in original]

After a preliminary overview of Vietnamese music, the professor declared, "Today, our country is independent, and all aspects of our people's character must be exalted. That is why there is the Vietnamese National Conservatory of Music."[3] Nguyễn Hữu Ba's conception of "national music" was a single, coherent unit identified with the music of ethnic Vietnamese.
The emphasis on "the language and voice of our people" implicitly excluded minority populations that spoke other languages. The professor also discussed Vietnam as if it was a unified nation but ignored the existence of the DRV and counterpart institutions in the North. While the professor was primarily concerned with his music school rather than politics, his speech demonstrates how some leaders in the RVN rooted nationalism in Vietnamese ethnicity and portrayed the Republic as the exclusive embodiment of Vietnamese culture.

The celebration of ethnic identity was a critical component of Republican nationalism, particularly as expressed through cultural policy. Because the DRV and the RVN contested the same ethnic heritage, cultural policy took on an unusual political urgency. The southern regime's educational and cultural programs promoted a politically-empowered Vietnamese ethnic identity and associated the Saigon government with Vietnamese history, territory, and culture. The underlying message was that the southern state was the true representative of the Vietnamese nation rather than Hanoi. This implicit message was a unifying theme rather than a stated policy. Although the Ministry of National Education directed most state-sponsored cultural activities, cultural policy never constituted a unified, systematic program but encompassed a wide variety of distinct projects.

The chapter explores four aspects of cultural policy and the construction of ethnic identity in the RVN. First, it demonstrates how the state created nationalist conceptions of space and time through geography education, the revision of place names, and the celebration of the former imperial capital. Second, it reveals the way in which official policy towards foreign

---

[1] The government did not formalize the new institution until 1958.
[2] "Mỗi quốc gia trên Thế giới đều có một nền quốc nhạc riêng. Để bảo tồn tính chất độc lập và văn-minh truyền thống của họ, nhiều nước đã có trường âm nhạc từ lâu để dạy dân trong nước học Quốc nhạc như học Quốc ngữ, Quốc văn. Quốc gia Việt-nam đã có một nền Quốc nhạc truyền thống bắt nguồn từ tiếng nói, giọng nói của người Việt, và đả [sic] tiến lên theo đà văn minh của dân tộc": "Nhạc sĩ Nguyễn Hữu Ba trình bày về đường lối phục hưng nền quốc nhạc," *Lẽ sống* 916 (4 Jun 1957): 2-3, citation from 2. See also Nguyễn Hữu Ba, *Dân ca Việt Nam* (Saigon: Sở học liệu, 1961; Trung tâm học liệu, 1971), ix. All references refer to the 1971 edition.
[3] "Ngày nay đất nước nhà đã độc lập, mọi bản năng bản sắc của dân tộc cần phải được đề cao, nên mới có Trường Quốc gia âm nhạc Việt Nam": "Nhạc sĩ Nguyễn Hữu Ba trình bày về đường lối phục hưng nền quốc nhạc," 3. See also Nguyễn Hữu Ba, *Dân ca Việt Nam*, i.

academic institutions and the research priorities of the RVN's national institutions displaced French scholars and marginalized ethnic minorities. The new Viện Khảo Cổ (Institute of History), for example, challenged colonial-era scholarship and sponsored new research to assert Vietnamese dominance over non-Vietnamese groups.[4] Third, it examines how the Ministry of National Education established national cultural institutions such as the National Conservatory of Music which aimed to homogenize the diverse practices of ethnic Vietnamese into a single national culture and shape the totality of cultural development. Fourth, it discusses how the government used international cultural exchanges to more forcefully assert its superior claim to Vietnamese identity over the DRV. Together, these initiatives contested Hanoi's claim to cultural legitimacy and exalted elite Vietnamese culture, but they did little to engage with popular, especially rural, culture. This elite bias ultimately limited the effectiveness of the RVN's cultural programs.

Nationalist Constructions of Space: Vietnamese Ethnic Identity and State Power

Various government initiatives created a new sense of national space and time. These efforts tied Vietnamese ethnic identity to state power and excluded Vietnamese communists as well as ethnic minorities. One of the greatest spatial challenges for anticommunist nationalists was that the RVN never controlled the entirety of the area they considered to be Vietnamese historical territory. In 1954, Ngô Đình Diệm was deeply disappointed by the loss of northern Vietnam and ordered his representative at Geneva to refuse to sign the Geneva Agreement.[5] Throughout his early years, he struggled to pacify areas formerly held by the Việt Minh and to expand the reach of the central government into rural areas. These efforts were somewhat successful until the growth of the southern insurgency in the late 1950s. By the early 1960s, the government's administrative hold on the countryside was once again receding. Despite these territorial limitations, the state aimed to create a single homogenous nation based on Vietnamese ethnicity and claimed sovereignty over all of the national territory.

Thongchai Winichakul argues that one of the components of a modern nation is its "geo-body." In *Siam Mapped,* a study of how Thailand acquired its modern boundaries through mapping, he explains that the geo-body is a discourse that spatializes the concept of the nation through specific institutions, practices, and technologies. The result is the acceptance of the nation as a bounded, geographical territory that is internally homogeneous, and its boundaries demarcate the limits of national identification.[6] Benedict Anderson has further argued that maps during the colonial period acted as logos, as an "infinitely reproducible series," that appeared in numerous textbooks and everyday objects.[7] The circulation of the map naturalized the belief that the bounded territory belonged to the nation. Although the Republic only controlled the area south of the 17th parallel, the southern government depicted Vietnam as a unified space rather than two separate states.[8]

---

[4] The literal translation of Viện Khảo Cổ is "Institute of Archaeology," but the institute's own journal provided "Institute of History" as its English-language name.

[5] Miller, "Grand Designs," 126.

[6] Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

[7] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 175.

[8] For why anticolonial nationalist movements adopt colonial-era administrative units as the boundaries of the nation, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 113-140. For conflicting concepts of national space during the colonial period, see Christopher Goscha, *Vietnam or Indochina?*

So serious was the belief in a unified national territory that the Republic's educational curriculum obligated students to learn about the geography of northern and north central Vietnam, as if to teach them that all of Vietnam was part of their patrimony and to contest Hanoi's control of those areas.[9] Geography textbooks consistently included northern territory in their descriptions of the country. For example, the introductory lesson to Nguyễn Văn Mùi's *Địa lý Việt Nam lớp đệ tứ (Vietnamese Geography for the Fourth Form),* identified the country's global coordinates and described its shape thus: "Vietnam is found approximately between latitude 8.33° and 23.22° north and between longitude 102 and 109 east. Its shape is long and narrow. From North to South, its length is 1650 km. The two ends are puffed up, but the middle is slender, and the narrowest place is only 50 km."[10] The description of Vietnam reaching the 23rd instead of the 17th parallel, the measure of its length, and the inclusion of a "puffed up" northern end all indicated that the northern half of the country was fully included in the official conception of Vietnam.

Even a quick perusal of the available textbooks demonstrates that students were surrounded by the universal logo of a single Vietnam. Almost all maps found in geography texts showed a unitary Vietnam stretching from the Chinese border to the Gulf of Thailand and omitted the demilitarized zone that separated the DRV and RVN. At most, the maps showed the Bến Hải River, which technically separated the two regimes, but the maps identified the river as a geographical landmark rather than a political boundary (Map 3).[11] To appreciate the visual impact of this omission, compare the physical and transportation maps in *Địa lý lớp đệ nhị (Geography for the Second Form),* published in the early 1960s, with the administrative map of Vietnam published by the CIA in 1970. The map by the CIA clearly labels the two Vietnams with their respective names and shades them in different colors to emphasize the partition (See Map 2). In contrast, the physical map from *Geography for the Second Form* does not identify either the RVN or DRV as distinct entities, despite the fact that it labels the neighboring countries of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and China (See Map 3). That is, the physical map shows the boundaries that separate Vietnam from other countries but ignores the border between the RVN and DRV. Even more striking is the transportation map, with its railroads and national roads linking Hanoi to Saigon, as if to suggest that Vietnam was internally bounded through travel (See Map 4). The maps that Republican schoolchildren studied encouraged them to accept that their nation encompassed all of Vietnamese territory, regardless of whether the area was controlled by the RVN.

The government's extensive revisions of non-Vietnamese place names south of the 17th parallel represented another attempt to nationalize geographical space. In the mid-1950s, one of the vestiges of French colonialism was the foreign toponyms attached to many cities, provinces, and other geographical sites throughout the country. The government replaced the European names with Vietnamese ones, which were often precolonial names. Thus, the cities of Faifo and

---

[9] Bộ Quốc gia Giáo dục, *Chương-trình trung-học: Nghị-định số 1286-GD/NĐ ngày 12 tháng 8 năm 1958; Nghị-định số 774-GD/NĐ ngày 28 tháng 5 năm 1959; Nghị-định số 308-GD/NĐ ngày 3 tháng 3 năm 1959* (Saigon: Bộ Quốc gia Giáo dục, 1960), 57.

[10] "Nước Việt-Nam ở vào khoảng, giữa Bắc Vĩ tuyến 8°33' và 23°22 giữa Đông Kinh Tuyến 102° và 109°. Hình thể dài và hẹp. Từ Bắc xuống Nam đường thẳng đo được 1650 km. Hai đầu phình ra, quãng giữa thắt lại, chỗ hẹp nhất chỉ đo được 50 km": Nguyễn Văn Mùi, *Địa lý Việt Nam lớp đệ tứ* (Saigon: Khai Trí, 1962), 3-4.

[11] For example, see Tăng Xuân An and Nguyễn Thị Hợp [bà Tăng Xuân An, pseud.], *Địa lý Việt Nam lớp đệ nhị A, B, C, D* (Saigon: Sống mới, 1963), 12, 69, 204; Phan Xuân Hòa, *Toát yếu địa lý Việt Nam lớp đệ nhị* (Saigon: Thụy Đình, 1960), 13, 33. This is not to suggest that there were no maps published under the First Republic that depicted the demilitarized zone, only that the maps in available geography textbooks did not.

Tourane reverted back to Hội An and Đà Nẵng,[12] popular vacation spot Cape St Jacques became Vũng Tàu, and the Bassac Canal in Phong Dinh province was rechristened Cái Côn Canal.[13] The Grand Massif and Petit Massif in Phước Tuy province became Núi Lớn (Big Mountain) and Núi Nhỏ (Little Mountain), the islands of Poulo Cécir de Mer and Poulo Cécir de Terre in Bình Thuận province transformed into Phú Quí and Lao Cao islands, and Belvédère Hill, located southwest of Huế, became Đồi Vọng Cảnh (Viewing-the-Landscape Hill).[14] The most well-known French toponyms to disappear were Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina, the French names for the north, central region, and south.

The project also erased numerous non-French place names from the map, especially ones of Khmer or ethnic highland origin. Claims by Vietnamese nationalists notwithstanding, the area that became known as Vietnam in the 1950s was historically inhabited by a diverse variety of ethnic groups besides ethnic Vietnamese. In the early 1960s, the RVN had a total population of 14 million, including approximately 400,000 Khmers found mostly in the Mekong delta, 600,000 upland minorities concentrated in the central highlands, up to 35,000 Cham living in pockets of central and southern Vietnam, and around 1 million ethnic Chinese in southern cities and parts of the delta.[15] Local place names reflected the historical presence of these indigenous minorities, and the government altered the names to conform to Vietnamese pronunciation and orthography. In the province of Lâm Đồng, the district of Djiring was Vietnamized into Di Linh and the new provincial seat of B'lao became Bảo Lộc.[16] The Minister of Public Works and Communications suggested that the neighboring district of Dran, soon to be part of Tuyên Đức province, be renamed Dần Rang.[17] In some locales, eager government officials were so thorough as to alter all names down to the level of individual communes. Thus, the names of several communes in Chương Nghĩa district, Quảng Ngãi province, became so Vietnamized that they bore little resemblance to the original toponyms: Vicklum became Chương Trung, Kon Tao turned into Chương Đông, Kon Wonkia transformed into Chương An, and Mak Pan was replaced by Chương Sơn.[18]

The revision of minority place names is particularly striking because, unlike Hội An and Đà Nẵng, most of those locations were remote, had been historically inhabited by non-Vietnamese, and, in many cases, had never before bore Vietnamese names. The minority populations living there often did not even speak Vietnamese, let alone refer to their homes by

[12] Trần Lê Quang to Ngô Đình Diệm on changing the name of postal stations, 25 Jun 1957, file 1851, ĐICH.
[13] "Dự-án Sắc-lịnh đổi tên địa-điểm địa-dư, cầu và kinh năm 1957," file 1851, ĐICH.
[14] "Dự-án Sắc-lịnh đổi tên địa-điểm địa-dư, cầu và kinh năm 1957," file 1851, ĐICH.
[15] Joseph Buttinger, "The Ethnic Minorities in the Republic of Vietnam," in *Problems of Freedom: South Vietnam Since Independence*, ed. Wesley Fishel (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), 99-121, reference to 99, 120 n2-3; David Haines, *The Limits of Kinship: South Vietnamese Households, 1954-1975* (DeKalb, Ill.: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University, 2006), 54-55. I have been unable to find estimates for minority populations any earlier than the early 1960s. See also Frank LeBar, Gerald Hickey, and John Musgrave, *Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia* (New Haven, Conn.: Human Relations Area Files Press, 1964); Gerald Hickey, *The Highland People of South Vietnam: Social and Economic Development* (Santa Monica, Cal.: Rand Corporation, 1967.
[16] Trần Lê Quang to Ngô Đình Diệm on changing the name of postal stations, 25 Jun 1957, file 1851, ĐICH; Ủy ban Nhân dân tỉnh Lâm Đồng, *Địa chí Lâm Đồng* (Hanoi: Nhà xuất bản Văn hóa Dân tộc, 2001), 20.
[17] Trần Lê Quang to Ngô Đình Diệm on changing the name of postal stations, 25 Jun 1957, file 1851, ĐICH.
[18] Sắc-lịnh 234-NV thành-lập quận Chương-Nghĩa, 9 Sep 1959; Nghị-định số 1247-BNV/NC8/NĐ đổi lại tên Việt các xã thuộc quận Chương-Nghĩa tỉnh Quảng-Ngãi, 16 Sep 1960, file 2187, ĐICH. There were also plans to change Khmer place names in Kiên Giang province. Letter from the Chief of Cabinet, [Office of the President?], on Vietnamizing hamlets, communes, and canton with Khmer names, c. Apr 1957, file 1164, ĐICH.

the new names. The decision of the government was unusual compared to French colonial officials, who never systematically renamed the country with French names and usually tolerated indigenous place names for far flung places to which they rarely ventured. In fact, the renamed areas were often as foreign to most lowland Vietnamese as the mountainous regions of Cambodia or Laos, but their location within the RVN's boundaries made their names anomalies within the national territory. The new names homogenized the regime's official territory into an ethnically uniform nation and tied minority spaces to the central government.[19] Yet spatial schemes could be inherently ambiguous. The government could not convincingly rename sites north of the 17th parallel without calling attention to the DRV's existence. The physical specificity of spatial schemes threatened to highlight rather than hide territorial shortcomings.

The Celebration of Huế and Historical Time

Another unpleasant reality for nationalists in the RVN was that the DRV controlled the Red River Delta, the historical heartland of Vietnamese civilization. By comparison, most of the RVN's territory had only become incorporated into Vietnamese-controlled lands since the 17th century, and the newest of all were the southern lowlands where Saigon was located. In order to contest the DRV's claims to history, the RVN turned to the city of Huế, the last imperial capital, as the focal point of its historical claims. Matthew Masur has rightly argued that the government promoted Huế because it provided a stronger symbolic connection to Vietnam's past than the more newly settled south.[20] But Huế was important in another sense as well. The government used the city to spatially and temporally reorient the nation towards the southern regime. Official rhetoric praised Huế as the seat of Vietnamese ethnic identity, and state-sponsored scholarship created a historical narrative that made the RVN the political successor to the Huế court. This official conception of history depicted the nation as moving through time to become the Saigon-based regime.

Hanoi served as the capital of various Vietnamese kingdoms from the eleventh through seventeenth centuries. In 1802, Gia Long founded the Nguyễn dynasty and moved the capital to Huế. Government officials celebrated the most recent imperial capital as a counterpoint to Hanoi and a symbol of Vietnam's precolonial heritage. The selection of Huế over historically older sites suggests that ethnic identity and state power were critical considerations for the RVN leadership. Gia Long's ancestors, the Nguyễn lords, first established the city in the 17th century, relatively late compared to other historical landmarks.[21] The government could have chosen Óc Eo, an archaeological site from an ancient civilization in the Mekong delta dating from around the 3rd century AD. Hội An, the premodern port town just north of Huế and dating from the late 16th century, was another alternative. Certainly, Hội An and Óc Eo were arguably as deserving of

[19] The government even revised vernacular Vietnamese names to sound more literary. The name of Bến Tre province in the Mekong delta was based on the common Vietnamese vocabulary word for "bamboo port." It was changed to Kiến Hòa, which maintained the meaning but substituted classical Chinese root words for vernacular Vietnamese. The substitution of Sino-Vietnamese names for vernacular ones suggests that renaming was meant to elevate Vietnamese culture to a level of classical refinement. Even Vietnamized versions of highland names like Di Linh were decidedly Sinic rather than colloquial alternatives that may have been more faithful to the original pronunciation. For example, Djiring could have been vernacularized into "Chi Rưng," rather than the more Sinic "Di Linh." See Donnell, "Politics in South Vietnam," 74.

[20] Masur, "Hearts and Minds," 115-124.

[21] Phú Xuân, now modern-day Huế, served as the capital of the Nguyễn lords from 1687-1712 and 1738-1777. See Alexander Woodside, "Central Vietnam's Trading World in the Eighteenth Century as Seen in Lê Quý Đôn's 'Frontier Chronicles," in *Essays into Vietnamese Pasts,* ed. Keith W. Taylor and John K. Whitmore (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1995), 158-172, reference to 158.

scholarly attention, but they had been cosmopolitan trading entrepôts and offered little that would promote a specifically Vietnamese identity. Óc Eo civilization actually predated Vietnamese presence in the Mekong delta. What distinguished Huế was that it had been the capital of an ethnically Vietnamese polity, and official rhetoric consistently emphasized the city's Vietnamese-ness.

When the regime established the University of Huế in 1957, Ngô Đình Diệm's inaugural speech praised the city for its cultural integrity:

> Due to its geographical location, the region of Huế has remained beyond the immediate reverberations of both Western and Eastern civilization. Therefore, Huế is an ideal setting for a center of Vietnamese culture. This [Vietnamese] culture is always developing and willing to accept what is truly valuable from foreign cultures without the fear of losing its roots because it possesses a national culture that has been cleansed of subservient values.[22]

The president portrayed Vietnamese culture as undergoing a continual process of change and continuity, and he envisioned Huế's role as maintaining the nation's cultural authenticity. He contrasted the city's independent character with "subservient values" *(giá trị ký sinh),* meaning values that betrayed a dependency on foreign cultures. By emphasizing culture rather than antiquity, Ngô Đình Diệm relocated the center of Vietnamese ethnic identity from Hanoi to Huế and, by extension, from the DRV to his own government. The official commemorative volume for the one year anniversary of the university's founding was less extreme in its description of the city. Published by the university, the volume portrayed Huế as a meeting point between different cultural influences: "the capital city of Huế has long been known as a peaceful place, as a place of encounter, exchange, and union between Indian and Chinese civilization and on the road between north and south."[23] But the city's defining trait was still its maintenance of traditional culture: Huế had been "forged by the utterly tranquil spirit of traditional culture."[24] Furthermore, history had failed to alter the city's authenticity, the volume claimed: "In terms of space, the land of Huế has never once changed its character, even when events have caused great changes; in terms of time, the comportment of Huế's people rarely departs from traditional virtues: indomitable but quiet and composed."

Cultural policy emphasized Huế as a place instead of the Nguyễn royal family whose ancestors had established it. The government carefully avoided praising the Nguyễn descendants that still resided there, as they were too closely associated with Bảo Đại, whom Ngô Đình Diệm had overthrown. Instead, the government appropriated the dynasty's architectural and artistic legacy to present itself as the successor to the Nguyễn polity. The city of Huế and the surrounding province of Thừa Thiên quickly became the focus of architectural restoration. The Institute of History, established in 1956 as a branch of the Ministry of National Education, repaired numerous imperial tombs, royal residences, pagodas in the greater Huế area, and significant portions of the citadel. Though the Institute did engage in other projects throughout

---

[22] "Do vị-trí địa-lý, vùng Huế ở ngoài mọi sự giao-động trực-tiếp và ồ-ạt của hai văn-minh Đông-phương và Tây-phương, cho nên Huế là một khung cảnh lý-tưởng cho một trung-tâm văn-hóa Việt-Nam. Nền văn-hóa này, luôn luôn phải tiến-triển, sẵn-sàng thâu nhận những chân giá-trị do các nguồn văn-hóa ngoại-quốc, mà không sợ mất gốc, vì đã sẵn có cái vốn văn-hóa quốc-gia đã gạt sạch những giá-trị ký-sinh": Ngô Đình Diệm, "Diễn văn khánh thành Viện Đại học Huế (12-11-57)," *CĐCN* 4: 100-101.

[23] "kinh thành Huế xưa nay vẫn có tiếng là chốn thanh-bình, nơi gặp gỡ, giao-nối của hai nguồn văn-minh Ấn-độ, Trung-Hoa; của con đường Nam, Bắc": Viện Đại học Huế, *Kỷ niệm đệ nhất chu niên* ([N.p.]: 1958), 1.

[24] "từng nung đúc theo một tinh thần văn-hóa Cổ truyền hết sức trầm tĩnh": Viện Đại học Huế, *Kỷ niệm đệ nhất chu niên,* 2.

the country, its highest priority was always Huế's royal architecture. It began working on Huế within the first year of its existence and continued to devote the bulk of its restoration projects to the former dynastic capital.[25] The regime also transferred the royal music and dance troupes formerly attached to the Huế court to the central government. The overthrow of the monarchy in the fall of 1955 had left the status of the troupes unclear, and Saigon used them as representatives of traditional Vietnamese culture. The government sent the troupes abroad to perform in international cultural exchanges, displayed their talent for visiting dignitaries, and offered occasional public performances throughout Vietnam.[26] In the early 1960s, the government sponsored audio and video recordings of traditional court rituals, and organizers called many performers out of retirement.[27] In effect, Ngô Đình Diệm replaced the royal court with his own government as the patron of Huế's cultural legacy and made Saigon rather than Hanoi the successor to the last Vietnamese dynasty.

The most powerful statement of Saigon's historical narrative was expressed in state-sponsored scholarship on Huế. The study of Huế and the Nguyễn dynasty was an area of research where the RVN enjoyed clear superiority over the DRV. Not only did it have access to Huế's architecture, it possessed the original annals of the Nguyễn dynasty. The University of Huế housed a special research unit called the Committee for the Translation of Vietnamese Historical Documents that was dedicated to translating the royal annals from classical Chinese into vernacular Vietnamese.[28] It was also home to the Institute of Chinese Studies, devoted to the study of the Chinese language and established partly to support the translation of classical Chinese texts.[29] Two scholarly journals, the University of Huế's *Đại học (University Journal)* and the Ministry of National Education's *Văn hóa Nguyệt san (Cultural Monthly),* became the primary vehicles for new scholarship on imperial architecture. Bửu Kế, a professor at the University of Huế and co-chair of the Committee for the Translation of Vietnamese Historical Documents, wrote several articles on the royal citadel and the imperial tomb of Tự Đức, the last emperor of precolonial Vietnam.[30] In 1957, *Cultural Monthly* published an article by Thái Văn Kiểm, entitled, "Huế muôn thuở" ("Huế Forever"), which the Ministry of National Education commissioned the author to expand into a full-length book.[31] The result was *Cố đô Huế (The Ancient Capital of Huế),* published by the Directorate of Cultural Affairs, a subsidiary of the Ministry of National Education.[32] *The Ancient Capital of Huế* was a comprehensive study that surveyed the imperial sites of Huế, the city's history throughout the premodern period, and the literature associated with Thừa Thiên.

---

[25] *Triển lãm thành tích kiến trúc, 1954-1963* (Saigon: [1963?]). The book is unpaginated.
[26] "Ba vũ, Cổ nhạc, Đại nội Huế," *CMQG* 812 (4 Apr 1961): 3.
[27] The Regional Delegate of the Central Region to Ngô Đình Diệm on filming and recording traditional ceremonies, correspondence no. 1716-VP/NPT, 17 Oct 1962, file 17899, ĐICH; the Regional Delegate of the Central Region to the chief of cabinet, Office of the President, on filming and recording the ceremony of Nam Giao, official telegram no. 226-BT, 5 Jul 1963, file 17899, ĐICH; Quách Tòng Đức to the Regional Delegate of the Central Region on filming and recording traditional ceremonies, official telegram no. 9243, 6 Jul 1963, file 17899, ĐICH.
[28] Ủy ban Phiên dịch Sử liệu Việt Nam, "Công việc tiến hành của Ủy ban Phiên dịch Sử liệu Việt Nam," *Đại học* 13 (Jan 1960): 147-148.
[29] Nghị-định số 1505-GD/NĐ tổ chức Viện Hán học tại Đại học Huế, 9 Dec 1959, file 1863, ĐICH.
[30] Bửu Kế, "Kinh thành Huế," *Đại học* 22 (Aug 1961): 92-111; Bửu Kế, "Kinh thành Huế," *Đại học* 23 (Oct 1961): 75-91; Bửu Kế, "Lăng Tự Đức," *Đại học* 31 (Feb 1963): 127-140; Ủy ban Phiên dịch Sử liệu Việt Nam, "Công việc tiến hành của Ủy ban Phiên dịch Sử liệu Việt Nam," *Đại học* 13 (Jan 1960): 147-148.
[31] Thái Văn Kiểm, "Huế muôn thuở," *Văn hóa Nguyệt san* 19 (Feb-Mar 1957): 120-130; Masur, "Hearts and Minds," 121.
[32] Thái Văn Kiểm, *Cố đô Huế*, Văn hóa tùng thứ 7-8 (Saigon: Nha Văn hóa, 1960).

As Masur has pointed out, the volume focused on dynasties and kingdoms, aspects of the old city that served the RVN's nation-building and state-building agendas.[33] Bao La Cư Sĩ, another Huế-based scholar, wrote the introduction. In it, he posited a historical narrative that explicitly anointed the Saigon regime the exclusive successor to the Nguyễn dynasty and the newest incarnation of legitimate state power. Bao La Cư Sĩ argued, "In the history of our country, each time the imperial seat is moved by the motions of heaven, it signals the arrival of a new epoch."[34] The literary phrase "motions of heaven" *(thiên di)* invoked the classical idea that the events in human society reflect the will of heaven. He listed what he considered the three most significant moments in Vietnamese history, which all entailed the relocation of capital cities: Thăng Long (modern day Hanoi) became the capital in 1010 AD at the beginning of the Lý dynasty, Phú Xuân (modern day Huế) became the capital in 1802 at the beginning of the Nguyễn dynasty, and Saigon became the capital of the RVN in 1954. The Lý dynasty had been the first stable Vietnamese dynasty after the country won its independence from Chinese rule, and the Nguyễn dynasty had been the last independent Vietnamese dynasty before the country fell to French colonialism. Bao La Cư Sĩ implied that each capital city represented the establishment of legitimate state power for a new era. The narrative of the three cities conceived of the nation as historically progressing from the Lý and Nguyễn dynasties to the modern RVN.

This conception of national history accords with Benedict Anderson's argument that nations are imagined as "a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history."[35] Rather than conceiving of the Lý kingdom, the Nguyễn kingdom, and the RVN as unrelated states, Bao Lao Cư Sĩ knit them together into a single genealogy of an enduring nation, or, what Anderson calls "the expression of an historical tradition of serial continuity."[36] As Anderson's theoretical arguments predict, Bao La Cư Sĩ's historical narrative is presentist and works backwards to create the origins for the contemporary Republic.[37] But equally striking is the narrative's spatial dimension. Instead of genesis or continuity, the narrative emphasized evolution and redirected national legitimacy southward away from the northern heartland. The glorification of Huế as a premodern capital foreclosed the possibility of a Hanoi-centered narrative, in which state power would return to the DRV after the anomalous Nguyễn dynasty. Bao La Cư Sĩ's conception of history made Hanoi more archaic than authentic, and Huế functioned as the critical halfway point in the temporal and spatial evolution of the heavenly mandate. In short, the whole of Vietnamese history led to the birth of the Republic.[38]

The Status of the EFEO and the Challenge to French Colonialism

Saigon's policies on foreign academic institutions and the research priorities of the RVN's own institutes challenged French colonialism and affirmed Vietnamese ethnic superiority

[33] Masur, "Hearts and Minds," 122.

[34] "Trong lịch-sử nước ta, mỗi lần thiên-di thủ-phú là mỗi lần báo hiệu cả một thời đại mới sắp sửa. Tựu-trung, có ba lần thiên đô trọng-đại hơn cả: lần đầu là sự dời đô từ Hoa-lư (Ninh-Bình) về Thăng-Long ở trung-châu Bắc-Việt hồi đầu nhà Lý (năm 1010), lần thứ hai là sự định đô ở Phú-Xuân (tức là thành Huế bây giờ) hồi Nguyễn-Sơ (năm 1802), lần thứ ba là sự định đô ở Sài-Gòn giữa năm 1954": Bao La Cư Sĩ, introduction to *Cố đô Huế,* by Thái Văn Kiểm (Saigon: Nha Văn hóa, 1960), i-v, citation on i.

[35] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 26.

[36] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 195.

[37] Anderson calls this presentism of national histories as being written "up time." See Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 205.

[38] Interestingly, Bao La Cư Sĩ ignored that Huế and Saigon had served as capital cities for far shorter periods than Hanoi.

over non-Vietnamese minorities. The government demanded that France relinquish the possession of native antiquities, refused the French any special research privileges, and replaced French research institutions with Vietnamese ones. State-sponsored research on the premodern kingdom of Champa asserted Vietnamese dominance over ethnic minorities by casting the Vietnamese as scholars and past conquerors of the Cham people. The primary target of Saigon's anticolonial cultural policies was the École Française d'Extrème Orient (French School of the Far East, EFEO). The EFEO was a Hanoi-based French research institute founded in 1900 and dedicated to archaeology in Asia, especially the study of Angkor Wat. Although the institution enjoyed the collaboration of amateur Vietnamese scholars, its leadership was always French, and the school was an instrument of the colonial state.[39] In the 1910s through the 1930s, it established five museums throughout Indochina: Musée Finot in Hanoi, Musée Blanchard de la Brosse in Saigon, Musée Parmentier in Đà Nẵng, Musée Khải Định in Huế, and Musée Albert Sarraut in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.[40] All were named after colonial governors and archaeologists, except for the museum in Huế, which bore the name of a colonial-era Vietnamese emperor. In 1949, when the SVN was established within the French Union along with Laos and Cambodia, the extensive collections of the EFEO came under joint French and Indochinese ownership.[41] After 1954, the EFEO was willing to transfer its Vietnamese museums and collections to the RVN but requested the right to continue conducting autonomous research as a foreign institute, similar to the French School of Athens or French School at Rome.[42]

French readiness to return the artifacts had an air of goodwill, but Saigon's response was suspicious and shrill. The RVN was determined to reclaim the antiquities from the French administration and establish Vietnamese sovereignty over the national patrimony. The Ministry of National Education began occupying the museums quite early. The late SVN had received the Musée Blanchard de la Brosse in the spring of 1954, even before Ngô Đình Diệm's assumption of the premiership.[43] The museums in Huế and Đà Nẵng probably came under Vietnamese possession sometime within the following two years, but certainly no later than the late 1950s.[44] To administer the new acquisitions and carry on the EFEO's scholarly functions, the Ministry of National Education established the Institute of History in early 1956.[45] In the same year, the government also renamed the Musée Blanchard de la Brosse the National Museum of Vietnam,

---

[39] For further discussion of the EFEO, see Haydon Cherry, "Digging Up the Past: Prehistory and the Weight of the Present in Vietnam," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 4, no. 1 (winter 2009): 84-144, reference to 88-90.

[40] Nora Taylor, "Whose Art Are We Studying? Writing Vietnamese Art History from Colonialism to the Present," *Studies in Southeast Asian Art,* ed. Nora Taylor (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 2000), 143-157, reference to 150.

[41] "Biên-bản Hội-đồng Nội-các v/v chấm-dứt chế-độ tay tư Pháp-Việt-Miên-Lào của Trường Bác-cổ," 26 Apr 1955, file 4562, PThTVNCH.

[42] Guy La Chambre to Ngô Đình Diệm regarding the modification of the status of the EFEO, correspondence no. 02577, 22 Dec 1954, file 17760, ĐICH; Note by the Minister at the Presidency regarding the EFEO and the proposal by the Minister of the Associated States, 25 Mar 1955, file 17760, ĐICH.

[43] Thái Văn Kiểm and Trương Bá Phát, *Chỉ nam về Viện Bảo tang Quốc gia Việt Nam tại Saigon* (Saigon: Bộ Văn hóa Giáo dục và Thanh niên, 1974), 22.

[44] The RVN likely received the museums in central Vietnam before or soon after the establishment of the Institute of History. The transfer of multiple museums would have demanded more institutional control than just a single one in Saigon. See Nguyễn Dương Đôn to Ngô Đình Diệm on the EFEO, correspondent no. 9-GD/PC/M, 4 Jan 1957, file 17760, ĐICH.

[45] Plans for the National Institute of History actually appeared as early as 1955. See Nghị định số 19-GD thiết lập Viện Khảo Cổ và ấn định các nhiệm vụ văn hóa của Viện, 18 Jan 1956, *Việt Nam Khảo Cổ Tập san* 1 (1960): 173-175; Nguyễn Dương Đôn to Ngô Đình Diệm on the establishment of the Institute of History to replace the EFEO, correspondence no. 12971-GD/BTCT, 21 Dec 1955, file 4562, PThTVNCH.

and later decrees changed the names of other museums to the cities where they were located, the Huế Museum and the Đà Nẵng Museum.[46] Like the revision of French toponyms, the museums' new names severed their ties with French colonists and bound them to their locations and the Saigon government.

Despite exercising effective control over the museums, the National Ministry of Education repeatedly demanded that the EFEO provide a full inventory of the various collections and all other property.[47] The government also denied the EFEO autonomous research access. After a meeting with representatives of France, Cambodia, and Laos to liquidate the joint funds of the EFEO, the RVN representative Dương Tấn Tài reported that the French had behaved suspiciously. "[D]uring the meetings, the demeanor of the French delegation showed hidden intentions," he claimed.[48] Dương Tấn Tài responded to French overtures by reminding them that the RVN had never guaranteed privileges for the EFEO and only promised to allow French institutions in general to have research access.[49] The Saigon leadership appears to have suspected the French of secretly retaining undisclosed artifacts, office buildings, or other property, and the government dismissed multiple French suggestions to formalize the transfer until a full inventory was produced.[50] In 1957, after the Director of the EFEO Jean Filliozat provided a list of the French school's possessions, Minister of National Education Nguyễn Dương Đôn pointed out that Filliozat had left out a chalet in Đà Lạt.[51]

Competition with the DRV also played a role in the protracted negotiations. Nguyễn Dương Đôn feared that an official transfer would permanently seal off the southern government's claim to the Musée Finot in Hanoi. In a letter to Ngô Đình Diệm, he explained, "My ministry suggests that, in the current situation, we should not officially accept the administration of the EFEO's former agencies because, if we do, the French government may transfer the Museum in Hanoi and the collection books there to the *Việt cộng* to administer, in

[46] For the new names of the museums in Saigon and Huế, see Nghị định số 321-GD/NĐ đổi tên Viện "Blanchard de la Brosse" thành Viện Bảo tàng Quốc gia Việt Nam, 16 May 1956, *Việt Nam Khảo Cổ Tập san* 1 (1960): 175-176; Nghị định số 1479-GD/NĐ đổi tên Viện Tàng Cổ Khải Định thành Viện Bảo tàng Huế, 29 Sep 1958, *Việt Nam Khảo Cổ Tập san* 1 (1960): 176-177. I have not been able to determine when the museum in Đà Nẵng was renamed, but a law formalizing the relationship between the museum and the Ministry of National Education from 1964 referred to it as the Đà Nẵng Museum. See Nghị-định số 111-GD/PC/NĐ đặt Viện Bảo-Tàng Đà-Nẵng trực-thuộc Viện Khảo-Cổ, 17 Jan 1964, file 4562, PThTVNCH.

[47] Ngô Đình Diệm to the Minister of the Associated States regarding the modification of the status of the EFEO, correspondence no. 343-PTT/TTK, 10 May 1955, file 17760, ĐICH; Minister at the Presidency regarding the modification of the status of the EFEO, correspondence no. 2517-AP3, 18 Jul 1955, file 17760, ĐICH; Nguyễn Dương Đôn to Ngô Đình Diệm regarding the EFEO, correspondence no. 9-GD/PC/M, 4 Jan 1957, file 17760, ĐICH; Vũ Văn Mẫu to Ngô Đình Diệm regarding the French return of the EFEO's property and artifacts, correspondence no. 204-VHPL/M, 12 Mar 1959, file 17896, ĐICH; Political Advisory Report of the General Secretary of the Office of the President regarding the request that France return the EFEO's property and artifacts, 23 Mar 1959, file 17896, ĐICH.

[48] Dương Tấn Tài to Ngô Đình Diệm on dividing the remainder of the common fund of the EFEO, correspondence no. 112-TTP/CV, 23 May 1956, file 17760, ĐICH.

[49] Dương Tấn Tài to Ngô Đình Diệm on dividing the remainder of the common fund of the EFEO, correspondence no. 112-TTP/CV, 23 May 1956, file 17760, ĐICH.

[50] Nguyễn Dương Đôn to Ngô Đình Diệm regarding the EFEO, correspondence no. 9-GD/PC/M, 4 Jan 1957, file 17760, ĐICH; Vũ Văn Mẫu to Ngô Đình Diệm regarding the French return of the EFEO's property and artifacts, correspondence no. 204-VHPL/M, 12 Mar 1959, file 17896, ĐICH.

[51] Nguyễn Dương Đôn to Ngô Đình Diệm regarding the EFEO, correspondence no. 9-GD/PC/M, 4 Jan 1957, file 17760, ĐICH.

violation of the principle of joint ownership that the Four Associated States have established."[52] The Associated States referred to France, the RVN, Cambodia, and Laos. When the French ambassador Jean Payart reported to the RVN's Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the DRV was pressuring the EFEO to hand over the Musée Finot, Saigon sharply reminded the French government of its promise to recognize the RVN as the sole legitimate Vietnamese government.[53] In 1958, after the communists took over the museum without French approval, Saigon again reminded the French to provide an inventory of the Finot collection.[54] It is unclear if the government's demands were met, but the RVN finally allowed a formal transfer in 1963.[55] From then on, the French school was only allowed to continue its activities under Vietnamese supervision in cooperation with the Institute of History.[56]

The Quest for Cham Artifacts and the Assertion of Vietnamese Superiority

The insistence on full sovereignty over former EFEO possessions hinted at Vietnamese aspirations to establish dominance over ethnic minorities. The original purpose of the Musée Parmentier in Đà Nẵng was to preserve Cham artifacts, and its collection was not the logical property of an ethnically Vietnamese state any more than of the colonial government.[57] Surprisingly, the RVN's sponsorship of research on Champa was second only to Huế as a distinct research agenda. The research on the Chams confirmed the ascendancy of the Republican researcher at the expense of the French scholar and reinforced ethnic superiority over the Cham and highland minorities. Champa was an ethnically Cham kingdom that had occupied most of central Vietnam until it was progressively annexed by the Vietnamese in the 18th and 19th centuries. Throughout the First Republic, the repair of Cham temples represented an important component of the restoration efforts of the Institute of History. In the early 1960s, the Institute repaired temples in the provinces of Bình Định, Phú Yên, and Qui Nhơn, areas of the country with high concentrations of Cham architectural sites.[58]

Significant scholarly and popular interest also surrounded the legendary treasures of the Cham kings.[59] The treasures had been made famous by the romantically titled *Le trésor des rois chams (The Treasure of the Cham Kings)*, published in the early 20th century by two French

[52] "Vậy Bộ tôi thiết tưởng trong tình-thế ngày nay, chưa nên nhận chính-thức việc quản-trị những cơ-sở cũ của Trường V.Đ.B.C., vì nếu nhận, e Chính-Phủ Pháp lại giao kho sách và Viện Bảo-tàng tại Hà-nội cho Việt-Cộng quản-trị, trái với nguyên-tắc sở-hữu vị-phân đã do Bốn Quốc-gia Liên-kết quyết-định": Nguyễn Dương Đôn to Ngô Đình Diệm regarding the EFEO, correspondence no. 9-GD/PC/M, 4 Jan 1957, file 17760, ĐICH.

[53] Vũ Văn Mẫu to the Minister at the Presidency on the EFEO, correspondence no. 3558-VHPL, 17 Jul 1957, file 17760, ĐICH.

[54] Political Advisory Report of the General Secretary of the Office of the President regarding the demand that France return the EFEO's property and artifacts, 23 Mar 1959, file 17896, ĐICH.

[55] Kh.D, "Việt-Nam và Pháp trao đổi công hàm, chấm dứt các hoạt động của Trường Viễn Đông Bác Cổ dưới hình thức hiện nay," *Bản tin VTX* 4458 (22 May 1963, afternoon): H3, file 17760, ĐICH.

[56] It is possible that the EFEO's activities in Vietnam were put in limbo because of the delayed transfer, which would explain the school's extreme eagerness. See Kh.D, "Việt-Nam và Pháp trao đổi công hàm, chấm dứt các hoạt động của Trường Viễn Đông Bác Cổ dưới hình thức hiện nay," *Bản tin VTX* 4458 (22 May 1963, afternoon): H3, file 17760, ĐICH.

[57] Hue-Tam Ho Tai, "Representing the Past in Vietnamese Museums," *Curator: The Museum Journal* 41, no. 3 (24 May 2010): 187-199, reference to 188.

[58] *Triển lãm thành tích kiến trúc, 1954-1963*. The book is unpaginated, and no page numbers can be cited.

[59] "Kho tàng và di tích của các vị Vua Chiêm vẫn bí mật," *Tự do* 603 (1 Jan 1959): 2-3; "Phái đoàn Viện Khảo Cổ Quốc gia đến viếng thăm các di tích lịch sử Chàm," *Tự do* 699 (30 Apr 1959): 1; "Viện Khảo Cổ Việt Nam ghi chép thêm các cổ tích Chàm ở Trung phần," *Tự do* 1031 (9 Sep 1960): 1-2; "Bí mật về di tích các đời vua cuối cùng của Chiêm Thành," *Văn hóa Á châu* 7 (Oct 1958): 93-94.

archaeologists, E.M. Durand and Henri Parmentier, for whom the museum in Đà Nẵng had been named.[60] Based on this account, Vietnamese scholars knew that the precious objects were kept in temples in some of the most remote areas of the central Vietnam.[61] In 1957, highland villagers in Tuyên Đức province showed a visiting district chief some Cham treasures, an event that set off a determined quest by the Ministry of National Education to locate and preserve the artifacts.[62] Later that year, a delegation from the Institute of History visited the temples to conduct inventory of the artifacts. Nghiêm Thẩm, the head of the delegation, suggested that Cham royal refugees brought these objects with them when they fled into the mountains to avoid Vietnamese persecution, and the highland minorities who took them in promised to preserve and protect the royal treasures.[63] The government hoped to place the artifacts in a museum but was unable to convince the villagers to relinquish the items. Instead, the Institute of History built storage facilities in the villages to better preserve the treasures.[64]

Champa had fallen so long ago that the RVN hardly needed to hunt down royal treasures to confirm the Vietnamese victory over the kingdom. But the research provided the Vietnamese with new roles as scholars and conquerors equal to the French and worthy of a newly independent nation. During the colonial period, French archaeology had cast the colonized people as the object of study, from the ruins of Angkor in Cambodia and philological research on Cham inscriptions to the excavations of the Bronze Age culture in Đông Sơn, northern Vietnam. Although research by the EFEO was professional, art historian Nora Taylor has observed that "the message that effectively said to the locals 'we know more about your history than you do' ran through much of the research conducted by the EFEO."[65] Now that Vietnam had thrown off the colonial yoke, Republican scholars eagerly challenged French scholarly authority and replaced the colonial researcher with themselves. When Nghiêm Thẩm published an account of his expedition in *Cultural Monthly,* he began by recounting two colonial expeditions that had viewed the same artifacts: an expedition in 1902 led by Durand, a co-author of *Treasure of the Cham Kings,* and a later one headed by Marcel Ner in 1929-1930. Nghiêm Thẩm quickly minimized the French discoveries: "But the truth is that Father Durand and M. Ner only got to glance over the precious objects at Krayo village but were not able to examine them carefully."[66] Concerning the expedition under his leadership, he gleefully boasted, "the Institute of History is

[60] Henri Parmentier and E.M. Durand, *Les trésors des rois chams* (Hanoi: F.H. Schneider, 1905).
[61] Nghiêm Thẩm, "Đi thăm kho tàng của các vua Chàm," *Văn hóa Nguyệt san* 56 (Nov 1960): 1359-1366; Nghiêm Thẩm, "Đi thăm kho tàng của các vua Chàm," *Văn hóa Nguyệt san* 57 (Dec 1960): 1567-1588.
[62] Nghiêm Thẩm, "Đi thăm kho tàng của các vua Chàm," *Văn hóa Nguyệt san* 56: 1361.
[63] Nghiêm Thẩm, "Sơ lược về các kho tàng chứa bảo vật của các vua Chàm," *Việt Nam Khảo Cổ Tập san* 1 (1960): 151-163, reference to 156; Nghiêm Thẩm, "Đi thăm kho tàng của các vua Chàm," *Văn hóa Nguyệt san* 57:1570-1572.
[64] Nghiêm Thẩm, "Đi thăm kho tàng của các vua Chàm," *Văn hóa Nguyệt san* 57:1572-1573; Nghiêm Thẩm and Lưu Quý Tân, "Tờ trình v/v đi xem công tác xây cất hai ngôi đền tại Kalong (Quận Phan-Lý-Cham, Tỉnh Bình-Thuận) và ngôi nhà đền tại Sopmadronhay (Quận Đơn-Dương, Tỉnh Tuyên Đức) để chứa bảo vật của các vua Chàm và ghé thăm các Tháp Po Dam, Tháp Phố-Hải và Đền thờ Vua Po Nrop," *Việt Nam Khảo Cổ Tập san* 3 (1962): 244-253. See also *Triển lãm thành tích kiến trúc, 1954-1963*.
[65] Taylor, "Whose Art Are We Studying?," 151.
[66] "Nhưng thật ra chính L.M. Durand và M. Ner cũng chỉ mới được ngó qua các bảo-vật ở Làng Krayo chứ chưa được xem kỹ-lưởng": Nghiêm Thẩm, "Đi thăm kho tàng của các vua Chàm," *Văn hóa Nguyệt san* 57:1568.

the first scientific organization to have the honor of carefully examining the treasure at Krayo and photographing and sketching all of the precious objects at Krayo."[67]

Vietnamese academic superiority was especially significant because the French had blocked Vietnamese access to the Cham artifacts. Nghiêm Thẩm explained that, during the 1902 expedition, Parmentier and Durand had allowed their Cham porters to accompany them to the remote villages but instructed their Vietnamese followers to remain behind, ostensibly because they wanted to win the confidence of their Cham companions. But Nghiêm Thẩm attributed this decision to "a reactionary attitude meant to be divisive," reminiscent of anticolonial accusations about France's divide-and-conquer strategy.[68] He claimed that his own experience contradicted Parmentier and Durand's prejudice, as the highland villagers had welcomed the Vietnamese delegation with hospitality. He implied that French scholars facilitated colonial rule by sowing divisions between the Cham and Vietnamese, but Republican researchers unified the different ethnic groups.

The role of the scholar empowered the Vietnamese to become colonizers and reduced minority populations to colonized objects of inquiry. Nghiêm Thẩm paternalistically described the highlanders as grateful objects of Vietnamese solicitude: "they were happy and touched that the Government would send experts to such a distant village to examine the Cham treasure."[69] Yet Nghiêm Thẩm never discussed allowing the Chams or the highlanders to occupy the role of the researcher. In his account, the highlanders' main function was to passively store historical artifacts, and the Chams were a disappeared people who played no role in preserving their own history. Nghiêm Thẩm did not even acknowledge the sizable Cham minority that still populated parts of central Vietnam. As a result, the quest to recover the artifacts became a specifically Vietnamese mission that marginalized the living Cham minority, not unlike older French claims that their scholarship was restoring the lost history of Champa that the Cham themselves had allegedly forgotten.

More significantly, the study of Cham history recalled the Vietnamese conquest of Champa in the premodern period, an achievement that paralleled France's colonization of Vietnam in the 19th century.[70] The search for the treasures was a reminder that it had been Vietnamese vanquishers who had chased the Cham royalty into the mountains, and the expedition evoked a past in which the Vietnamese had been conquerors rather than conquered. As in the discussion of Huế, the state's selection of Cham sites and artifacts was significant because it won more official interest than Óc Eo, Hội An, or other equally compelling projects and pointed to an interest in centralized political power. True, Champa had been a relatively decentralized polity compared to premodern Vietnam, but kingly treasures and monumental architecture were features of Cham culture that suggested state regalia and imperial power. The difference lay in the treatment of Champa as an extinct non-Vietnamese kingdom and the glorification of Huế as the revitalized center of enduring Vietnamese culture. Furthermore, it was

[67] "Như vậy Viện Khảo-Cổ là cơ-quan khảo-cứu thứ nhứt đã có vinh-dự được xem-xét kỹ-lưỡng kho-tàng Krayo, đã chụp ảnh và vẽ đầy đủ các bảo-vật ở Krayo": Nghiêm Thẩm, "Đi thăm kho tàng của các vua Chàm," *Văn hóa Nguyệt san* 57:1568.

[68] "một sự ngoan-cố để chia rẽ": Nghiêm Thẩm, "Đi thăm kho tàng của các vua Chàm," *Văn hóa Nguyệt san* 57:1567.

[69] "họ đã sung-sướng và cảm động vì tuy là những làng ở rất xa mà cũng được Chính-Phủ để tâm phái chuyên-viên đến khảo-sát các bảo-vật Chàm": Nghiêm Thẩm, "Đi thăm kho tàng của các vua Chàm," *Văn hóa Nguyệt san* 57:1567.

[70] The discursive theme of Vietnamese "colonization" of Champa first appeared during the colonial period. See Christopher Goscha, *Vietnam or Indochina?*, 50.

the Nguyễn dynasty that annexed the last remnants of independent Champa, and, therefore, Huế was the historical conqueror. The juxtaposition celebrated Vietnamese superiority over ethnic competitors both past and present.

One Nation, One Music

The Saigon regime was unable to forcibly reunite the country under its rule, but it compensated by attempting to unify the nation culturally through the creation of new cultural institutions. These institutions promoted the idea of a single, homogenous culture that was based on Vietnamese ethnicity and under Saigon's leadership. The most remarkable feature of these institutions was their ambition to encompass the totality of Vietnamese culture. Their vision entailed not only the homogenization of diverse practices into a unitary national culture but also the implicit rejection of the DRV's alternative cultural authority. Significantly, the conception of a singular Vietnamese culture included cultural forms native to areas ruled by the DRV. In effect, the new institutions expressed the desire for the cultural reunification of the nation under the RVN's rule. The institutions included two music academies and unfulfilled plans for a national academy.

From the beginning, the mission of the music schools was conceived in terms of a single, national music. In their legal charters, the synonymous usage of "Vietnam" and "national" to describe the schools' cultural jurisdiction flattened diverse musical practices among ethnic Vietnamese into a single genre. The beginning of the chapter mentioned the inauguration of the National Conservatory of Music in Saigon in 1957. In the following year, the government formalized its existence as an independent school charged with promoting "national music" *(quốc nhạc),* a phrase used repeatedly throughout its charter. The charter specified that the school's purpose was to "research and restore folk music and traditional national music in order to guide artists on the path of developing an authentic Vietnamese music" and "popularize national music domestically and overseas to work towards establishing a 'National Institute of Music.'"[71] The curriculum provided two fields of study: western music and the "traditional national music of Vietnam" *(quốc nhạc cổ truyền Việt Nam)*.[72] In 1960, the government established a second academy, the National School of Music and Theater of Huế. Its charter similarly invoked the nation's name in the description of the school's objectives: "To train professional artists who will serve and develop Vietnam's music, theater, and dance; To train music, theater, voice, and dance teachers in order to improve and develop music and theater in Vietnam; Research traditional music, theater, and dance for preservation purposes and to lay the foundation for a future Vietnamese art."[73] The goal of the new institutions was nothing short of guiding the artistic direction of the entire Vietnamese nation.

Also in 1960, the conservatory in Saigon added theater arts *(kịch nghệ)* to the curriculum, so that both schools were broadly dedicated to the performing arts. The new division consisted of

[71] "phổ-biến Quốc-nhạc ở trong nước và ngoại quốc và tiến đến việc xây dựng một 'Quốc-gia Nhạc-viện'": Nghị-định số 294-GD cải tổ Ban Âm-nhạc thành "Trường Quốc-Gia Âm-Nhạc," 21 Aug 1958, file 2672, ĐICH.
[72] Nghị-định số 294-GD cải tổ Ban Âm-nhạc thành "Trường Quốc-Gia Âm-Nhạc," 21 Aug 1958, file 2672, ĐICH.
[73] "Đào-tạo những nghệ-sĩ chuyên-nghiệp để phụng-sự và phát triển nền nhạc, kịch, ca, vũ Việt-nam; Đào-tạo những Giáo-sư âm-nhạc, kịch, ca, vũ để nâng cao và khuếch-trương nền âm-nhạc và kịch-nghệ tại Việt-nam; Nghiên-cứu nghệ-thuật nhạc, kịch, ca, vũ truyền-thống để bảo-tồn và đặt làm nền tảng cho nghệ-thuật tương lai Việt-nam": Nghị-định số 1266-GD thiết-lập một Trường Quốc-gia Âm-nhạc và Kịch-nghệ tại Huế, 21 Dec 1961, file 2672, ĐICH.

four fields: drama, *cải lương, hát chèo,* and *hát bội*.[74] *Hát chèo* and *hát bội* were traditional forms of opera native to northern Vietnam, while *cải lương,* or "reform opera," was indigenous to the south. By grouping ethnically Vietnamese musical and theatrical genres from distant geographical regions within the same curriculum, the school was creating a single national culture that transcended political boundaries but was specifically located under Saigon's authority. When interviewed about the addition of theater arts, Nguyễn Phụng, director of the Conservatory, explained that the new fields were designed to "preserve the Nation's traditional artistic heritage, such as *hát chèo* and *hát bội"* and "develop the country's theater arts."[75] For the director, it was only natural for the RVN to claim musical genres originating beyond its official territory as national heritage. The musical academies created the fiction of a culturally uniform field that belonged to Saigon. But "national music," as defined by the curriculum at the National Conservatory, excluded the musical forms of Khmers, Chams, Chinese, and highland minorities, who did not necessarily practice any of the genres included in the "traditional national music of Vietnam."

The silence regarding the DRV's existence and Hanoi's cultural institutions reinforced the RVN's claim to represent the entire nation. When the theater arts division was added to the National Conservatory, *Văn hữu (Literary Friends)* hailed it as a historical event: "For the first time in the history of Vietnamese theater arts, a school that teaches theater arts has just been established in the capital city of Saigon, within the administrative system of the Ministry of National Education. This is an effort on the part of the Government to develop national culture and has been warmly received by art-loving youth."[76] The anonymous author praised the National Conservatory as the first school in Vietnamese history to formally teach drama but failed to acknowledge that the DRV's School of Folk Music and Theater had been established a year earlier in 1959. A similar silence characterized Nguyễn Hữu Ba's inaugural speech for the National Conservatory quoted at the opening of the chapter. For Nguyễn Hữu Ba, the need to preserve and develop the nation's distinct heritage automatically led to Saigon's National Conservatory, as if to imply that no other musical academy of such stature existed. He proclaimed, "To be worthy of a nation's independent and progressive character, to be worthy before the International world in the field of music, the main concern of the Vietnamese National Conservatory of Music must be the National music as it is in other countries."[77] The statement identified the National Conservatory and, by extension, the RVN as the embodiment of national music and anointed the RVN the primary representative of Vietnamese culture to the world. No mention was made of either the northern regime or its recently established Vietnamese School of Music.

---

[74] "Trường Quốc gia Kịch nghệ và Sân khấu ngày mai," *Văn hữu* 8 (Oct 1960): 178-182. In the 1950s, *cải lương,* or southern reform opera, was still a popular, contemporary art form and may not have been considered as "traditional" as the older, less popular *hát chèo* and *hát bội.* Nguyễn Phụng also referred to *cải lương* as *ca kịch,* or "musical play."

[75] "Bảo tồn tài sản nghệ thuật Cổ truyền của Quốc gia như các ngành hát chèo, hát bội," "phát triển nghệ thuật sân khấu nước nhà": "Trường Quốc gia Kịch nghệ và Sân khấu ngày mai," 179.

[76] "Lần đầu tiên, trong lịch sử nghệ thuật sân khấu Việt-Nam, một trường dạy về kịch nghệ vừa được thành lập tại thủ đô Saigon, nằm trong hệ thống tổ chức của bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục. Đây là một sự cố gắng của Chính phủ trong công cuộc phát huy văn hóa dân tộc, và đã được sự hưởng ứng nhiệt thành của thanh niên yêu chuộng nghệ thuật": "Trường Quốc gia Kịch nghệ và Sân khấu ngày mai," 178.

[77] "Và để xứng đáng với tính cách độc lập tiến bộ của một Quốc gia, đối với Quốc tế trên địa hạt âm thanh, trọng tâm của trường Quốc Gia Âm Nhạc Việt Nam phải là Quốc nhạc như các nước khác": "Nhạc sĩ Nguyễn Hữu Ba trình bày về đường lối phục hưng nền quốc nhạc," *Lẽ sống* 916 (4 Jun 1957): 2-3, citation from 3. For slightly different wording, see Nguyễn Hữu Ba, *Dân ca Việt Nam,* ix.

From the perspective of the late 1950s, the macadamizing of Vietnamese music and theater was an exciting nationalist development in both halves of Vietnam. In the RVN, the inclusion of folk music in the same curriculum as western music recognized the former as achieving the same level of high art as European music. For those living south of the 17th parallel, these schools transformed Vietnamese music into a serious academic discipline and a subject of scholarly inquiry. Professors at the academies, such as Nguyễn Hữu Ba, authored some of the earliest Vietnamese-language textbooks on music, including one of first published collection of folksongs written in western musical notation.[78]

Linguistic Unity and National Reunification: Plans for a National Academy

A more ambitious undertaking than directing all of Vietnamese music was the desire to guide all of Vietnamese culture. Throughout the 1950s, RVN government officials proposed a national academy that would act as the highest authority on the Vietnamese language and provide a unified direction for cultural development, in the style of the Académie Française. Such an institution was totalizing in its interdisciplinary approach, which sought to mold every aspect of the country's contemporary culture. Calls for a national academy dated back as early as 1954. Towards the end of that year, the Hội đồng Quốc gia Lâm thời (Provisional National Council) appealed to the government to establish a number of cultural institutions, including libraries, museums, local associations devoted to spreading literacy, a national literary prize, and a national office of cultural affairs. The council argued, "The government must boldly establish a Vietnamese Academy with the responsibility of revising and unifying the Vietnamese language and encouraging literary production" (underline in original).[79] The academy's main tasks would include compiling an official dictionary and grammar of the Vietnamese language and organizing a national literary competition. In addition, the council also recommended the establishment of a national institute of Vietnamese culture that would administer libraries and research institutions, increase the number of reading rooms and mobile libraries, organize local literacy associations, collect historical sources, produce a complete national history, translate foreign classics, and support artistic research and the collection of artwork.[80] The proposal conceived of Vietnamese culture as a coherent, national entity guided by one set of grammatical rules and defined by one official history.

As might be expected, the council assumed that the Saigon government would lead this far-reaching initiative. The group justified the proposal by arguing that all modern countries had established similar institutions long ago, and Vietnam needed to have them to keep from slipping behind:

> Considering that all progressive countries from the West to East have had such institutions, such as the Académie Française established in 1634, like in China where there has been a Hall of Great Learning and Translators' College organized according to the modern Western method since the Qing dynasty, like in Japan where education and culture have been organized as thoroughly as in the West and cultural agencies are found throughout the country… then our country, while regaining its independence in the

[78] Nguyễn Hữu Ba, *Dân ca Việt Nam*. Interestingly, a collection of Vietnamese folk music was also published in Hanoi in 1961.

[79] "Chánh phủ nên bạo dạng thành lập một Hàn lâm viện Việt-Nam vơi nhiệm vụ san định và thống nhất ngôn ngữ Việt-Nam và khuyến khích việc trước tác văn học": Kiến-nghị của Hội đồng Quốc gia về việc chấn hưng văn-hóa, 15 Dec 1954, file 29111, PTHTVNCH.

[80] Kiến-nghị của Hội đồng Quốc gia về việc chấn hưng văn-hóa, 15 Dec 1954, file 29111, PTHTVNCH.

> middle of the 20th century, must quickly organize cultural institutions so that our progress will catch up with that of the world and to prevent Marxist culture from spreading and invading the intellectual and spiritual life of our people.[81]

The proposal mentioned France during the Enlightenment, China under the Qing dynasty, and Japan during, presumably, the Meiji restoration, but it ignored the existence of the DRV. Instead, the council only acknowledged the rivalry obliquely with a vague reference to "Marxist culture." The label implied that the DRV was more ideological than Vietnamese, and communist culture was a threat to the Vietnamese people. Although the National Provisional Council probably had little or no political power, its petition demonstrates that politically prominent anticommunists conceived of a national academy as the exclusive prerogative of the southern regime quite early on.[82] The government's response to the proposal is unknown, but the Ministry of National Education under Ngô Đình Diệm sought to fulfill a vision of linguistic unity and a national academy very similar to the one suggested in the council's petition.

In the fall of 1956, the ministry began taking preliminary steps with the Hội nghị Thống nhất Ngôn ngữ (Conference on Linguistic Unity),[83] organized by the Directorate of Cultural Affairs.[84] The name of the conference bore striking resemblance to the National Provisional Council's recommendations to "unify" the Vietnamese language *(thống nhất)*, but it is unclear whether the conference was influenced by the council's proposal.[85] For the Ministry of National Education, unification referred to the standardization of language throughout the country, and the conference concentrated on three main issues: orthography, vocabulary, and scientific

---

[81] "Thiết nghĩ các nước tân tiến từ Tây chí Đông đều đã có những cơ quan nói trên, như Hàn lâm viện Pháp đã thành lập từ 1635, như ở Trung quốc từ đời Thanh đã có các Đại học viện và Sở quán Dịch học quán tổ chức theo tân thức Âu Mỹ, như ở Nhật bản nền học và văn hóa đã tổ chức đến mực hoàn bị không kém gì Âu Mỹ các cơ quan văn hóa đầy dẫy cả nước;… thì nước ta trong lúc lấy lại độc lập giữa thế kỷ thứ 20 này phải nên cấp bách tổ chức các cơ quan văn hóa để tiến triển cho kịp đà quốc tế và để tránh nạn văn hóa mác xít lan tràn xâm chiếm đời sống tinh thần của quốc dân": Kiến-nghị của Hội đồng Quốc gia về việc chấn hưng văn-hóa, 15 Dec 1954, file 29111, PTHTVNCH.

[82] Historians have not yet identified the Provisional National Council. I located a petition by the council dated 1954, and a relatively powerless body with the same name was established under the SVN in 1952. It is possible that the council of 1952 remained in nominal existence until 1954. I thank Edward Miller and Tuan Hoang for their assistance with this matter. See Kiến-nghị của Hội đồng Quốc gia về việc chấn hưng văn hóa, 15 Dec 1954, file 29111, PTHTVNCH; Đoàn Thêm, *Hai mươi năm qua, việc từng ngày, 1945-1964,* 115.

[83] Hội nghị Thống nhất Ngôn ngữ literally translates to the "Conference to Unify Language," but I have chosen a more elegant translation.

[84] The purpose of the month-long meeting was to prepare for the National Cultural Conference, which in turn would lead to the establishment of the Hội Văn hóa Việt Nam (Vietnamese Cultural Organization). Ultimately, the Vietnamese Cultural Organization would become a full-fledged Hàn Lâm Viện (National Academy) to guide the development of Vietnamese culture. See "Thống-nhứt ngôn-ngữ," *Văn hóa Nguyệt san* 15 (Sep-Oct 1956): 1647-1650; [Võ Văn Lúa], "Diễn văn kết thúc Hội nghị của Giám đốc Nha Văn hóa," *Văn hóa Nguyệt san* 16 (Nov 1956): 1850-1852.

[85] The earliest evidence of the conference is a charter from late summer 1955 granting the organization of the conference to the Directorate of Cultural Affairs. The charter came nine months after the proposal of the National Provisional Council. I have been unable to locate any documents listing the members of the National Provisional Council, and it remains unclear if there was any overlap between the membership of the council and the participants in the Conference on Linguistic Unity. For the charter on the conference, see Nghị định 287-GD/NĐ thiết lập tại Nha Văn hóa một Hội nghị bàn v/v thống nhất ngôn ngữ, 30 Aug 1955, file 10432, PThTVNCH. For the list of participants at the Conference on Linguistic Unity, see "Danh sách các nhân-viên Hội-nghị," *Văn hóa Nguyệt san* 16 (Nov 1956): 1779-1781.

terminology.[86] Võ Văn Lúa, the Director of Cultural Affairs, introduced the conference by blaming the French for the country's linguistic heterogeneity: "During the entire colonial period, the conquerors made every effort to divide the people and the land, both physically and spiritually."[87] As evidence, he cited the colonial division of Vietnam into three regions with different legal regimes, consequent difficulties in interregional travel, and jealously between people of different regions. As a result of colonial policies, "language seemed to stop and stagnate in each place with its local patois and distinct definitions, unable to spread to other places, which caused us to be removed from each other not just geographically, politically, or administratively, but also linguistically, intellectually, and emotionally."[88] Furthermore, people of different social classes expressed themselves differently, a practice that reinforced the class stratification of the old feudal society.[89]

Minister of National Education Nguyễn Dương Đôn echoed Võ Văn Lúa's sentiments. He argued that streamlining the vernacular language would overcome the divisions and lead to greater national unity. He urged the audience, "Let us not wait any longer to identify and explain those few discrepancies, so that all [our] compatriots may understand each other better, regardless of their situation or native region. To unify [our] language and consciousness is to help the people grow in unity and mutual affection."[90] The denunciation of French policies transformed the project into an effort to return to an imagined, precolonial unity. Nguyễn Dương Đôn suggested that unity was particularly needed due to the arrival of northern émigrés, which increased the social interaction between northerners and southerners.[91] The Minister of National Education explained that the conference was part of the ministry's long-term objective to expand the Directorate of Cultural Affairs. The minister hoped to add several subsidiary divisions: new research and publishing units to publish a national scholarly journal; new agencies to compile dictionaries, research grammar, and determine technical terminology; and an office to study the possibility of establishing a National Cultural Organization leading towards a National Academy. The conference concluded with the recommendation that the Ministry establish an independent National Institute of Language.[92]

The Conference on Linguistic Unity aimed to reduce the vast collection of different language practices among ethnic Vietnamese into a uniform linguistic field. Organizers hoped to root out all local variation and even had designs on language usage in North Vietnam. Phạm Xuân Độ and Nguyễn Thế Tương, the official secretaries of the conference, summarized the position of the meeting by describing linguistic discrepancies as "weeds in the garden of the national culture" in their report for *Cultural Monthly*.[93] They declared that the Vietnamese

---

[86] Phạm Xuân Độ and Nguyễn Thế Tương, "Hội-nghị Thống-nhất Ngôn-ngữ: Mục-đích và cộng-việc của Hội-nghị," *Văn hóa Nguyệt san* 16 (Nov 1956): 1771-1773.

[87] "Trong suốt thời-kỳ đô-hộ, mọi cố-gắng của kẻ thống-trị là chia rẽ dân-tộc, đất-nước, về thể-chất cũng như về tinh-thần": [Võ Văn Lúa], "Diễn văn giới thiệu Hội nghị của Ông Giám đốc nha Văn hóa," 1777.

[88] "Ngôn ngữ như ngừng đọng lại ở từng nơi với những thổ-âm, những ý nghĩa riêng biệt, không sao lan-tràn đi nơi khác được, khiến chúng ta đã xa nhau về địa-lý, về chế-độ chính-trị và hành-chánh, lại xa nhau cả về ngôn-ngữ, tính-tình, tư-tưởng": [Võ Văn Lúa], "Diễn văn giới thiệu Hội nghị của Ông Giám đốc nha Văn hóa," 1777.

[89] [Võ Văn Lúa], "Diễn văn giới thiệu Hội nghị của Ông Giám đốc nha Văn hóa," 1777.

[90] "còn chờ gì mà chẳng nêu ra và giải-thích những chỗ sai-biệt rất ít kia, để toàn thể đồng-bào, dù ở hoàn-cảnh nào, dù quê-quán ở đâu, củng có thể hiểu biết nhau hơn. Thống-nhất về ngôn-ngữ và tinh-thần, tức là làm cho nhân-dân thêm tình đoàn-kết và tương-thân tương-ái": "Thống-nhứt ngôn-ngữ," 1648-1649.

[91] "Thống-nhứt ngôn-ngữ," *VNHS* 15 (Sep-Oct 1956): 1649.

[92] "Đề nghị đệ ông Bộ trưởng Quốc gia Giáo dục," *Văn hóa Nguyệt san* 16 (Nov 1956): 1850.

[93] "những cỏ dại trong ngôi vườn văn-hóa quốc-gia": Phạm Xuân Độ and Nguyễn Thế Tương, "Hội-nghị Thống-nhất Ngôn-ngữ: Mục-đích và công-việc của Hội-nghị," 1771.

language was an indivisible whole and never acknowledged the partition: "the language of our country is unitary – there is one Vietnamese language from Nam Quan Pass to the Point of Cà Mau."[94] For Phạm Xuân Độ and Nguyễn Thế Tương, the Vietnamese language bound all of Vietnam along the same north-south axis, even reaching into the DRV. Nam Quan Pass and the Point of Cà Mau are the proverbial northernmost and southernmost points of Vietnam, respectively. The editorial comments in *Cultural Monthly* proposed an even more extreme claim: "From the South to the North, our national language is currently used everywhere in the nation."[95] Here, the Vietnamese language blanketed the combined territories of the RVN and the DRV. In both cases, the faith in the unbreakable unity of the Vietnamese language concealed a territorial claim. In 1956, the idea of linguistic unification was especially powerful because that was the year that the Geneva Agreement had planned for nation-wide reunification elections, which the RVN rejected. Indeed, the 17th parallel was a militarized border and far more restrictive of travel and interaction than colonial-era divisions. Intolerant of internal differences and geographically expansionist, the dream of linguistic unity expressed the RVN's desire to unite the country under its exclusive rule.

For reasons that remain unclear, the Ministry of Education's plans for a national academy never came to fruition. The National Cultural Conference, which was to be the second step in the process after the Conference on Linguistic Unity, was granted to the Ministry of Information. But the Ministry of Information had no particular interest in establishing a national academy and designed the conference to support the Denounce the Communists campaign and denounce the DRV in response to the Nhân văn – Giai phẩm Affair.[96] Ultimately, the RVN never established a national academy, despite continual discussion concerning the matter.[97]

International Art Exhibitions and the Exclusion of the DRV

The omission of the DRV was even more effective when placed in an international context. In the early 1960s, the RVN organized a series of international art exhibitions to celebrate Republic Day, the annual holiday celebrating the founding of the Republic on 26 October 1955. The government invited Free World countries and neutralist nations to contribute artwork but excluded the DRV and all communist countries.[98] The exhibitions situated the RVN in an international community of nations by including local and foreign artwork within the same display, a combination that portrayed the Saigon government as the internationally recognized

[94] "ngôn-ngữ nước ta, tuy tự xưa đã duy-nhất, – từ ải Nam-Quan đến Mũi Cà-Mau, vẫn chỉ có một thứ tiếng Việt-Nam": Phạm Xuân Độ and Nguyễn Thế Tương, "Hội-nghị Thống-nhất Ngôn-ngữ: Mục-đích và công-việc của Hội-nghị," 1771.

[95] "Từ Nam chí Bắc, quốc-ngữ của ta hiện được dùng khắp nơi trong nước": "Thống-nhứt ngôn-ngữ," 1647.

[96] The Office of Cultural Affairs proposed a cultural conference in 1955, but it was postponed. See Phạm Xuân Thái to Ngô Đình Diệm on the proposed Cultural Conference, correspondence no. 398-VP/BTT, 29 Mar 1955, file 16246, ĐICH; Trần Trung Dung to the Minister of Information and Psychological Warfare [Phạm Xuân Thái] on postponing the Cultural Conference, correspondence no. 243-PTT/TTK, 4 Apr 1955, file 16246, ĐICH.

[97] In the early 1960s, another ambitious plan called for a new Institute of Vietnamese Culture. The institute was to compile a Vietnamese-language encyclopedia and books for both higher education and popular consumption. This proposed national academy would have greatly expanded the state's intervention into Republican cultural life, but it is unclear whether the plans were ever seriously considered. See "Dự-án kế-hoạch hoạt-động Viện Văn-hóa Việt-Nam," c. 1961, file 17387, ĐICH. For more popular discussions, see Đoàn Thêm, "Viện Hàn lâm hay Viện Văn hóa?" *Bách khoa* 175 (15 Apr 1964): 3-8.

[98] Plans for an international cultural exhibition dated back as early as 1957. See "Cuộc triển lảm văn hóa quốc gia tại 'Thảo cầm viên' sẻ khánh thành vào tháng 4," *Bản tin VTX* 2207 (18 Mar 1957, afternoon): VII-VIII, citation on VII, file 16249, ĐICH.

representative of Vietnamese art. Conversely, the absence of the DRV constituted a silent rejection. The exhibitions also celebrated the city of Saigon as the center of intercultural interaction, almost as a foil to Huế. If Huế's cultural integrity allowed Vietnamese culture to accept foreign influences without losing authenticity, then Saigon was the sophisticated, modern capital that attracted foreign artists from throughout the world and contributed to the cosmopolitan exchange with its own artistic achievements.

The First International Salon of Pictorial Photography was organized for Republic Day in 1960. The organizing committee consisted of personnel from the Ministry of Information and professional photographers.[99] Over a thousand photographs poured in from every imaginable corner of the noncommunist world. A total of 21 countries participated, from Asian neighbors, like Burma, Cambodia, Taiwan, Korean, Malaya, Thailand, and the Philippines, to distant nations with which Vietnam had had little contact prior to the Cold War, such as Argentina, Australia, Spain, Finland, Italy, and the US. Of these, the committee selected 265 photographs for the exhibit.[100] The sheer variety of images concealed the absence of communist countries. In the official catalog, the organizing committee claimed that the event was a demonstration of international reciprocity and friendship. The standard practice in the RVN was to use "Vietnam" and the "Republic of Vietnam" interchangeably, as if an alternative Vietnamese state did not exist. The organizing committee adhered to this practice as it explained the genesis of the exhibition:

> There have been in the past [,] several opportunities for cultural and technical exchanges between the Republic of Vietnam and friendly countries. But this is the first time we are able to welcome entries of photographers from all over the world at an exhibition in our very country… That is also a tangible expression of friendship between Vietnam and other nations of the Free World.[101]

The participation of artists from so many foreign countries indirectly confirmed the regime's legitimacy as a producer of Vietnamese art. But what the passage failed to mention was that many participants were actually from non-aligned countries, whose recognition of both the RVN and DRV undermined Saigon's pretensions.

Within the display, the arrangement depicted Vietnamese culture as a distinct subset within a diverse collection of international artwork. The organization of the photographs obscured the qualitatively different character of the RVN by comparing it with non-partitioned states. There was nothing visually incongruent about Republican photographs displayed next to those from Cambodia or Italy, but the Italian government's claim to represent Italian culture and Cambodia's claim to represent Khmer culture were not in contest as it was for the RVN and Vietnamese culture. Likewise, the absence of the DRV in such an international array implied that

---

[99] The anticommunist message of the exhibition was subtle, and I have found no evidence of anticommunist speeches or publications surrounding the event. It should be noted that, around the time of the exhibition, the Ministry of Information was dismantled and reduced to the General Directorate of Information within the Office of the President, but much of the mid-level and lower level personnel likely remained unchanged. The president of the organizing committee for the exhibition was Nguyễn Hữu Dung, who had been Chief of Cabinet in the Ministry of Information in the late 1950s. Among the remaining five members of the organizing committee, I have been able to identify two: Phạm Văn Mùi, president of the Saigon Photo Club and a speaker at the National Cultural conference; and Ưng Hội, who worked in the Office of Motion Pictures in the General Directorate of Information. The others organizers were Nguyễn Thao and Trần Văn Khanh.

[100] *Triển lãm quốc tế nhiếp ảnh mỹ thuật nhân dịp lễ Quốc khánh Việt Nam Cộng Hòa 26 tháng 10 năm 1960* (Saigon: 1960). The volume is unpaginated, and specific pages cannot be cited.

[101] *Triển lãm quốc tế nhiếp ảnh mỹ thuật nhân dịp lễ Quốc khánh Việt Nam Cộng Hòa 26 tháng 10 năm 1960*. The original statement is in English.

the rest of the world considered Hanoi irrelevant, at best, or illegitimate, at worse. Together, the omission of the DRV and the presence of foreign countries portrayed Saigon as the true representative of Vietnamese art and the Vietnamese nation. The government's ability to solicit foreign participation was also a testament to the regime's diplomatic legitimacy, as the RVN was initially more successful in winning recognition from non-aligned, third world countries than the DRV.[102] Reflecting on the experience, the Director General of Information Trần Văn Thọ explained, "[T]his Exhibition also allows the Vietnamese people to see clearly the government's diplomatic and political achievements in relation to foreign countries."[103]

In 1962, the government organized an even larger exhibition, the First International Exhibition of Fine Arts of Saigon. An international panel of judges selected 430 watercolors, oil paintings, drawings, and sculptures representing twenty-one countries.[104] The official catalog reinforced the idea of the world as a collection of cultural units. The glossy, trilingual volume divided works by country of origin, and each section was preceded by an official statement by the country's ambassador or other national representative. The RVN's section was labeled "Vietnam" and introduced by Nguyễn Văn Thế, an adviser to the organizing committee and a well-known sculptor. As an art student in France, he had won second place for the prestigious Prix de Rome scholarship from the government of France. In his remarks, the sculptor highlighted the international character of the exhibit and its importance for "Vietnam": "Vietnam welcomes the artists of twenty different countries to Saigon. This is an event of considerable importance and exceptional interest to the Vietnamese public who will for the first time be able to enjoy a complete panorama of all the styles of contemporary Art."[105] Like the physical arrangement of artwork, the visual format of the catalog, the usage of "Vietnam" for the RVN, and Nguyễn Văn Thế's description all portrayed the RVN as the only Vietnam and rejected the DRV.

The exhibition of fine arts was meant to raise the stature of Saigon to an international city. The stated purpose was "to strengthen, beyond already existing cultural relations, the friendship of artists of all participating nations in an atmosphere of mutual confidence and

---

[102] Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams,* 392, 398-400. Interestingly, the RVN appears to have inherited from the SVN a tradition of celebrating foreign alliances. See "Đức Quốc trưởng hiệu triệu quốc dân Việt-Nam Tết Nguyên-đán Tân-Mão," c. 6 Feb 1951, file 29092, PThTVNCH; Secretary-General of the UN [Trygve Lie] to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and of the Interior [of the SVN] on the celebration of International Human Rights Day, correspondence no. SOA 373/1/06, 6 Sep 1951, file 29094, PThTVNCH; Lê Tấn Nẩm to the President [Nguyễn Văn Tâm] on the celebration of International Human Rights Day in Vietnam on 10 Dec 1952, correspondence no. 6314-GD/UNESCO, 1 Dec 1952, file 29094, PThTVNCH; Nguyễn Văn Tâm to the Minister of National Education on the celebration of International Human Rights Day in Vietnam on 10 Dec 1952, correspondence no. 1573-SG/L, 4 Dec 1952, file 29094, PThTVNCH.

[103] "Nha tôi nhận thấy cuộc Triển-lãm Quốc-tế là một phương tiện để nối chặt tình giao hảo giữa nước Việt-Nam và các nước bạn trên thế giới và cũng là những dịp tốt để nhân dân thế-giới hiểu nhiều hơn dân-tộc Việt-Nam. Ngoài ra, cuộc Triển-lãm này lại chứng tỏ cho nhân dân Việt Nam thấy rõ những thắng lợi về ngoại giao và chính trị của chánh-phủ đối với các nước ngoài": Trần Văn Thọ to the Minister [at the Presidency?] on organizing the annual International Salon of Pictorial Photography, correspondence no. 1715-TTP/TT/VHV/PT, 21 Mar 1961, file 17401, ĐICH.

[104] *Đệ nhất triển lãm quốc tế mỹ thuật tại Sàigòn 1962* (Saigon: Nha Mỹ Thuật Học Vụ, Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục, 1962), 83, 95, 257.

[105] "le Viet-Nam acceuille à Saigon les artistes de vingt pays différents. C'est là un évènement d'une importance considerable et d'un intérêt exceptionnel pour le public vietnamien qui, pour la 1ère fois, pourra jouir d'un panorama complet de toutes les tendances de l'Art contemporain": *Đệ nhất triển lãm quốc tế mỹ thuật tại Sàigòn 1962,* 247.

respect."[106] The exhibition was imagined as a cultural dialogue between equals, where Republican artists contributed as much as foreigners. In the official catalog, the Vietnamese subtitle billed the event as "An encounter between Vietnamese and Foreign Artists at Tao Đàn Park Hall."[107] Referring to previous international art exhibitions, the catalogue explained,

> Following the examples of Venice, Sao Paolo, and Paris, the city of Saigon – with its choice geographical location encouraging cultural relations between the East and West to multiply and flourish over the centuries – aspires to match the symbolic gesture of its elders [Italy, Brazil, France] by inviting artists of the world to again pay homage, this time within its walls, to Art and Beauty.[108]

By relocating the center of international art and culture from such renowned cities to its own capital, the regime was declaring its importance not merely as a distinctive member but a potential leader of international culture. This artistic sophistication made Saigon the modern complement to Huế. Just as the old imperial capital derived its cultural strength from tradition, Saigon prided itself on cosmopolitanism.

Rhetorically, the exhibitions built upon other aspects of Republican cultural policy and constructions of ethnic identity. At its most basic, Republican nationalism sought to link state power with ethnic identity through spatial, temporal, and historical conceptions of the nation. The revision of toponyms and holidays created a uniform territory that shared the same ethnic and political rituals, and the celebration of Huế crowned Saigon as the inheritor of cultural authenticity and political legitimacy. The government challenged French authority and asserted ethnic dominance over Vietnamese minorities with policies on historical artifacts, museums, and scholarship. The Ministry of Education envisioned and established national cultural institutions that claimed to place all of Vietnamese culture under Saigon's leadership. In doing so, it tried transcend the partition. In the early 1960s, government officials and artists turned outward towards the international world and used foreign participation in cultural exchanges to portray the Saigon government as the only Vietnamese state.

Conclusion

The cultural programs discussed above identified Vietnam's national culture with elite culture while largely ignoring popular, rural culture. Imperial architecture, royal music and dance, art exhibitions, academic research, and secondary and university education were all part of urban, elite cultural and intellectual life, and the government did not offer programs that supported folk dances, rural crafts, or oral literature to the same degree, in contrast to the communist impulse to privilege popular culture.[109] Indeed, the Republic's desire for cultural "unification" called for the homogenization of regional and local cultural forms far removed from urban centers. Not only did the definition of ethnic identity marginalize the DRV, the Ministry of National Education did little to incorporate the peasantry into its vision of the Vietnamese nation, a bias that reflected the regime's narrow political base.

Instead, the celebration of ethnic identity targeted a small, but influential sector of the population: educated middle and upper class urbanites. The urban population would have had the greatest access to research institutions, conservatories, and art exhibitions, all of which were

---

[106] *Đệ nhất triển lãm quốc tế mỹ thuật tại Sàigòn 1962*, 32. The original quote is in English.
[107] "Một cuộc tao-ngộ giữa các Nghệ-sĩ Việt-Nam và Ngoại-quốc tại Viên-Đình Tao-Đàn": *Đệ nhất triển lãm quốc tế mỹ thuật tại Sàigòn 1962*, title page.
[108] *Đệ nhất triển lãm quốc tế mỹ thuật tại Sàigòn 1962*, 29. The original is in English.
[109] Pelley, *Postcolonial Vietnam*, 132-140; Ninh, *A World Transformed*, 63-68, 164-203.

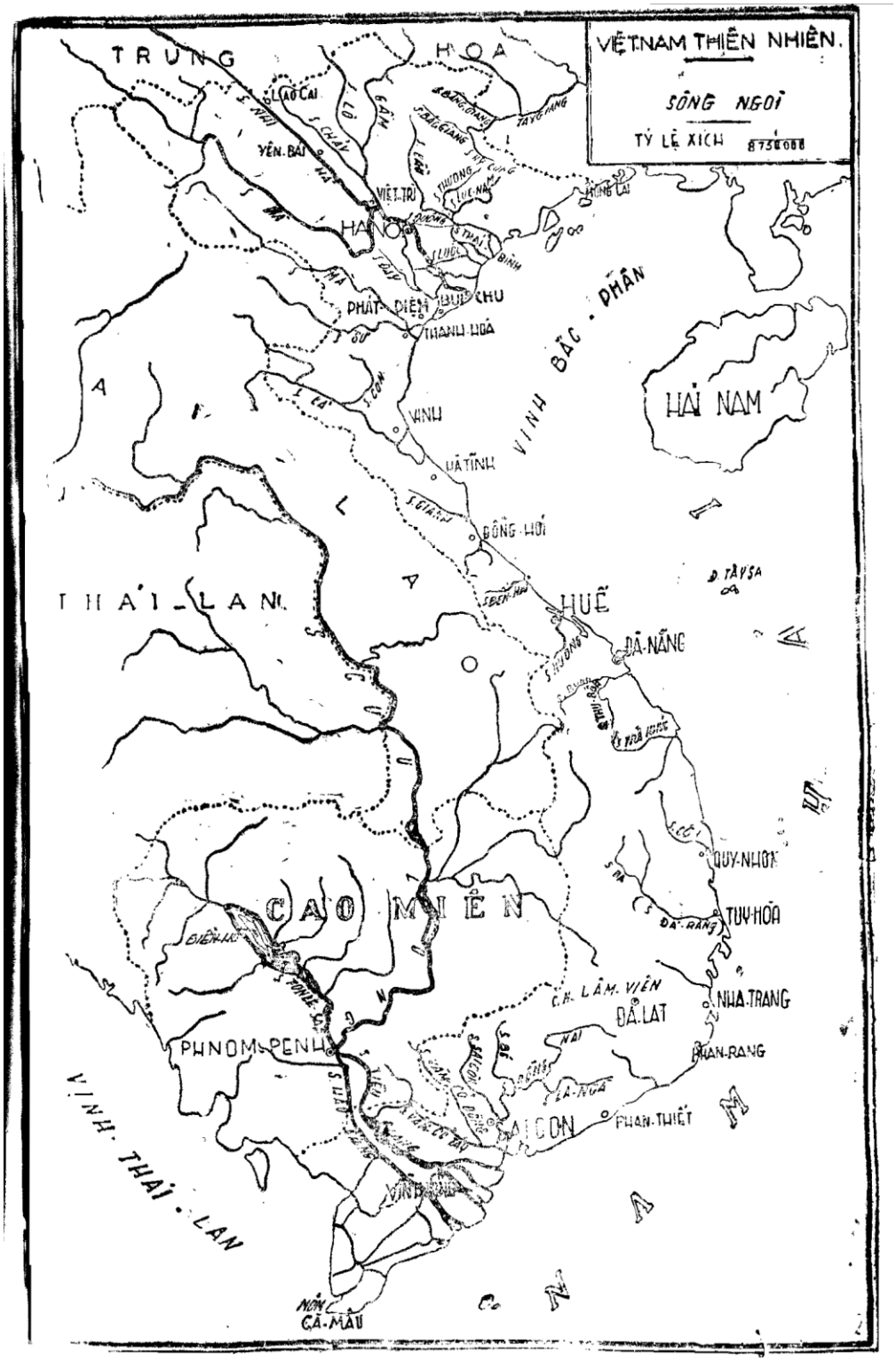
concentrated in cities, and the appreciation of such elite culture generally required significant education. For those who were actively involved in Republican intellectual life, the government programs were potentially powerful because they were present in so many distinct realms of activity. Whether these educated urbanites examined the latest academic research, attended concerts by the National Conservatory, toured the imperial citadel at Huế, assisted their children with homework, or admired photographs at the state-sponsored art exhibitions, the government presented them with depictions of Vietnam as single culture under Saigon's leadership. More specifically, the cultural policies appear to have won over many intellectuals and scholars. Nguyễn Hữu Ba, Bao La Cư Sĩ, Nguyễn Văn Thế, and other intellectuals that cooperated or worked for the Ministry of National Education were not propagandists or high level government officials. Rather, they were scholars and artists who willingly collaborated with the regime even when the artistic and literary scene of the RVN provided ample professional opportunities outside of state employment, and there is no evidence that the government pressured them to adhere to a specific political agenda.

Put within the wider context of Republican nationalism, the celebration of Vietnamese ethnic identity and the battle against the three enemies represented different sides of the same coin. On the one hand, antifeudalism, anticolonialism, and anticommunism constituted the negative definitions of Republican nationalism. That is, the precepts clarified what anticommunists believed the nation of Vietnam was *not.* On the other hand, the exaltation of Vietnamese culture offered a positive definition of the RVN, that is, what government officials, educators, scholars, and artists believed the Vietnamese nation *was*. While anticolonial and anticommunist tracts blamed the French and the Việt Minh for partitioning the country and sowing social divisions, geography textbooks and new cultural institutions championed the idea of national unity. As if responding to anticommunist concerns that North Vietnam was assimilating culturally into the communist empire, the Ministry of National Education demanded control over Vietnamese archaeological artifacts, sponsored traditional music and dance, and restored the former imperial capital. The argument that Ngô Đình Diệm's government inherited the mandate of the Huế court indirectly corresponded to antisectarian accusations medieval warlordism and benighted kings. But in other ways, the triple enemy slogan and Vietnamese ethnic identity exemplified the contradiction between identity and difference that was inherent in contested nationalism. Anticommunist initiatives consistently rejected Vietnamese communists as external enemies, and antisectarians denounced the sects, but the cultural rhetoric around Vietnamese identity celebrated the wholeness of the nation and included the territory and population of the DRV within its fold without mentioning political enemies.

Moreover, these two faces of nationalism were unequal. The government promoted the war against the enemies with far more fanfare than it fostered cultural activities. Ngô Đình Diệm consistently enunciated variations of the triple enemy formula throughout his rule, but he never provided any precepts defining Vietnamese ethnic identity. The cultural programs described in this chapter constituted a disconnected collection of distinct projects that followed no systematic guidelines. Yet the RVN's cultural policy also displayed unique strengths compared to anticommunist propaganda. Unlike the latter, the cultural programs engaged indirectly in politics and were not saturated with polemical denunciations. As educated urbanites became frustrated with Ngô Đình Diệm's heavy handed politics, cultural policy may have represented one aspect of Republican nationalism that they did support. Ngô Đình Diệm's persecution of suspected communists, the sects, and the Đại Việt undermined his attempt to draw clear political distinctions between his own government and the way that anticommunists imagined the DRV.

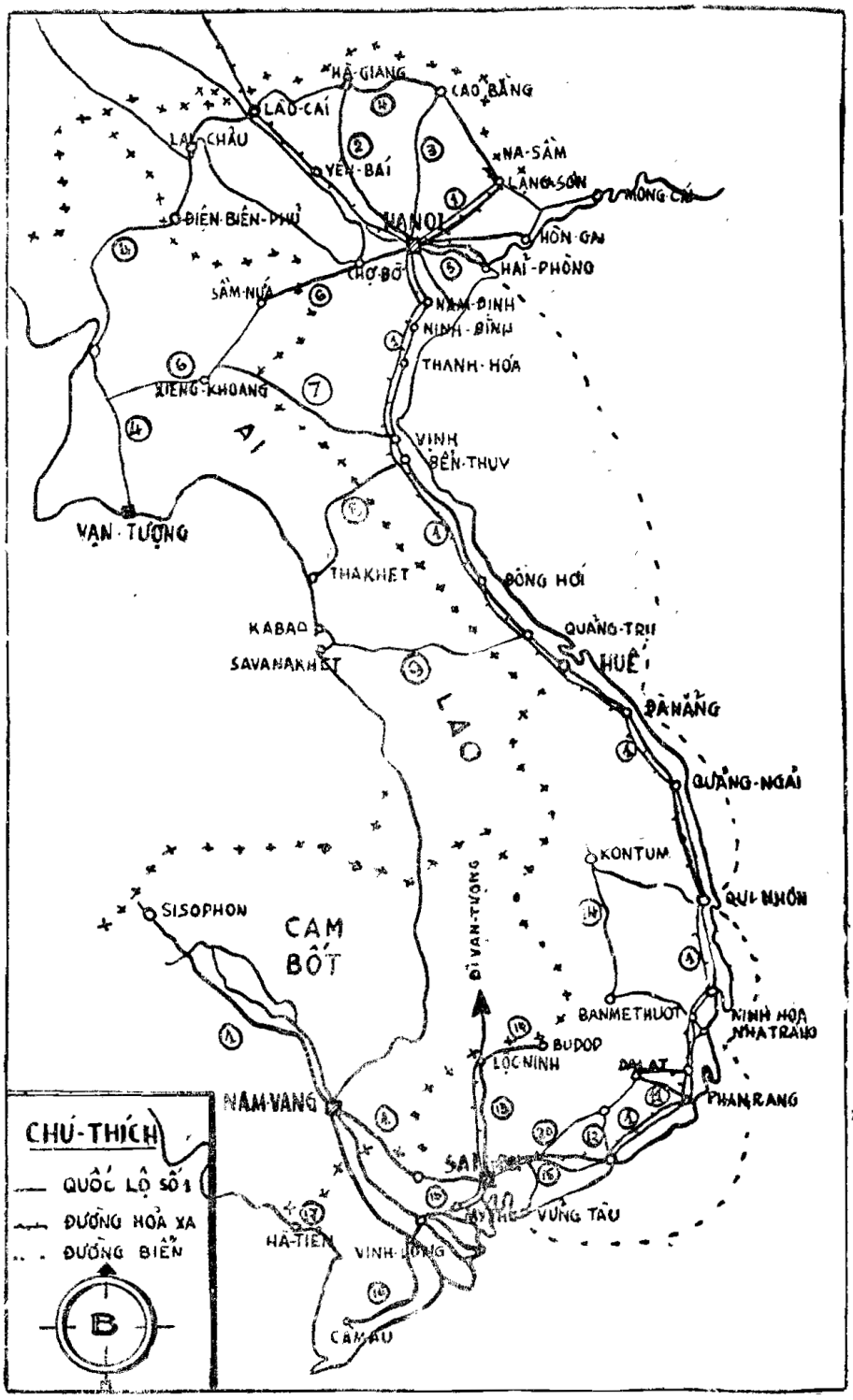
But the nationalist orientation of the RVN's cultural programs contrasted sharply with the pervasive rumors that the Hanoi government had abandoned Vietnamese culture to become a colony of the communist empire. Indeed, the profound engagement of the Ministry of National Education in scholarship and culture endowed it with an air of disinterested expertise and lofty aestheticism that seemed to transcend politics. Cultural policy may well have helped to retain political support for an anticommunist Vietnamese state even as intellectuals grew disenchanted with Ngô Đình Diệm's rule.

Map 3. **Physical Map of Vietnam.**



"Việt Nam Thiên nhiên," in *Địa lý Việt Nam lớp đệ nhị lớp A, B, C, D,* by Tăng Xuân An and Nguyễn Thị Hợp [bà Tăng Xuân An, pseud.] (Saigon: Sống Mới, 1963), 69.

Map 4. **Transportation Map of Vietnam.**



Việt-nam : Đường giao-thông

"Việt Nam: Đường giao thông," in *Địa lý Việt Nam lớp đệ nhị lớp A, B, C, D,* by Tăng Xuân An and Nguyễn Thị Hợp [bà Tăng Xuân An, pseud.] (Saigon: Sống Mới, 1963), 204.

Conclusion

Writing in the late 1950s, émigré author and Đại Việt activist Nghiêm Xuân Hồng argued that Vietnamese nationalism had entered a new phase. In *Lịch trình diễn tiến của phong trào quốc gia Việt Nam (The Development of the Vietnamese Nationalist Movement),* he explained that the movement was initially royalist and restorationist but later became "nationalist and nation-statist" *(quốc gia dân tộc).* Now, the movement had shifted once again to become anticommunist: "And now today, the path of struggle has transitioned into a new period in which… the enemy before us is a force that is Vietnamese but has clearly manifested the principle of class warfare and willingly serves as a 'fifth column' for the imperial, proletarian Sino-Soviet bloc."[1] Nguyễn Mạnh Côn similarly suggested that anticommunism was the new stage of Vietnamese nationalism. His novel, *Writing History With Personal Sentiments,* concludes in 1954 with the northern narrator about to leave for the South. As he watches other northerners embark on the journey, the narrator muses: "[T]he colonial period has ended, and a subsequent period has begun with voyages to the South, voyages that will gather in one place all those who are anticommunist."[2] The narrator suddenly realizes the significance of his remark: "I wrote, 'subsequent period… anticommunist,' and only after I wrote that did I realize that we have never really had an anticommunist front and an anticommunist period."[3] An anticommunist front was a historical necessity, according to the narrator, who is an anticommunist nationalist: "There hasn't been any [anticommunist fronts], but there will be because there must be. Because South Vietnam is our last line of defense, if we do not want to turn into objects someday."[4] The narrator implies that life under communist rule would reduce Vietnamese people to mere objects. In different ways, both authors recognized that the establishment of an anticommunist southern government marked a new phase in Vietnamese history.

The changes that Nghiêm Xuân Hồng and Nguyễn Mạnh Côn lived through in the early RVN constituted a major turning point in Vietnamese history. The existing conflict between communist and anticommunist nationalists became a competition between mutually hostile states. Ngô Đình Diệm's refusal to hold reunification elections hardened the division into a more rigid border. He also launched the anticommunist denunciation campaign to publicly discredit Vietnamese communists and destroy their underground network. His chosen brand of northern, secular anticommunism resonated mainly with émigré intellectuals. These intellectuals popularized a preexisting anticommunist terminology and constructed a narrative based on the alleged treachery of the Việt Minh in northern Vietnam during the resistance. Government officials even subsumed the predominantly Catholic character of the migration of 1954-1955 under the rubric of anticommunist nationalism: their propaganda depicted émigrés as political rather than religious refugees. Yet Ngô Đình Diệm sidelined some of the same northern nationalists whose legacy he appropriated, especially the Đại Việt parties and the VNQDĐ.

---

[1] "Cho tới ngày nay, con đường tranh đấu đã chuyển sang một giai đoạn mới trong đó… kẻ thù trước mắt chỉ là một hàng ngũ, tuy cũng là người Việt, nhưng đã bộc lộ rõ rệt chủ trương giai cấp đấu tranh và đã cam tâm làm một thứ 'đệ ngũ lộ quân' cho khối đế quốc vô sản Trung-sô": Nghiêm Xuân Hồng, *Lịch trình diễn tiến của phong trào quốc gia Việt Nam*, 237-238.

[2] "giai đoạn thực dân đã hết, giai đoạn sau đã bắt đầu bằng những chuyến đi tập trung vào miền Nam của những người chống Cộng": Nguyễn Mạnh Côn, *Đem tâm tình viết lịch sử,* 198.

[3] "Tôi viết 'giai đoạn sau… chống Cộng,' viết xong mới ý thức được rằng, từ trước đến nay, chúng ta quả thực chưa từng có một mặt trận và một giai đoạn chống Cộng": Nguyễn Mạnh Côn, *Đem tâm tình viết lịch sử,* 198.

[4] "Chưa có, nhưng sẽ có, vì phải có. Vì Nam-Việt là cứ điểm cuối cùng của chúng ta, nếu chúng ta không muốn có ngày biến thành đồ vật": Nguyễn Mạnh Côn, *Đem tâm tình viết lịch sử,* 198.

Moreover, a northern-based anticommunism had little relevance for the southern peasantry, especially those who had supported the Việt Minh. Even as Ngô Đình Diệm accused the communist party of oppressing noncommunists in the North, his officials persecuted communist nationalists and former members of the Việt Minh in the South.

His decision to suppress southern anticommunists further shrank his political base, and the early years of his rule witnessed an intense competition *between* anticommunist nationalists that paralleled the overarching conflict between communists and the RVN. He initially attacked hardline elements among the sects, but, after defeating the Bình Xuyên and Bảo Đại, he quickly disbanded the more moderate Revolutionary Committee. Meanwhile, his propagandists accused the Cao Đài, Hòa Hảo, and Bình Xuyên of conspiring with the French, the former emperor, and the communists. Most independent intellectuals ignored the antifeudal and anticolonial propaganda, and it never crystallized into a compelling narrative like the northern memory of the resistance. More importantly, the war against the sects alienated the Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo masses, which had been the bastion of southern anticommunism.

As the Cold War increasingly influenced Vietnamese perceptions of the world, Republican nationalism developed an international dimension. Anticommunists attributed the radicalization of the Việt Minh to the machinations of the communist superpowers and their alleged Vietnamese servants. Intellectuals also cultivated a sense of international anticommunist solidarity, and many touted the contribution of the RVN to the global struggle against communism. Propagandists, journalists, and poets linked the Quỳnh Lưu uprising with the Hungarian Revolution and professed friendship with all populations living under communist regimes. In return, the Saigon government requested support from the Free World and neutralist countries against the insurgency at home, especially after the dramatic murder of Hoàng Thụy Năm.

Similar to many nationalist states, the RVN promoted the history, geography, language, and art associated with the dominant ethnic group. Changes in toponyms created the illusion of an ethnically homogeneous territory, and state-sponsored research projects privileged ethnic Vietnamese at the expense of minorities and French colonial scholars. The Republic's continual competition with the DRV underlay many of these initiatives. Scholars, educators, and government officials established new cultural institutions that associated Vietnamese ethnicity with the southern regime, championed a historical narrative that culminated in the RVN, and taught schoolchildren that their patrimony encompassed the territory of North Vietnam. The government also organized international exhibitions in which it invited only noncommunist countries and presented itself as the exclusive representative of Vietnamese culture. These cultural expressions represented one of the few aspects of state nationalism in which the government defined the Vietnamese nation positively by its own characteristics rather than negatively in contrast to its enemies. The official cultural policy defined national culture as elite Vietnamese culture. Most programs were designed by educated urbanites for other educated urbanites, and there was little acknowledgement of the historical and cultural experiences of poor, rural southerners, the largest demographic in South Vietnamese society.

Anticommunist Nationalism in Vietnamese History and the Vietnam War

The study of anticommunist nationalism sheds light on the RVN's internal politics. It suggests that there was significant support for a noncommunist Vietnamese state below the 17th parallel, but Ngô Đình Diệm was unable to channel popular political sympathies into support for his regime. Many scholars consider Vietnamese anticommunism to be synonymous with

Vietnamese Catholicism, while others imply that only wealthy elites supported the southern Republic.[5] A more thorough analysis demonstrates that anticommunism attracted individuals from diverse social, political, regional, and religious backgrounds, including middle class émigrés that had abandoned the Việt Minh, members of northern-based nationalist parties, lower class southern gangsters, and followers of southern religious mass movements. The Republican critique of communism was also more political than religious or economic: anticommunists accused the Việt Minh of consolidating power through the violent oppression of noncommunists. Even self-professed middle class authors complained less about the loss of property than about indoctrination, purges, and arbitrary imprisonment. The diverse backgrounds of Vietnamese anticommunists and the sizable population of the sects suggest that there was a substantial political base for a noncommunist government. This anticommunist bloc did not encompass the majority of the population, but it was nonetheless a significant political force.

Yet Ngô Đình Diệm failed to take advantage of it. When he became the premier of the State of Vietnam in 1954, he faced the difficult task of ruling over a society divided by civil war. On the one hand, he had to contend with former enemies: the Việt Minh and their southern supporters. On the other hand, he faced a wide array of anticommunist constituencies that had fought the Việt Minh. Scholars usually focus on his relationship with the first group and rightfully argue that Ngô Đình Diệm alienated the southern peasantry through the denunciation campaign, a land reform program that favored landlords over tenants, and nation-building schemes that forcibly relocated peasants.[6] Beyond these shortcomings, anticommunism was not an effective vehicle to win the allegiance of those who had sided with Việt Minh. Many rural residents regarded communists as anticolonial leaders and benefited from the Việt Minh's land reform and the overthrow of the local elite.[7] Southern peasants often remembered a communist movement that was milder and less radical than that described by government officials. The second issue, Ngô Đình Diệm's relationship with other anticommunists, has attracted far less scholarly attention. This dissertation argues that his failure to incorporate fellow anticommunist nationalists – those who would have been his most natural allies – also weakened the regime. His treatment of anticommunist rivals angered the sectarian population and left his administration bereft of groups that had been at the forefront of noncommunist nationalism since the late colonial period.

More broadly, Ngô Đình Diệm's rule illuminates important continuities and discontinues in modern Vietnamese history. The most important continuity was the conflict between communist and anticommunist nationalists. The Denounce the Communists Campaign marked the transition of this conflict from the resistance war to the Vietnam War. The campaign developed a northern strain of anticommunist nationalism that first emerged during the resistance. The narrative of communist betrayal and the binary of *Việt cộng* and *quốc gia* tied the RVN to the earlier struggle. The campaign also created the conditions that helped give rise to the NLF, the last belligerent of the Vietnam War.[8] The campaign alienated the southern peasantry, pushed many rural residents into the arms of the revolution, and, in certain locales, provoked

[5] Kolko, *Anatomy of a War,* 222; Kahin, *Intervention,* 84-88; Karnow, *Vietnam,* 238; Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams,* 154; Jacobs, *Cold War Mandarin,* 98-99.
[6] Catton, *Diem's Final Failure,* 136-140, 163-183; Elliott, *Vietnamese War,* concise ed., 95-110; Duiker, *Communist Road to Power,* 192-194.
[7] Elliott, *Vietnamese War,* concise ed., 67-69; Race, *War Comes to Long An,* 39-41.
[8] Duiker has gone so far suggest that the campaign was the first step in the escalation of the Vietnam War. See Duiker, *Communist Road to Power,* 196.

some communist cadres into engaging in armed revolt in defiance of party directives.[9] A number of scholars claim that anticommunist persecutions convinced southern cadres that they needed to switch to armed struggle and that the southerners eventually pressured Hanoi into adopting a policy of violent revolution,[10] but other researchers attribute the party's shift in strategy to other causes.[11] Regardless, Ngô Đình Diệm's oppressive measures contributed significantly to the popularity of the southern insurgency.

Another continuity was the persistence of anticommunist nationalism from the First Republic to the post-Diệm years. Anticommunist nationalism was the rallying cry not only for Ngô Đình Diệm but also his opponents and subsequent governments. In April 1960, opposition leaders gathered at the Caravelle Hotel in downtown Saigon and drafted a document that openly criticized the government. The Caravelle Manifesto, as it became known, attacked Ngô Đình Diệm by comparing his authoritarian government to a communist regime.[12] Three years later, a cabal of generals overthrew Ngô Đình Diệm on 1 November 1963. The new military government firmly espoused anticommunism and justified the coup by pointing to Ngô Đình Diệm's failure to adequately fight the communists. Their official statement explained that "the [RVN] Government's mission is to lead the entire people in the task of fighting Communism, saving the nation, safeguarding freedom and security, and bringing happiness to the people," but "the Government of former President Ngô Đình Diệm has been incapable of that mission and has betrayed the most sacred interests of the people."[13] Thus, the failure to effectively wage war against Vietnamese communists was the justification for the ouster of a national leader. After 1963, anticommunism remained the foundation of Republican nationalism for the rest of the RVN's existence. In 1968, in response to the Tet Offensive, President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu accused the communists of treacherously violating the ceasefire. According to the president, the communists had proposed a week-long truce, and the RVN and the US agreed to a short ceasefire of only 48 hours, but the communists mounted a general offense in direct violation of the agreement. "This incident demonstrates once again that their [the communists'] plan for a general uprising during Tết [the Lunar New Year] was premeditated and the suggestion of a seven-day truce was a deceitful, unscrupulous Communist method," Nguyễn Văn Thiệu charged.[14] The accusation represented yet another variation on the theme of communist treachery.

---

[9] Elliott, *Vietnamese War,* concise ed., 118-120; Kahin, *Intervention,* 105-109; Duiker, *Communist Road to Power,* 197-198, 205-206.

[10] Duiker, *Communist Road to Power,* 200-2; Kahin, *Intervention,* 109-121.

[11] Thayer, *War By Other Means,* 145-155, 169-177, 180-189, 191-196; Lien-Hang Thi Nguyen, *Hanoi's War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 42-68.

[12] One section of the Caravelle Manifesto read, "A constitution has been established in form only; a National Assembly exists whose deliberations always fall into line with the government; antidemocratic elections – all those are methods and 'comedies' copied from the dictatorial Communist regimes." See Trần Văn Văn, et. al., "Manifesto of the Eighteen," appendix 2 in *The Two Viet-Nams,* by Bernard Fall, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 435-441, citation on 436-437.

[13] Dương Văn Minh, "Destitution of President Ngo-Dinh-Diem and Dissolution of His Government," in *Policy of the Military Revolutionary Council and the Provisional Government of the Republic of Vietnam,* by the Ministry of Information (Saigon: Ministry of Information, 1963), 5.

[14] "Điều này một lần nữa, chứng tỏ rằng kế hoạch gọi là tổng tấn công của chúng trong dịp Tết đã được sắp đặt từ lâu và đề nghị hưu chiến dài 7 ngày là một thủ đoạn gian manh của Cộng sản": Nguyễn Văn Thiệu, "Hiệu triệu của Tổng thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa, 31-01-1958," in *Con đường sáng: Dân chủ, hòa bình, tiến bộ* ([Saigon?]: [1968?]), 93-94, citation on 93.

In other ways, the RVN represented major discontinuities in Vietnamese history. Significant political changes punctuated the transition from the State of Vietnam to the Republic of Vietnam, including the end of the traditional monarchy, the decline of coalition politics, and unprecedented hostility between anticommunists. During the previous decade, anticommunist nationalism encompassed a broad array of groups and individuals. Rivalries divided them, but they actively built coalitions and did not engage in systematic warfare against each other. After 1954, Ngô Đình Diệm chose a deliberately narrow political style of anticommunist politics that avoided the instability inherent in coalition-building. He shunted aside well-known anticommunist nationalists and filled his administration with loyal followers. His war against the sects, the Đại Việt, and VNQDĐ sparked a brief civil war that recalled the schism between the Việt Minh and the same groups. These changes were by no means as radical as the construction of socialism in North Vietnam, but they did amount to the dismantling of the SVN's political order and the decline of a more inclusive style of politics.

The weakening of sectarian power also meant the eclipse of several important strains of southern anticommunist nationalism. Although the Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo became politically active again after the First Republic, they never regained the power that they had enjoyed during the resistance. Antifeudal propaganda appears to have dealt a severe blow to their prestige. Nguyễn Long Thành Nam, a former Hòa Hảo member of the United Front, later complained that newspapers in Saigon smeared the reputation of the front by linking it to casinos, prostitution, and robbery.[15] The antifeudal campaign also created an atmosphere that was hostile to public expressions of sectarian anticommunism and nationalism. But even after the First Republic, there was no outpouring of memoirs, monographs, or novels about the communist betrayal of the sects. That the badly defeated Bình Xuyên left few publications is hardly surprising, but why did the much larger Hòa Hảo and Cao Đài produce so little writing about their experiences with the Việt Minh? The reason is unclear. By the mid-1960s, perhaps new memories of Ngô Đình Diệm's persecution crowded out older stories about the resistance, and anxieties concerning the NLF trumped fears of the Việt Minh. Whatever the case, the paucity of writing on sectarian anticommunism ensured that southern experiences of the resistance never became a shared historical memory to the same degree as the northern narrative.

Contestations over Vietnamese nationalism persisted after the Vietnam War. The Republic collapsed in 1975, but diasporic Vietnamese maintained the tradition of anticommunist nationalism overseas. They established Vietnamese-language publishing houses and reissued major anticommunist works, including *Writing History with Personal Sentiments* and *A Hundred Flowers Bloom on Northern Soil*, the literary anthology from the Nhân văn – Giai phẩm Affair. The memory of the resistance remains particularly potent among overseas Vietnamese. The divergence between communists and noncommunists during the late colonial period and the violence of 1945-1946 featured prominently in historical accounts of the resistance written abroad.[16] Unlicensed videotapes of *We Want To Live* was popular among diasporic Vietnamese, and, in 2002, director Vĩnh Noãn officially released the movie on DVD.[17] The DVD is rumored to circulate clandestinely in Vietnam, where anticommunist materials are prohibited. Diasporic

[15] Nguyễn Long Thành Nam, *PGHH trong dòng lịch sử dân tộc,* 561.
[16] Lữ Giang, *Những bí ẩn lịch sử đàng sau cuộc chiến Việt Nam* (Garden Grove, Calif.: privately published, 1999), 332-385; Lê Xuân Khoa, *Việt Nam, 1945-1995,* vol. 1 (Bethesda, Md.: Tiên Rồng, 2004), 33-74.
[17] "Đài 'Tiếng Nói VN Hải Ngoại' Phỏng Vấn Đạo Diễn Vĩnh Noãn: Ra Sách, Dvd Phim 'Chúng Tôi Muốn Sống' Sau 50 Năm," Việt Báo online (18 Dec 2002), accessed 17 July 2011, http://www.vietbao.com/D_1-2_2-282_4-43782/.

Vietnamese have also added new narratives to the existing tales of the betrayal and escape. Ham Tran's *Vượt Sống (Journey from the Fall,* 2006), one of the most prominent diasporic movies, examines the experience of the boat people and communist reeducation camps after the war. The postwar government imprisoned Republican military officers, civilian officials, and others perceived to be politically unreliable and aimed to "reeducate" them to become socialist citizens.[18] In many ways, *Journey from the Fall* echoed the themes of *We Want to Live.* When the communist commandant of the reeducation camp accuses Long, a prisoner and former military officer, of betraying the Vietnamese nation, Long responds, "I fought for the freedom of my country."[19] The scene recalls Vinh's confrontation with the presiding cadre at the land reform trial in *We Want to Live.* Like Vinh, Long argues that he fought in the name freedom and nationalism and remains defiant in the face of unjust communist punishment.

The ongoing contestations provide an alternative framework for understanding Vietnamese nationalism. They highlight the factionalism and fragmentation that is often lost in conventional narratives of unified resistance against foreigners. Because the origins of Vietnamese nationalism were anticolonial, historians have focused on its emancipatory aspects, especially the goals of national liberation and overcoming traditionalism. But the history of internal schisms indicates that scholars should also be attuned to the aggressive character of Vietnamese nationalism, both between rival factions and towards the general population. Ruling and revolutionary elites on multiple sides have attempted to impose their brand of nationalism on all Vietnamese. In this sense, the central narrative of modern Vietnamese history is as much about the process of anticolonial liberation as about the attempts by competing groups to force national unity upon a politically heterogeneous society.

The analysis of anticommunist nationalism provides context for better understanding the American involvement in the Vietnam War. The above findings suggest that the war originated during the resistance as an internal Vietnamese struggle, not as a conflict between Americans and Vietnamese. The Americans transformed the existing conflict by arming the weaker side. In 1950, midway through the First Indochina War, the Americans began funding the French, who reallocated some of its funds to the sects. By the time of partition, it was clear that the French, the SVN, and allied Vietnamese anticommunists controlled a smaller portion of the population than the communists, and only foreign support enabled Ngô Đình Diệm to remain in power. (It should also be noted that the Việt Minh and the DRV also relied significantly on Soviet and PRC assistance.) Equally important was that American officials picked winners and losers among anticommunists. In the fall of 1954, one of the main reasons why Nguyễn Văn Hinh did not carry out his threat to overthrow Ngô Đình Diệm was because the general knew that the premier enjoyed American backing. Later, Washington nearly replaced Ngô Đình Diệm with Phan Huy

[18] There is barely been any scholarship on communist reeducation in Vietnam. Instead, most accounts are memoirs or scholarly studies of the literature about reeducation camp. The following includes the most prominent English language accounts: Huỳnh Sanh Thông, ed. and trans., *To Be Made Over: Tales of Socialist Reeducation in Vietnam* (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1988); Jade Ngọc Quang Huỳnh, *South Wind Changing* (St. Paul: Graywolf Press, 1994); Trần Tri Vũ, *Lost Years: My 1632 Days in Vietnamese Reeducation Camp* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1988); Lê Hữu Tri, *Prisoner of the Word: A Memoir of the Vietnamese Reeducation Camps* (Seattle: Black Heron Press, 2001); Edward P. Metzner, et. al., *Reeducation in Postwar Vietnam: Personal Postscripts to Peace* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2001); Đoàn Văn Toại and David Chanoff, *The Vietnamese Gulag* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986).

[19] In the original Vietnamese, Long states, "Tôi chỉ có chiến đấu bảo vệ tự do cho Việt Nam thôi." See Hàm Trần, *Vượt sống* [Journey from the fall] (ImaginAsian Pictures, 2006), DVD.

Quát during the Battle of Saigon but reversed the decision after the premier triumphed over the Bình Xuyên. The American decision not to interfere on his behalf precipitated the coup in 1963.

The study of the Vietnam War requires a new approach that incorporates internal Vietnamese conflicts without denying the importance of the international dimension. A useful way of conceptualizing the war is the intersection of three conflicts. The first conflict is the *international* Cold War, including the American attempt to contain communism and Chinese and Soviet support for foreign communists. International allies were critical to the war effort in both North and South Vietnam, and it was the Cold War that drew the Americans and Soviets into the Vietnamese struggle. The second level is the *Vietnamese* conflict between communists and anticommunists. This study has focused exclusively on the RVN, but the competition between the three Vietnamese belligerents formed the core of the Vietnamese war. The competitive relationship between Hanoi and Saigon is discussed below. The third conflict is what might be called the *factional* conflict, that is, disagreements within each of the main belligerents. The split within the DRV's leadership in the late 1950s is a primary example. While one faction wanted to focus on socialist development in the North, the other argued that the DRV's resources should be funneled into the liberation of the South. The victory of the latter faction set North Vietnam on the path to full-scale war.[20] These three levels of conflict converged in myriad ways. State nationalism in the RVN operated primarily in response to the Vietnamese conflict but also reflected the influence of Cold War alliances and factional struggles between Ngô Đình Diệm and his rivals.

Sibling Rivalries

One of the defining characteristics of contested nationalism is the tension between identity and difference. On the one hand, the governments in Hanoi and Saigon tried to draw stark differences between the two regimes in order to claim nationalist legitimacy. On the other hand, a common heritage and international context led to similar developments in the sibling states. Leaders on either side made identical accusations against each other, and they contested the same historical legacy. Relations between them were also dialogical, as both responded to the other's actions with criticism.[21] Thus, the relationship between communist and anticommunist nationalism in Vietnam was simultaneously antagonistic, congruent, and mutually constitutive.

Nationalists in the two Vietnams employed similar political epithets to describe the enemy regime. The North Vietnamese charged that the RVN was a colony of the "American empire" *(đế quốc Mỹ)* [22] and derided the Republic as the "American-Diệm regime" *(chế độ Mỹ-Diệm)* and the "American-Puppet regime" *(chế độ Mỹ ngụy).*[23] Likewise, anticommunists fretted

---

[20] Nguyen, *Hanoi's War,* 41-47.

[21] For example, see the accusations and refutations surrounding the alleged mass murder at Phú Lợi prison: *Mối thù Phú Lợi* (Hanoi: Văn học, 1959); Central Committee of Protest Struggle Against the Mass Murder at Phu Loi, *The Phu Loi Massacre in South Vietnam* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959); *Sự thật về vụ Phú Lợi* (Saigon: Văn Hữu Á Châu, 1960). For an overview of the Phú Lợi incident, see Thayer, *War By Other Means,* 183-184.

[22] For examples of the "American empire," see Nam Mộc, *Nâng cao cảnh giác, củng cố hòa bình, chặn tay đế quốc Mỹ và tay sai* (Hanoi: Sự Thật, 1955); Trần Văn Giàu, *Miền Nam giữ vững thành đồng: Lược sử đồng bào miền Nam đấu tranh chống Mỹ và tay sai* (Hanoi: Khoa Học, 1964); *Chống âm mưu bắt ép dụ dỗ di dân của đế quốc Mỹ và bè lũ Ngô Đình Diệm* (Hải Phòng: Tuy Tuyên truyền Hải Phòng, 1955); C.B. and Đ.X., *Đế quốc Mỹ đáng ghê tởm, đáng căm thù, không đáng sợ* (Hanoi: Sự Thật, 1955); Trường Sơn, *Vì sao quân dân miền Nam thắng lớn, Mỹ và ngụy thua to trong mùa khô 1965-1966* (Hanoi: Quân đội Nhân dân, 1966).

[23] Scigliano, *South Vietnam,* 158, 206. For examples of *Mỹ Diệm* and *Mỹ ngụy,* see Phạm Đình Tân, *Đập tan luận điệu gian trá của Mỹ-Diệm* (Hanoi: Sự Thật, 1955); Đinh Gia Trinh, *Hiến pháp Mỹ-Diệm: Một công cụ nô dịch*

over the "communist empire" and labeled the leaders of the DRV "puppets" *(ngụy)* and "lackeys" *(tay sai)*. The sibling regimes resembled each other in the enforcement of political orthodoxy, as neither government allowed publications sympathetic to the other side to circulate freely. For example, Republican censorship guidelines strictly prohibited any account of the resistance that was favorable to the communists.[24]

History was another area of contestation. Virtually all nationalists appealed to what they considered Vietnam's historical resistance against foreign aggression. Ngô Đình Diệm called upon the Vietnamese to fight foreign communism and compared the PRC's domination of North Vietnam to the millennium of Chinese rule during the premodern period. Likewise, authorities in the North rallied the population to fight against the Americans by linking American neocolonialism to French colonialism and to various episodes of Chinese aggression in the premodern period.[25] A particularly striking example of academic parallelism was the publication of *The Ancient Capital of Huế* in Saigon and *Lịch sử thủ đô Hà Nội (The History of the Capital of Hanoi)* in Hanoi in the same year.[26] In the introduction to *The Ancient Capital of Huế,* Bao La Cư Sĩ implied that the defining theme in Vietnamese history was a southward evolution towards the RVN. In contrast, historians in the DRV emphasized the antiquity and continuity of northern state power. *The History of the Capital of Hanoi* declared that Hanoi had continuously served as Vietnam's political, economic, and cultural center for almost a millennium.[27] Not surprisingly, the volume dismissed Huế as a brief, insignificant interlude that did not alter Hanoi's primacy.[28]

The most famous historical debate between the two Vietnams centered on the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when two distinct Vietnamese kingdoms in the north and the south merged to become a single polity – circumstances that seemed to foreshadow the partition of the mid-20th century.[29] Specifically, communist and anticommunist historians disagreed on which historical leader reunified Vietnam. In the DRV, historians argued that Nguyễn Huệ, one of the leaders of the Tây Sơn uprising (1771-1802), reunified the country by defeating the two kingdoms.[30] Although Nguyễn Huệ was not a northerner by birth, his military victories in the north, his brief tenure as the region's overlord under the title of Bắc Bình Vương (Northern Pacification King), and his favorable portrayal by northern literati in the early modern period all associated him with northern Vietnam.[31] In contrast, historians in the RVN had a less favorable view of the Tây Sơn uprising. Nguyễn Phương, the most vocal Republican participant in the

---

nhân dân miền Nam (Hanoi: Sự Thật, 1959); *Năm 1966: Quân và dân miền Nam thắng lớn, Mỹ ngụy thua to* (Hanoi: Quân đội nhân dân, 1967).

[24] "Những nguyên tắc kiểm duyệt," c. 1961, file 17475, ĐICH.

[25] These various episodes included the uprising of the Trưng sisters against the Han Chinese, the Trần wars against the Mongol invasions in the 13th dynasty, and Lê Lợi's overthrow of the Ming occupation in the early 15th century. See Pelley, *Postcolonial Vietnam,* 179-189.

[26] Trần Huy Liệu, et. al., *Lịch sử thủ đô Hà Nội* (Hanoi: Sử Học, 1960). For a discussion of the volume, see Pelley, *Postcolonial Vietnam,* 210-233.

[27] Trần Huy Liệu, et. al., *Lịch sử thủ đô Hà Nội,* 6-8.

[28] Trần Huy Liệu, et. al., *Lịch sử thủ đô Hà Nội,* 8.

[29] For an overview of the debate, see Wynn Wilcox, "Allegories of the US-Vietnam War: Nguyễn Ánh, Nguyễn Huệ, and the 'Unification Debates," *Crossroads* 17, no. 1 (2003): 129-160; George Dutton, "The Tây Sơn Uprising: Society and Rebellion in the Late Eighteenth-Century Việt Nam, 1771-1902" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2001), 75-96.

[30] Dutton, "The Tây Sơn Uprising," 75-83.

[31] For a more detailed treatment of Nguyễn Huệ's exploits in northern Vietnam, see George Dutton, *The Tây Sơn Uprising: Society and Rebellion in Eighteenth Century Vietnam* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 46-50. For the treatment of Nguyễn Huệ and the Tây Sơn uprising by northern literati, see Dutton, "The Tây Sơn Uprising," 38-50, 55-59. The translation of Bắc Bình Vương is Dutton's. See Dutton, *The Tây Sơn Uprising,* 47.

debate, responded to the northern historians by arguing that it was not Nguyễn Huệ but Nguyễn Ánh, the first emperor of the Nguyễn dynasty, who had reunified the country.[32] As the counterpart to Nguyễn Huệ, Nguyễn Ánh was firmly associated with the south. He was a descendant of the seigniorial family that had ruled the southern kingdom, and he established a base in what is now southern Vietnam during the war against the Tây Sơn, whom he eventually defeated. In essence, these "unification debates," as Wynn Wilcox so aptly describes them, were a proxy debate over whether the northern DRV or southern RVN should unite partitioned Vietnam.[33]

Yet in other ways, the DRV and RVN were more alike than different. A sense of Vietnamese cultural superiority animated research under both regimes. Vietnamese scholars in both zones of the country displaced French colonial researchers and cast non-Vietnamese ethnic groups as the objects of inquiry. In the RVN, Nghiêm Thẩm dismissed the achievements of colonial expeditions to Krayo, praised his own research on the royal Cham artifacts as the most complete, and never considered that the Chams or ethnic highlanders could also occupy the role of the researcher. Similarly, North Vietnamese anthropologists discarded the colonial system of classifying ethnic minorities, but they replaced it with schemas that privileged the normative status of Vietnamese culture. Using the new classification system, scholars in the DRV evaluated the civilizational level of each non-Vietnamese group based on its similarity or difference to ethnic Vietnamese.[34]

The shared experiences of precolonial history, French imperialism, decolonization, and colonial-era nationalism appear to explain the seeming convergence between the two regimes. The recentness of colonialism and the availability of the same anticolonial vocabulary encouraged Vietnamese nationalists to frame political illegitimacy and foreign influence in terms of colonialism. Indeed, the charge of "lackey" was one of the most politically damaging accusations in a decolonizing society. The sibling states also inherited a common intellectual tradition of Vietnamese nationalism from the colonial period. Between the two world wars, intellectuals such as the historian Trần Trọng Kim found that the main theme of Vietnamese history was the endurance of Vietnam's cultural distinctiveness and political sovereignty in the face of foreign (usually Chinese) aggression.[35] In the 1950s, nationalists of all stripes drew upon this interpretation of Vietnamese nationalism to justify their own struggles.[36] Disdain towards non-Vietnamese groups appears to have older, precolonial roots. Ming Mạng, the second emperor of the Nguyễn dynasty, instituted assimilationist policies that aimed to Vietnamize the Khmer population and a tributary system that cast other Southeast Asian kingdoms and ethnic groups as vassals and even barbarians.[37]

---

[32] Nguyễn Phương, "Ai đã thống nhất Việt Nam: Nguyễn Huệ hay Nguyễn Ánh?" *Bách khoa* 148 (1 Mar 1963): 19-30; Nguyễn Phương, "Ai đã thống nhất Việt Nam: Nguyễn Huệ hay Nguyễn Ánh?" *Bách khoa* 149 (15 Mar 1963): 19-26.

[33] Wilcox, "Allegories of the US-Vietnam War," 136.

[34] Pelley, *Postcolonial Vietnam*, 90-91.

[35] Trần Trọng Kim, *Việt Nam sử lược.* For an overview of historical publications from the colonial period, see Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, 261-264.

[36] It is necessary to point out that mid-century scholars did not always recognize their debt to colonial-era Vietnamese scholars. In particular, scholars in the DRV viciously criticized Trần Trọng Kim's and Phạm Quỳnh's works. See Pelley, *Postcolonial Vietnam*, 32-40.

[37] Choi Byung Wook, *Southern Vietnam under the Reign of Minh Mang, 1820-1841: Central Policies and Local Response* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 2004), 101-160; Alexander Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model: A Comparative Study of Vietnamese and Chinese Civil Government in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), 234-261.

Another commonality was the Cold War. Foreign policy in both Vietnams aimed to strengthen relations with politically similar countries and to win foreign assistance, though the search for allies diverged according to Cold War divisions. Throughout the late 1950s, the DRV cultivated relations with Eastern Europe and North Korea in addition to its existing ties with the Soviet Union and the PRC. It also made inroads with neutralist countries, including India and Burma.[38] Meanwhile, the RVN's strongest ties were with the US, the so-called Free World, and its Asian neighbors. Ngô Đình Diệm visited the US, Thailand, Australia, South Korea, India, and the Philippines during his tenure.[39] The RVN also welcomed delegations from neutralist and anticommunist Asian countries and organized cultural events open to anticommunist and non-aligned states.

At a more abstract level, the international conflict placed the two Vietnams into distinct intellectual currents. In North Vietnam, intellectuals engaged with ideas from the communist world, especially the Soviet Union. Haydon Cherry argues persuasively that scholars in the DRV applied Soviet archaeological theory and techniques to raise the level of professionalism in North Vietnamese archaeology.[40] In *Postcolonial Vietnam*, Patricia Pelley demonstrates that North Vietnamese historians adopted Stalin's five-stage model of history to find that the origins of Vietnamese history predated the first Chinese dynasty.[41] North Vietnamese scholars traveled to other communist countries, established institutional relations with Soviet and Chinese research units, and translated works by foreign communist intellectuals.[42] The government also imported Soviet and Chinese books and sent numerous university professors for training in the USSR and the PRC.[43] Similarly, intellectuals in the RVN interacted with the Free World and, to a lesser extent, non-aligned countries. Republican universities invited visiting scholars, such as Swedish archaeologist Olov Jansé and American philosopher Francis Raymond Iredell, to conduct research in Vietnam and offer courses at local universities.[44] In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Summer Institute of Linguistics of the University of North Dakota established a branch in Vietnam. Linguists dispersed throughout the country to study minority languages in the central highlands, offered English courses to students and civil servants, published in Republican journals, and attended in-country conferences.[45] Vietnamese intellectuals also translated foreign

[38] For a succinct discussion of the DRV's foreign policy, see Thayer, *War By Other Means*, 163-1179.
[39] Thayer, *War By Other Means*, 163.
[40] Haydon Cherry, "Digging Up the Past," 109-118.
[41] Pelley, *Postcolonial Vietnam*, 46-66.
[42] Pelley, *Postcolonial Vietnam*, 61-63, 57-58, 62 86-88.
[43] Ninh, *A World Transformed*, 111, 178, 216.
[44] For Olov Jansé's activities in the RVN, see Nghiêm Thẩm, "Nguồn gốc văn minh Việt Nam (theo giả thuyết của giáo sư Olov RT Jansé)," *Văn hóa nguyệt san* 51 (Jun 1960): 513-520; Nghiêm Thẩm, "Nguồn gốc văn minh Việt Nam (theo giả thuyết của giáo sư Olov RT Jansé)," *Văn hóa nguyệt san* 52 (Jul 1960): 683-691; Olov Jansé, "Nguồn gốc văn minh Việt Nam," translated by Cao Hữu Hoành, *Đại học* 12 (Nov 1959): 3-12; Olov Jansé, "Nguồn gốc văn minh Việt Nam," translated by Cao Hữu Hoành, *Đại học* 14 (Mar 1960): 57-70. The exact date of the invitation is unclear, but Jansé was clearly in Vietnam by 1959. Francis Raymond Iredell became the director of the Vietnamese-American Association, a subsidiary of the United States Information Agency. In Saigon, he lectured and published on Buddhism and became an honorary member of the Vietnamese Association for Confucian Studies. See F. Raymond Iredell, "So sánh quan điểm về chữ 'Ngã' trong triết học Phật giáo và Tây phương," *Văn hóa nguyệt san* 79 (Mar 1963): 334-342; Donald C. Williams, "Francis Raymond Iredell, 1894-1972," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 45 (1972): 215-216.
[45] For more on the activities of the Summer Institute of Linguistics and its affiliated researchers, see the director of the [Summer] Institute of Linguistics to Ngô Đình Diệm on the activities of the institute in 1961, 30 Dec 1961, file 17532, ĐICH; David Thomas, acting director of the Vietnamese branch of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, University of North Dakota, to Ngô Đình Diệm on the activities of the institute in 1962, 27 Dec 1962, file 17766,

anticommunist works, and propagandists drew freely from American modernization theory and development theory.

In brief, the two regimes actually resembled each other in their appropriation of a shared Vietnamese heritage and of foreign ideas from allied countries. While the content of their claims differed, the common condition of partition and the Cold War similarly shaped the political and intellectual impulses within their respective nationalisms.

Partitioned Vietnam in the Comparative Perspective

The case of divided Vietnam invites comparisons with other countries that were partitioned during the Cold War. Germany, Korea, and China met similar fates, though the partition of each country reflected local circumstances. In Germany and Korea, the boundary was based on the position of foreign troops at the conclusion of WWII and the Korean War, respectively. In contrast, the flight of Chinese nationalists to Taiwan resulted from a much longer struggle between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the anticommunist Guomindang (GMD). Both external pressures and internal conflicts shaped the process of partition in Vietnam. The negotiations at Geneva included not just France and the Việt Minh but also major Cold War powers, including the Soviet Union, the PRC, the US, and the United Kingdom.[46] The determination of Ngô Đình Diệm and other anticommunists to resist incorporation into the DRV, even through peaceful elections, turned the temporary division into an indefinite partition. Their deeply held conviction grew out of divisions within Vietnamese nationalism that predated the Geneva Agreement.

If the path to partition varied, contestations over nationalist legitimacy were remarkably consistent. The competition in Vietnam, Korea, and China shared a number of similar features: communist denunciations of American imperialism, anticommunist accusations that communism was a foreign ideology, and attempts by all sides to claim the legacy of the anti-imperial movement. According to Weiqun Gu's *Conflicts of Divided Nations*, a study of competitive relations in Korea and China, both the governments of the PRC and Taiwan considered themselves to be the exclusive heir to Sun Yat-Sen's nationalist movement and accused its sibling state of treachery and factionalism.[47] The PRC claimed that communist forces did most of the fighting against the Japanese during WWII and that the GMD's policy prioritized attacking communist Chinese troops over fighting the Japanese.[48] The CCP further complained that American imperialism was eroding Taiwan's traditional Chinese culture.[49] Taiwan countered that it was the GMD's forces that had done most of the fighting against the Japanese because the communists had been too busy battling the GMD.[50] Anticommunists also faulted the PRC for

---

ĐICH; "Bibliography of published articles by members of the Vietnam Branch of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, University of North Dakota, 1958-1961," 30 Dec 1961, file 17532, ĐICH; David Thomas, "Thế nào là một 'Tiếng' [Word] trong Việt ngữ," *Văn hóa nguyệt san* 72 (Jul-Aug 1962): 773-778; Harvey M. Taylor, "A phonetic description of the tones of the Hue dialect of Vietnamese," *Văn hóa nguyệt san* 74 (Oct 1962): 1175-1180; Henri F. Blood, "Hệ thống mẫu âm trong ngôn ngữ Mnong Rơlơn," *Văn hóa nguyệt san* 82 (Jun 1963): 951-964. Henri Blood's article is in English, despite the Vietnamese title.

[46] Laos and Cambodia also participated, but the negotiations regarding their status were separate from the negotiation concerning the cease fire in Vietnam.

[47] Weiqun Gu, *Conflicts of Divided Nations: The Cases of China and Korea* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995), 66-67, 69.

[48] Gu, *Conflicts of Divided Nations,* 67.

[49] Gu, *Conflicts of Divided Nations,* 67.

[50] Gu, *Conflicts of Divided Nations,* 69-70.

espousing an alien ideology that was incompatible with Chinese culture.[51] A similar situation unfolded in Korea. After 1950, North Korean leaders argued that the communists had led the resistance against Japanese imperialism and dismissed South Korea as a puppet of American imperialism.[52] In response, South Korea accused North Korea of being a Soviet puppet, claimed that its own government was composed of independence fighters, and complained that North Korea was destroying traditional Korean culture with its foreign ideology.[53] These accusations and counteraccusations resembled the situation in divided Vietnam, in which the contestations centered on the legacy of the anticolonial resistance, Vietnamese culture, and alleged foreign domination. The obvious parallels demonstrate the need for more comparative studies of partitioned countries in Asia.

The Cold War also shaped relations between the divided Asian nations. Each regime forged bonds with politically sympathetic neighbors but rejected its ethnically identical sibling state. Scholars have long recognized the close relations within the communist camp.[54] Prior to the Cold War, many Korean communists, including Kim Il Sung, the future leader of North Korea, joined the CCP in the 1920s and 1930s.[55] Hồ Chí Minh's ties with Moscow were stronger than his connection to the CCP, but he did spend a significant part of his revolutionary career in China. He worked for the Chinese office of a Soviet news agency in the mid-1920s and founded the first communist Vietnamese organization in southern China. In the late 1930s, he also served briefly in the CCP's Eighth Route Army.[56] After 1949, the PRC provided assistance to Vietnamese communists in the First Indochina War and to Korean communists in the Korean War.

Less is known about relations between the RVN, South Korea, and Taiwan. The anticommunist states cooperated in the establishment of the Asian People's Anticommunist League, engaged in frequent cultural exchanges, and expressed a shared commitment to protecting their homelands against the incursion of the PRC. The partnership between Vietnamese and Chinese anticommunists actually dated back to Vietnam's colonial period. Some of the founders of the VNQDĐ considered themselves to be students of Sun Yat-Sen's nationalist principles,[57] and the name of the party, Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng, clearly echoed that of the Guomindang (Vietnamese: *Quốc Dân Đảng*). After the VNQDĐ's failed uprising in 1930, surviving remnants of the party fled to Yunnan to escape French persecution, and they found protection under the wings of the GMD.[58] At the end of WWII, when the GMD entered northern Vietnam to disarm the Japanese, the exile branch of the VNQDĐ returned with them, and the

[51] Gu, *Conflicts of Divided Nations,* 71.
[52] Gu, *Conflicts of Divided Nations,* 153.
[53] Gu, *Conflicts of Divided Nations,* 154-155.
[54] Chong-Sik Lee, "Korean Communists and Yenan," *China Quarterly* 9 (Jan 1962): 182-192; Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Chen Jian, "China and the First Indo-China War, 1950-1954"; Chen Jian, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969," *China Quarterly* 142 (Jun 1995): 356-387; Ang Cheng Guan, *Vietnamese Communists' Relations With China and the Second Indochina Conflict, 1956-1962* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1997); Kosal Path, "Hà Nội's Responses to Beijing's Renewed Enthusiasm to Aid North Vietnam, 1970-1972," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 6, no. 3 (fall 2011): 101-139; Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975.*
[55] Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War,* 106.
[56] Pierre Brocheux, *Ho Chi Minh: A Biography*, trans. Claire Duiker (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 65-68.
[57] Huỳnh Kim Khánh, *Vietnamese Communism,* 92-93.
[58] For more on the activities of the VNQDĐ in exile, see Hoàng Văn Đào, *Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng: Lịch sử tranh đấu cận đại, 1927-1954*, 2nd ed., (Saigon: 1970), 169-214.

GMD pressured the Việt Minh to include the VNQDĐ in the short-lived coalition government.[59] Thus, anticommunist internationalism in Asia actually predated the partition of Vietnam and China. The alliances examined above indicate that relations between the anticommunist states deserve scholarly attention just as much as the connection between the communist states.

A different dynamic characterized nationalism in partitioned Germany. Instead of imperialism and the anticolonial resistance, German contestations focused on the legacy of Nazism and the antifascist struggle. The official ideology of communist East Germany cast itself as the leader of the antifascist struggle during WWII but accused noncommunist West Germany of being a neofascist state and an embodiment of American imperialism.[60] But West Germans considered East Germany to be the inheritor of Nazi totalitarianism and perceived themselves as manifesting progressive, democratic values.[61] In essence, both sides split the heritage of German history into "good" progressive elements identified with the self and "bad" totalitarian tendencies embodied by the other regime.[62] Yet unlike the Asian nations, the two Germanys recognized the other's sovereignty in 1972 and peacefully reunited in 1989, a stark contrast Vietnam's violent reunification in 1975 and the enduring partition in China and Korea.

Nonetheless, what is striking is the persistence of divisions. In Roland Bleiker's *Divided Korea*, he draws a fascinating comparison between North Korean defectors in South Korea and East Germans in reunified Germany. Bleiker argues that both groups experience difficulty adjusting to the new environment not because of ideological differences but due to distinct patterns of behavior and identity.[63] According to Bleiker, North Korean defectors grew up in a highly-regulated totalitarian society and struggle to adapt to the competitive individualism of South Korea's free market system.[64] Similarly, East Germans experience higher rates of psychological stress than West Germans in post-unification Germany.[65] Although the former do not identify politically with the East German regime, studies demonstrate that they tend to value collectivity, solidarity, and equality compared to West Germans, who prioritize freedom and individualism.[66] Bleiker's comparison examines two populations living under relatively benign conditions, especially the East Germans after a non-violent reunification. North Korean defectors may have experienced a harrowing journey from their home state, but they nonetheless chose to come to South Korea. In contrast, anticommunists in the RVN experienced postwar communist rule as the violent imposition of an enemy government. If differences have persisted even under more relaxed conditions, then it would suggest that harsher circumstances would cause divisions to be more profound, sustained, and polarized.

It is ironic that the divisions created or intensified by the Cold War have actually outlasted the global struggle. In the Vietnamese case, the explanation for this conundrum lies in the internal history of contestations that coincides with but cannot be subsumed within the international conflict. Instead, accounts such as *Journey from the Fall* points to the failure of the

---

[59] Duiker, *Communist Road to Power,* 115-116.
[60] Joe Cleary, *Literature, Partition, and the Nation State: Culture and Conflict in Ireland, Israel, and Palestine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 61-62.
[61] Cleary, *Literature, Partition, and the Nation State,* 62.
[62] Alison Lewis, "Unity Begins Together: Analyzing the Trauma of German Unification," in "Germany: East, West, and the Other," special issue, *New German Critique* 64 (winter 1995): 135-159.
[63] Roland Bleiker, *Divided Korea: Toward a Culture of Reconciliation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 26-28, 30-31.
[64] Bleiker, *Divided Korea,* 25, 28.
[65] Bleiker, *Divided Korea,* 30.
[66] Bleiker, *Divided Korea,* 30-31.

postwar government to incorporate its former enemies, similar to the failure of the Việt Minh government to accept noncommunist allies during the resistance and Ngô Đình Diệm's refusal to incorporate his enemies after the First Indochina War. This pattern of persecution and political exclusion helps explain why many Vietnamese continue to interpret their historical and collective identities in politically antagonistic terms.

Bibliography

Archival Collections

Trung Tâm Lưu Trữ Quốc Gia II, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam [National Archives Center II, TTLTQGII]

Phong Bộ Văn hóa Giáo dục và Thanh niên [Ministry of Culture, Education, and Youth Collections, VHGDTN]

Phong Phủ Thủ tướng Việt Nam Cộng Hòa [Office of the Prime Minister Collections, PThTVNCH]

Phong Phủ Tổng thống Đệ Nhất Cộng Hòa [Office of the President Collections for the First Republic, ĐICH]

Published and Informally Published Collections of Primary Sources

Ministry of Information. *Policy of the Military Revolutionary Council and the Provisional Government of the Republic of Vietnam.* Saigon: Ministry of Information, 1963.

Ngô Đình Diệm. *Con đường chính nghĩa* [The path of the righteous cause]. Saigon: Sở Báo chí Thông tin, Phủ Tổng thống, 1956-1963. 8 volumes.

Nguyễn Văn Thiệu. *Con đường sáng: Dân chủ, hòa bình, tiến bộ* [The shining path: Democracy, peace, and progress]. [Saigon?]: [1968?].

Pentagon Papers. National Archives. Accessed 27 Mar 2013. http://www.archives.gov/research/pentagon-papers.

Quang Minh [Bùi Văn Tiếp], ed. Công văn lịch sử [Historical correspondences]. Vol. 2. Accessed 2 Oct 2012. http://www-personal.usyd.edu.au/~cdao/booksv/BuiVanTiep/congvanlichsu-II/congvanlichsu-II.htm.

US Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954.* Vol. 13, no. 2, *Indochina.* Edited John P. Glennon. Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1985.

US Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957.* Vol. 1, *Vietnam.* Edited by John P. Glennon. Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1985.

Western-Language Newspapers and Chronologies

Chronology of International Events
New Age (London)
New York Times
Times of Vietnam Magazine

Vietnamese-Language Periodicals from the RVN

Bách Khoa [Encyclopedic]
Cách mạng Quốc gia [National Revolution]
Chỉ đạo [Guidance]
Đại học [University Journal]
Lẽ sống [Ideals for Living]
Minh tân [Illustrious Renewal]
Nghiên cứu hành chánh [Research on Administration]
Nhân loại [Humanity]
Nội san Quốc hội [Bulletin of the National Assembly]
Sáng dội miền Nam [The Brilliant South]
Sáng tạo [Creation]
Tiếng chuông [Sound of the Bell]
Tin sách [Book News]
Tự do [Freedom]
Văn hóa Á châu [Asian Culture]
Văn hóa Nguyệt san [Cultural Monthly]
Văn hữu [Literary Friends]
Việt Nam Khảo cổ tập san [Journal of Vietnamese Archaeology; officially translated as, Transactions of the Historical Research Institute]
Xây dựng [Constructive]

Western-language Books, Articles, and Theses

Ahern, Thomas, Jr. *The CIA and the House of Ngo: Covert Action in South Vietnam 1954-1963.* Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 2000.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso, 1991.

Anderson, David. *Trapped by Success: The Eisenhower Administration and Vietnam, 1953-61.* New York City: Columbia University Press, 1991.

Ang Cheng Guan. *Vietnamese Communists' Relations With China and the Second Indochina Conflict, 1956-1962.* Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1997.

Appy, Christian. *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam.* Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

Asselin, Pierre. "The Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the 1954 Geneva Conference: A Revisionist Critique." *Cold War History* 11, no. 2 (May 2011): 155-195.

Berman, Larry. *No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger, and Betrayal in Vietnam.* New York: Free Press, 2001.

Blagov, Sergei. *Caodaism: Vietnamese Traditionalism and its Leap into Modernity*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2001.

Blagov, Sergei. *Honest Mistakes: The Life and Death of Trình Minh Thế, 1922-1955: South Vietnam's Alternative Leader*. Huntington, N.Y.: Nova Science Publishers, 2001.

Bleiker, Roland. *Divided Korea: Toward a Culture of Reconciliation.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Bodard, Lucien. *The Quicksand War: Prelude to Vietnam.* Translated by Patrick O'Brian. Boston: Little, Brown, 1967.

Bourdeaux, Pascal. "Approches statistiques de la communauté du bouddhisme Hòa Hảo (1939-1954)." In *Naissance d'un État-Parti: Le Viêt Nam depuis 1945*, edited by Christopher Goscha and Benoit de Tréglodé, 277-304. Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2004.

Bousquet, Gisèle L. *Behind the Bamboo Hedge: The Impact of Homeland Politics in the Parisian Vietnamese Community.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991.

Bradley, Mark Philip. *Vietnam at War.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Brazinsky, Gregg. "Koreanizing Modernization: Modernization Theory and South Korean Intellectuals." In *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War,* edited by David Engerman, et. al., 251-273. Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003.

Brigham, Robert. *ARVN: Life and Death in the South Vietnamese Army.* Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2006.

Brocheux, Pierre. *Ho Chi Minh: A Biography.* Translated by Claire Duiker. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Brook, Timothy, and Andre Schmid, ed. "Introduction: Nation and Identities in Asia." In *Nation Work: Asian Elites and National Identities,* 1-16. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000.

Brosnan, Vivienne. "The International Control Commission for Vietnam: The Diplomatic and Military Context." Master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1975.

Brubaker, Rogers. *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Bukharin, Nikolai, and Yevgeni Preobrazhenski. *The ABC of Communism.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988.

Busch, Peter. *All the Way with JFK?: Britain, the U.S., and the Vietnam War.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Buttinger, Joseph. "The Ethnic Minorities in the Republic of Vietnam." In *Problems of Freedom: South Vietnam Since Independence,* edited by Wesley Fishel, 99-121. New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961.

Buttinger, Joseph. *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled.* Vol. 2, *Vietnam at War.* New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967.

Buttinger, Joseph. *Vietnam: A Political History.* New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968.

Carter, James. *Inventing Vietnam: The United States and State Building, 1954-1968.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Catton, Philip. *Diem's Final Failure.* Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2002.

Central Committee of Protest Struggle Against the Mass Murder at Phu Loi. *The Phu Loi Massacre in South Vietnam.* Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959.

Chapman, Jessica. "Debating the Will of Heaven: South Vietnamese Politics and Nationalism in the International Perspective, 1954-1956." PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2006.

Chapman, Jessica. "The Sect Crisis of 1955 and the American Commitment to Ngô Đình Diệm." *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 5, no. 1 (winter 2010): 37-85.

Chen Jian. "China and the First Indo-China War, 1950-1954," *China Quarterly* 133 (Mar 1993): 85-110.

Chen Jian. "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969," *China Quarterly* 142 (Jun 1995): 356-387.

Chen Jian. *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of Sino-American Confrontation.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

Chen, King. *Vietnam and China, 1938-1954.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

Cherry, Haydon. “Digging Up the Past: Prehistory and the Weight of the Present in Vietnam.” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 4, no. 1 (winter 2009): 84-144.

Choi Byung Wook. *Southern Vietnam under the Reign of Minh Mang, 1820-1841: Central Policies and Local Response.* Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 2004.

Cleary, Joe. *Literature, Partition, and the Nation State: Culture and Conflict in Ireland, Israel, and Palestine.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Couturier, Charles. “Typhons sur la Chine.” *Études* 1 (Jan 1958): 42-57.

Couturier, Charles. “Typhons sur la Chine.” *Études* 2 (Feb 1958): 175-192.

Currey, Cecil. *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American.* Washington: Brassey’s, 1998.

Dai, Poeliu. “Canada’s Role in the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam.” *Canada Year Book of International Law* 4, tome 4 (1966): 161-177.

DeBenedetti, Charles, and Charles Chatfield. *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era.* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990.

Divine, Robert. “Vietnam Reconsidered.” *Diplomatic History* 12: no. 1 (winter 1998): 79-93

Djilas, Milovan. *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System.* New York: Praeger, 1957.

Đoàn Văn Toại and David Chanoff. *The Vietnamese Gulag.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986.

Donnell, John. “Personalism in Vietnam.” In *Problems of Freedom: South Vietnam Since Independence,* edited by Wesley Fishel, 29-67. New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961.

Donnell, John. “Politics in South Vietnam: Doctrines of Authority in Conflict.” PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1964.

Dooley, Thomas. *Deliver Us From Evil: The Story of Viet Nam’s Flight to Freedom.* New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Cudahy, 1956.

Duiker, William J. *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam.* 2nd ed. Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1996.

Duiker, William J. *Ho Chi Minh: A Life*. New York City: Hyperion, 2000.

Duiker, William J. *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976.

Duiker, William J. *Sacred War: Nationalism and Revolution in a Divided Vietnam.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995.

Dutton, George. *The Tây Sơn Uprising: Society and Rebellion in Eighteenth Century Vietnam.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006.

Dutton, George. "The Tây Sơn Uprising: Society and Rebellion in Late Eighteenth-Century Việt Nam, 1771-1902." PhD diss., University of Washington, 2001.

Elliott, David. *The Vietnamese War: Revolution and Social Change in the Mekong Delta, 1930-1975.* 2 vols. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003.

Elliott, David. *The Vietnamese War: Revolution and Social Change in the Mekong Delta, 1930-1975.* Concise ed. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2007.

Elliott, Duong Van Mai. *The Sacred Willow: Four Generations in the Life of a Vietnamese Family.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Ernst, John. *Forging a Fateful Alliance: Michigan State University and the Vietnam War.* East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998.

Fall, Bernard. "The Political-Religious Sects of Viet-Nam." *Pacific Affairs* 28, no. 3 (Sep 1955): 235-253.

Fall, Bernard. *The Two Viet-Nams: A Political and Military Analysis.* 2nd rev. ed. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967.

Fall, Bernard. *The Việt Minh Regime: Government and Administration in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.* Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1956.

Fitzgerald, Frances. *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam.* New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

Foster, John Bellamy. "The Imperialist World System: Paul Baran's *Political Economy of Growth* After Fifty Years." *Monthly Review* 59, no. 1 (May 2007): 1-16.

Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism: New Perspectives on the Past.* Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983.

Gibbs, Jason. "The Music of the State: Vietnam's Quest for a National Anthem." *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 2, no. 2 (summer 2007): 129-174

Giebel, Christoph. *Imagined Ancestries of Vietnamese Communism: Ton Duc Thang and the Politics of History and Memory.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004.

Gilman, Nils. *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

Gonzalez, Valentin, and Julian Gorkin. *El Campesino: Life and Death in Soviet Russia.* Translated by Ilsa Barea. New York: GP Putnam's Sons, 1952.

Goodman, Allan. *The Bases of Political Community in South Vietnam.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973.

Goscha, Christopher. *Historical Dictionary of the Indochina War, 1945-1954: An International and Interdisciplinary Approach.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2012.

Goscha, Christopher. *Vietnam or Indochina: Contesting Concepts of Space in Vietnamese Nationalism, 1887-1954.* Denmark: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Books, 1995.

Gu, Weiqun. *Conflicts of Divided Nations: The Cases of China and Korea.* Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995.

Guillemot, François. "Au coeur de la fracture vietnamienne: L'Élimination de l'opposition nationaliste et anticolonialiste dans le Nord du Vietnam (1945-1946)." In *Naissance d'un État-Parti: Le Viêt-Nam depuis 1945,* edited by Christopher Goscha and Benoît Tréglodé, 175-216. Paris: Les Indes savants, 2004.

Guillemot, François. "Autopsy of a Massacre on a Political Purge in the Early Days of the Indochina War (Nam Bo 1947)." *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 9, no. 2 (2010): 225-265.

Guillemot, François. *Dai Viêt, independence et révolution au Viêt-Nam: L'échec de la troisième voie, 1938-1955* Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2012.

Guillemot, François. "La tentation 'fasciste' des luttes anticoloniales Dai Viet: Nationalisme et anticommunisme dans le Viêt-Nam des années 1932-1945." *Vingtième siècle* 4, no. 104 (Sep 2009): 45-66.

Haines, David. *The Limits of Kinship: South Vietnamese Households, 1954-1975.* DeKalb, Ill.: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University, 2006.

Halberstam, David. *The Best and the Brightest.* New York: Random House, 1972.

Hammer, Ellen J. *Struggle for Indochina, 1940-1955.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955.

Hansen, Peter. "Bắc Di Cư: Catholic Refugees from the North of Vietnam, and Their Role in the Southern Republic, 1954-1959." *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 4, no. 3 (fall 2009): 173-211.

Henderson, William, and Wesley Fishel. "The Foreign Policy of Ngo Dinh Diem." *Vietnam Perspectives* 2, no. 1 (Aug 1966): 3-30.

Hendry, James. *The Small World of Khanh Hau.* Chicago: Aldine, 1964.

Herring, George. *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002.

Hickey, Gerald. *The Highland People of South Vietnam: Social and Economic Development.* Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corporation, 1967.

Hickey, Gerald. *Village in Vietnam.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964.

Hoàng Văn Chí. "Land Reform." In *To Bear Any Burden: The Vietnam War and Its Aftermath in the Words of Americans and Southeast Asians*, edited by Al Santoli, 41-17. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Hoang, Tuan. "The Early South Vietnamese Critique of Communism." In *Dynamics of the Cold War in Asia*, edited by Tuong Vu and Wasana Wongsurawat, 17-32. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Hunt, David. *Vietnam's Southern Revolution: From Peasant Insurrection to Total War.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009.

Huỳnh Kim Khánh. *Vietnamese Communism, 1925-1945.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982.

Huỳnh Sanh Thông, ed. and trans. *To Be Made Over: Tales of Socialist Reeducation in Vietnam.* New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1988.

Huỳnh, Jade Ngọc Quang. *South Wind Changing.* St. Paul: Graywolf Press, 1994.

International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam. *Special Report to the Co-Chair of the Geneva Conference on Indochina, Saigon, June 2 1962.* London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1962.

Jacobs, Seth. *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, Religion, Race, and the US Intervention in Southeast Asia, 1950-1957.* Duke University Press, 2005.

Jacobs, Seth. *Cold War Mandarin: Ngo Dinh Diem and the Origins of America's War in Vietnam, 1950-1963.* Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006.

Jamieson, Neil. *Understanding Vietnam.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993.

Jammes, Jérémy. "Divination and Politics in Southern Vietnam: Roots of Caodaism." *Social Compass* 57, no. 3 (2010): 357-371.

Jammes, Jérémy. “Le Saint-Siège Caodaïste de Tây Ninh et le médium Phạm Công Tắc (1890-1959): Millénarisme, prosélytisme et oracles politiques en Cochinchine.” *Outre-Mers: Revue d'Histoire* 93, no. 352-353 (2006): 209-248.

Jassal, Smita, and Eyal Ben-Ari, ed. “The Partition Motif: Concepts, Comparisons, and Considerations.” In *The Partition Motif in Contemporary Conflicts,* edited by Smita Jassal and Eyal Ben-Ari, 19-51. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2007.

Joiner, Charles. *The Politics of Massacre: Political Processes in South Vietnam.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974.

Jones, Howard. *Death of a Generation.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Kahin, George, and John Lewis. *The United States in Vietnam.* New York: Dial Press, 1967.

Kahin, George. *Intervention: How America Became Involved in Vietnam.* New York City: Anchor Books, 1987.

Kaiser, David. *American Tragedy: Kennedy, Johnson, and the Origins of the Vietnam War.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Karnow, Stanley. *Vietnam: A History.* 2nd rev. ed. New York: Penguin, 1997.

Kennedy, John F. “America’s Stake in Vietnam: The Cornerstone of the Free World in Southeast Asia, Jun 1 1956.” In *Landmark Speeches on the Vietnam War,* edited by Gregory Allen Olson, 19-28. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010.

Kimball, Jeffrey. *Nixon’s Vietnam War.* Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998.

Koestler, Arthur. *Darkness at Noon.* New York: Macmillan, 1941.

Kolko, Gabriel. *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States, and the Modern Historical Experience.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.

Kravchenko, Victor. *I Chose Freedom: The Personal and Political Life of a Soviet Official.* New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1946.

Labin, Suzanne. *Il est moins cinq.* Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1960.

Lancaster, Donald. *The Emancipation of French Indochina.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1961.

Lansdale, Edward. *In the Midst of War: An American’s Mission to Southeast Asia.* New York: Fordham University Press, 1991.

Lawrence, Mark Atwood. *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Lê Hữu Tri. *Prisoner of the Word: A Memoir of the Vietnamese Reeducation Camps.* Seattle: Black Heron Press, 2001.

LeBar, Frank, Gerald Hickey, and John Musgrave. *Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia.* New Haven, Conn.: Human Relations Area Files Press, 1964.

Lee, Chong-Sik. "Korean Communists and Yenan," *China Quarterly* 9 (Jan 1962): 182-192.

Levant, Victor. *Quiet Complicity: Canadian Involvement in the Vietnam War.* Toronto: Between the Lines, 1986.

Lewis, Alison. "Unity Begins Together: Analyzing the Trauma of German Unification." In "Germany: East, West, and the Other." Special issue, *New German Critique* 64 (winter 1995): 135-159.

Lockhart, Greg. *Nation in Arms: The Origins of the People's Army of Vietnam.* Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989.

Logevall, Fredrik. *Choosing War.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999.

Loh, Robert, and Humphrey Evans. *Escape from Red China*. New York: Coward-McCann, 1962.

Luong, Hy Van. *Tradition, Revolution, and Market Economy in a North Vietnamese Village, 1925-2006.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010.

Maddux, Thomas, ed. Review of *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965,* by Mark Moyar. *H-Diplo Roundtable Review* 8, no. 7 (2 July 2007): http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/TriumphForsaken-Roundtable.pdf.

Mahant, Edelgard, and Graeme Mount. *Invisible and Inaudible in Washington: American Policies Towards Canada.* Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999.

Marr, David G. *Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Marr, David G. *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.

Marr, David G. *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

Masur, Matthew. “Hearts and Minds: Cultural Nation-Building in South Vietnam, 1954-1963.” PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2004.

McCoy, Alfred, with Cathleen Read and Leonard Adams. *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia.* New York: Harper and Row, 1972.

McHale, Shawn. “Understanding the Fanatic Mind? The Việt Minh and Race Hatred in the First Indochina War.” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 4, no. 3 (fall 2009): 98-138.

McLeod, Mark. *Vietnamese Response to French Intervention, 1862-1874.* New York: Praeger, 1991.

McMahon, Robert. *The Limits of Empire: The United States and Southeast Asia Since WWII.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Metzner, Edward P., et. al. *Reeducation in Postwar Vietnam: Personal Postscripts to Peace.* College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2001.

Miller, Edward. “The Diplomacy of Personalism: Civilization, Culture, and the Cold War in the Foreign Policy of Ngo Dinh Diem.” In *Connecting Histories: Decolonization and the Cold War in Southeast Asia, 1945-1962,* edited by Christopher Goscha and Christian Ostermann, 376-402. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.

Miller, Edward. “Grand Designs: Vision, Power, and Nation-Building in America’s Alliance with Ngo Dinh Diem, 1954-1960.” PhD diss., Harvard University, 2004.

Miller, Edward. *Misalliance: Ngo Dinh Diem, the United States, and the Fate of South Vietnam.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013.

Miller, Edward. “Vision, Power and Agency: The Ascent of Ngo Dinh Diem, 1945-54.” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 35, no. 3 (Oct 2004): 433-458.

Miller, Edward, and Tuong Vu. “The Vietnam War as a Vietnamese War: Agency and Society in the Study of the Second Indochina War.” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 4, no. 3 (fall 2009): 1-16.

Moise, Edwin. *Land Reform in China and North Vietnam: Consolidating the Revolution at the Village Level.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983.

Moyar, Mark. *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Ngo Ngoc Trung. “Nguyen Van Hinh.” In *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War: A Political, Social, and Military History,* 2nd ed., ed. Spencer Tucker, 839. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2011.

Ngo Ngoc Trung. "Nguyen Van Xuan." In *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War: A Political, Social, and Military History,* 2nd ed., ed. Spencer Tucker Santa Barbara, 843-844. Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2011.

Nguyễn Kiên. *Le Sud-Vietnam depuis Dien-bien-phu.* Paris: F. Maspero, 1963.

Nguyễn Kiên. *Vietnam: 15 Years After the Liberation of Saigon.* Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1990.

Nguyễn Nguyệt Cầm. "Z.28 and the Appeal of Spy Fiction in Southern Vietnam, 1954-1975." Master's thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 2001.

Nguyen, Lien-Hang Thi. *Hanoi's War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

Ninh, Kim. *A World Transformed: The Politics of Culture in Revolutionary Vietnam, 1945-1965.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.

Nitz, Kiyoko Kurusu. "'Independence Without Nationalists': The Japanese and Vietnamese Nationalism During the Japanese Period, 1940-1945." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 15, no. 1 (1984): 108-132.

Oliver, Victor. *Caodai Spiritism: A Study of Religion in Vietnamese Society.* Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976.

Oliver, Victor. "The Development of Caodai Sectarianism." *Religion* 4, no. 1 (1974): 1-25.

Ông, Như-Ngọc T., and David S. Meyer. "Protest and Political Incorporation: Vietnamese American Protests in Orange County, California, 1975-2001." *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 3, no. 1 (winter 2008): 78-107.

Parmentier, Henri, and E.M. Durand. *Les trésors des rois chams.* Hanoi: F.H. Schneider, 1905.

Path, Kosal. "Hà Nội's Responses to Beijing's Renewed Enthusiasm to Aid North Vietnam, 1970-1972." *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 6, no. 3 (fall 2011): 101-139.

Pelley, Patricia. *Postcolonial Vietnam: New Histories of the National Past.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

Peycam, Philippe. *The Birth of Vietnamese Political Journalism: Saigon, 1916-1930.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

Phillips, Rufus. *Why Vietnam Matters.* Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2008.

Pike, Douglas. *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1966.

Preston, Andrew. *The War Council: McGeorge Bundy, the NSC, and Vietnam.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Quinn-Judge, Sophie. "Through a Glass Darkly." In *Making Sense of the Vietnam Wars: Local, National, and Transnational Perspectives,* edited by Mark Bradley and Marilyn B. Young, 111-170. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Race, Jeffrey. *War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.

Republic of Vietnam. *The Murder of Colonel Hoang Thuy Nam.* Saigon: 1962.

Rostow, W.W. *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto.* 2nd ed. London: Cambridge University Press, 1971.

Savani, A.M. *Notes sur la secte PGHH.* Saigon: 1951.

Savani, A.M. *Notes sur le Caodaisme.* Saigon: 1954.

Savani, A.M. *Notes sur les Binh Xuyen.* Saigon: 1954.

Savani, A.M. *Visage et images du Sud Viet-Nam.* Saigon: Imprimerie Française d'Outre-mer, 1955.

Schaeffer, Robert. *Warpaths: The Politics of Partition.* New York: Hill and Wang, 1990.

Scigliano, Robert. "Political Parties in South Vietnam Under the Republic." *Pacific Affairs* 33, no. 4 (Dec 1960): 327-346.

Scigliano, Robert. *South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963.

Shaplen, Robert. *The Lost Revolution: The US in Vietnam, 1946-1966.* New York: Harper Colophon, 1966.

Short, Frisco. "The Influence of Religious/Political/Military Growth on National Politics: A Case Study, the Phat Gia Hoa Hao, Republic of Vietnam." Unpublished manuscript, 1974. Accessed 4 Oct 2012. http://pghh-research.tripod.com/fws.html.

Smith, R.B. "An Introduction to Caodaism I: Origins and Early History." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 33, no. 2 (1970): 335-349.

Smith, R.B. "An Introduction to Caodaism II: Beliefs and Organization." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 33, no. 3 (1970): 573-589.

Statler, Kathryn C. *Replacing France: The Origins of American Intervention in Vietnam.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007.

Stewart, Geoffrey. “Hearts, Minds and Công Dân Vụ: The Special Commissariat for Civic Action and Nation-Building in Ngô Đình Diệm’s Vietnam, 1955–1957.” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 6, no. 3 (fall 2011): 44-100.

Tai, Hue-Tam Ho. *Millenarianism and Peasant Politics in Vietnam.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Tai, Hue-Tam Ho. *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Tai, Hue-Tam Ho. “Representing the Past in Vietnamese Museums.” *Curator: The Museum Journal* 41, no. 3 (24 May 2010): 187-199.

Taylor, Nora. “Whose Art Are We Studying? Writing Vietnamese Art History from Colonialism to the Present.” In *Studies in Southeast Asian Art,* edited by Nora Taylor, 143-157. Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 2000.

Thakur, Ramesh. *Peacekeeping in Vietnam: Canada, India, Poland and the International Commission.* Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 1984.

Thayer, Carlyle. *War by Other Means: National Liberation and Revolution in Viet-Nam, 1954–1960.* Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1989.

Thomas, Lowell. *The Dalai Lama.* New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1961.

Thongchai Winichakul. *Siam Mapped.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994.

Tongas, Gérard. *J’ai vécu dans l’enfer communiste au Nord Viet-Nam et j’ai choisi la liberté.* Paris: Debresse, 1960.

Trần Mỹ-Vân. “Beneath the Japanese Umbrella: Vietnam’s Hòa Hảo During and After the Pacific War.” *Crossroads* 17, no.1 (2003): 60-107

Trần Mỹ-Vân. “Japan and Vietnam’s Caodaists: A Wartime Relationship, 1939-45.” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27, no. 1 (Mar 1996): 179-193.

Trần Mỹ-Vân. *Vietnam’s Caodaism, Independence, and Peace: The Life and Work of Pham Cong Tac, 1890-1959.* PROSEA Research Paper 38. Taipei: Academia Sinica, 2000.

Trần Mỹ-Vân. *A Vietnamese Royal Exile in Japan: Prince Cường Để, 1882-1951.* New York: Routledge, 2005.

Tran, Nu-Anh. Review of the *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 4, no. 3 (fall 2009), special issue on the New Vietnam War Scholarship. *H-Diplo Roundtable Review* 11, no. 12 (29 Jan 2010): 23-31

Trần Tri Vũ. *Lost Years: My 1632 Days in Vietnamese Reeducation Camp.* Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1988.

Trần Văn Văn, et. al. "Manifesto of the Eighteen." Appendix 2 in *The Two Viet-Nams,* by Bernard Fall, 2nd rev. ed., 435-441. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967.

Tréglodé, Benoît de. *Heroes and Revolution in Vietnam.* Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2012.

Trương Bửu Lâm. "Japan and the Disruption of the Vietnamese Nationalist Movement." In *Aspects of Vietnamese History,* edited by Walter Vella, 237-270. Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1973.

Turley, William. *The Second Indochina War: A Short Political and Military History, 1954-1975.* Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1986.

Turner-Gottschange, Karen, and Phan Thanh Hảo. *Even the Women Must Fight: Memories of the War from North Vietnam.* New York: Wiley, 1998.

Vasavakul Thaveeporn. "Schools and Politics in South and North Viet Nam: A Comparative Study of State Apparatus, State Policy, and State Power, 1945-1965." PhD diss., Cornell University, 1994.

Vernengo, Matias. "Technology, Finance and Dependency: Latin American Radical Political Economy in Retrospect." *Review of Radical Political Economics* 38, no. 4 (fall 2006): 551-568.

Vo-Dang, Thuy. "The Cultural Work of Anticommunism in the San Diego Vietnamese American Community." *Amerasia Journal* 32, no. 2 (2005): 65-86.

Vũ Ngự Chiêu. "The Other Side of the 1945 Vietnamese Revolution: The Empire of Viet-Nam (March-August 1945)." *Journal of Asian Studies* 45, no. 2 (February 1986): 293-328.

Vu, Tuong. "Cold War Studies and the Cultural Cold War in Asia." In *Dynamics of the Cold War in Asia: Ideology, Identity, and Culture,* edited by Tuong Vu and Wasana Wongsurawat, 1-16. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Vu, Tuong. "Vietnamese Political Studies and Debates on Vietnamese Nationalism." *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 2, no. 2 (summer 2007): 175–230.

Warner, Dennis. *Last Confucian.* New York: Macmillan, 1963.

Wells, Tom. *The War Within: America's Battle Over Vietnam.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.

Werner, Jayne. "Vietnamese Communism and Religious Sectarianism." In *Vietnamese Communism in Comparative Perspective,* edited by William S. Turley, 107-127. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1980.

Werner, Jayne. *Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism: Peasant and Priest in the Cao Dai in Vietnam.* New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies, 1981.

Wherle, Edmund. *Between a River and a Mountain: The AFL-CIO and the Vietnam War.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005.

Wiest, Andrew. *Vietnam's Forgotten Army: Heroism and Betrayal in the ARVN.* New York and London: New York University Press, 2008.

Wiest, Andrew, and Michael J. Doidge, ed. *Triumph Revisited: Historians Battle for the Vietnam War.* New York: Routledge, 2010.

Wilcox, Wynn. "Allegories of the US-Vietnam War: Nguyễn Ánh, Nguyễn Huệ, and the 'Unification Debates.'" *Crossroads* 17, no. 1 (2003): 129-160.

Williams, Donald C. "Francis Raymond Iredell, 1894-1972." *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 45 (1972): 215-216.

Woodside, Alexander. "Central Vietnam's Trading World in the Eighteenth Century as Seen in Lê Quý Đôn's 'Frontier Chronicles.'" In *Essays into Vietnamese Pasts,* edited by Keith W. Taylor and John K. Whitmore, 158-172. Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1995.

Woodside, Alexander. *Vietnam and the Chinese Model: A Comparative Study of Vietnamese and Chinese Civil Government in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971.

Young, Marilyn B. *The Vietnam Wars, 1945-1990.* New York: Harper Perennial, 1991.

Zhai, Qiang. *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Zhou Enlai. *Selected Works of Zhou Enlai.* Vol. 1. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1981.

Zinoman, Peter. *Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862-1940.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001.

Zinoman, Peter. "Nhân Văn – Giai Phẩm and Vietnamese 'Reform Communism' in the 1950s: A Revisionist Interpretation." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 13, no. 1 (winter 2011): 60-100.

Zinoman, Peter. “Vietnamese Urban Intellectuals and Anti-Communism in the 1930s.” Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Association of Asian Studies, Honolulu, HI, 20 Mar 2011.

Vietnamese-Language Sources Published in the Republic of Vietnam (1954-1975)

Bao La Cư Sĩ. Introduction to *Cố đô Huế,* by Thái Văn Kiểm. Saigon: Nha Văn hóa, 1960.

Bình giải về những điểm chính của Luật số 10/59 lập Tòa án Quân sự Đặc biệt [Commentary on and explantion of the main points of Law 10/59 establishing special military courts]. Saigon: Văn hữu Á châu, 1959.

Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục. *Chương-trình trung-học: Nghị-định số 1286-GD/NĐ ngày 12 tháng 8 năm 1958; Nghị-định số 774-GD/NĐ ngày 28 tháng 5 năm 1959; Nghị-định số 308-GD/NĐ ngày 3 tháng 3 năm 1959* [The secondary school curriculum: Decree 1286-GD/NĐ of 12 August 1958, Decree 744-GD/NĐ of 28 May 1959, and Decree 308-GD/NĐ of 3 March 1959]. Saigon: Bộ Quốc gia Giáo dục, 1960.

Bùi Anh Tuấn. *Mầm biến động tại Bắc Việt?: Chính luận* [Seeds of revolt in North Vietnam?: A political discussion]. [Saigon?]: 1957.

Bùi Quang Ly. *Việt sử Thế giới sử lớp đệ tứ* [Vietnamese history and world history for the fourth form]. [Saigon?]: Nam Sơn, [1960?].

Chánh nghĩa đã thắng [The righteous cause has triumphed]. [Saigon?]: [1955?].

Chủ nghĩa Cộng sản đối với dân tộc Việt Nam [Communism and the Vietnamese people]. Huế: Phòng Nghiêm huấn Nha Thông tin Trung Việt, 1955.

Cuộc chiến đấu dành tự do của Hung-Gia-Lợi: phóng sự đặc biệt bằng tranh ảnh do các biên tập viên báo Life [Hungary’s battle for freedom: A special illustrated report by the editorial board of *Life]*. N.p.: [1956?].

Cuộc di cư lịch sử tại Việt Nam [The historical migration in Vietnam]. [Saigon?]: Phủ Tổng ủy Di cư Tị nạn, [1958?].

Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ Tòa Thánh Tây Ninh. *Hồi ký của Phối sư Thượng Vinh Thanh, Trần Quang Vinh, 1897-1975* [The memoir of Archbishop Thượng Vinh Thanh Trần Quang Vinh, 1897-1975]. Tây Ninh: Tòa Thánh Tây Ninh, 1972. Reprinted under new title with commentaries by several authors. *Hồi ký Trần Quang Vinh và lịch sử quân đội Cao Đài* [The memoir of Trần Quang Vinh and the history of the Cao Đài Armed Forces]. Washington D.C.: Thánh thất vùng Hoa Thịnh Đốn, 1996.

Đại hội văn hóa toàn quốc 1957 [The National Cultural Conference of 1957]. Saigon: Bộ Thông tin, 1957.

Dật Sĩ and Nguyễn Văn Hầu. *Thất sơn mầu nhiệm* [The miraculous Seven Mountains]. Saigon: Liên Chính, 1955.

Đệ nhất triển lãm quốc tế mỹ thuật tại Sàigòn 1962 [The first international art exbhition in Saigon, 1962]. Saigon: Nha Mỹ Thuật Học Vụ, Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục, 1962.

Djilas, Milovan. *Giai cấp mới* [The new class]. Translated by Chính Tâm and Trương Tiến. Saigon: Ánh Việt, 1958.

Đoàn Đình Nhuệ. *Một thế cờ lật ngược* [Counter strategy]. [Saigon?]: Chống Cộng, 1956.

Đoàn Thêm, *Hai mươi năm qua: Việc từng ngày, 1945-1964* [The past twenty years: Daily events, 1945-1964]. Los Alamitos, Calif.: Xuân Thu, 1986. First published in 1966 in Saigon by Nam Chí Tùng Thư.

Hoàng Đạt [Phạm Văn Thanh]. *Tôi sang chiếm đất Thượng Lào với bộ đội Việt Cộng* [I fought in the invasion of Upper Laos with the *Việt Cộng* military]. [Saigon?]: Dân tộc, 1956.

Hoàng Văn Chí [Mạc Đình, pseud.], ed. *Tâm trạng của giới văn nghệ ở miền Bắc* [The state of mind of artists in the North]. Saigon: [privately published?], 1956.

Hoàng Văn Chí [Mạc Đình, pseud.], ed. *Trăm hoa đua nở trên đất Bắc* [A hundred flowers bloom on Northern soil]. Saigon: Mặt trận bảo vệ tư do văn hóa, 1959.

Hoàng Văn Đào. *Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng: Lịch sử tranh đấu cận đại, 1927-1954* [The Vietnamese Nationalist Party: A history of the modern struggle, 1927-1954]. 2nd ed. Saigon: 1970.

Kỳ Văn Nguyên [Nguyễn Văn Thúy]. *Tìm về sinh lộ* [Seeking the path to life]. Saigon: Lê Thanh Thư Xã, 1957. Reprinted with a biographical sketch by Hoàng Trúc Tâm. USA: privately published, 1996.

Lã Huy Quý. *Đây... Bắc Việt, 1957* [This… is North Vietnam, 1957]. N.p.: 1958.

Labin, Suzanne. *Nước đã đến chân* [The water is at our feet]. Translated by Hải Chi. Saigon: Tự do, 1962. Originally published as *Il est moins cinq* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1960).

Lê Lam Sơn. "Hiện tình Văn nghệ Việt cộng" [The current condition of *Việt cộng* art]. In *Phê bình văn nghệ cộng sản* [Criticism of communist art], edited by Võ Phương Tùng, Lê Lam Sơn, and Phan Lạc Tuyền, 13-21. [Saigon?]: Việt Nam, 1955.

Lê Phong. *Người quân nhân dưới chế độ Việt Cộng* [Soldiers under the *Việt Cộng* regime]. [Saigon?]: Hoàng Ba, [1956?].

Lê Văn Dương. *Quân lực Việt Nam Cộng hòa trong giai đoạn hình thành, 1946-1955* [The Army of the Republic of Vietnam during its formative period, 1946-1955]. Saigon: Bộ Tổng tham mưu, 1972.

Lý luận về kháng chiến [An argument about the resistance]. Saigon: Văn hữu Á châu, 1959.

Nghiêm Xuân Hồng. *Lịch trình diễn tiến của phong trào quốc gia Việt Nam* [The development of the Vietnamese nationalist movement]. Saigon: Quan Điểm, 1958.

Ngọc Tuấn. *Hiệp ước Genève với chúng ta* [The Geneva Treaty and us]. [Saigon?]: Quân đội ĐTQK, 1956.

Nguyễn Cao Hách, ed. *Hiện tượng chậm tiến* [Underdevelopment]. Saigon: Hoài Bảo, 1960.

Nguyễn Duy Hinh [pseud. Cồ Việt Tử]. *Vụ án Ba Cụt (phụ thêm 2 bản án của Bảy Viển và Nguyễn Văn Thành)* [The trial of Ba Cụt (supplemented with the sentences of Bảy Viễn and Nguyễn Văn Thành]. Saigon: Nguyễn Duy Hinh, 1956.

Nguyễn Hữu Ba. *Dân ca Việt Nam* [Vietnamese folk songs]. Saigon: Trung tâm Học liệu, 1971. First published 1961 by Sở học liệu.

Nguyễn Mạnh Côn [Nguyễn Kiên Trung, pseud.]. *Đem tâm tình viết lịch sử* [Writing history with personal sentiments]. Saigon: Nguyễn Đình Vượng, 1958.

Nguyễn Ngọc Thanh. *Truyện người vượt tuyến* [Tale of a meridian crosser]. [Saigon?]: privately published, 1959.

Nguyễn Trân. *Chế độ Cộng Sản* [Communist regimes]. Saigon: Đông Nam Á, 1958.

Nguyễn Vạn An. *Phan Khôi và cuộc tranh đấu tư tưởng ở miền Bắc* [Phan Khôi and the intellectual struggle in the North]. Saigon: Ủy ban Trung ương Chống chính sách nô dịch văn hóa và đàn áp văn nghệ sĩ, trí thức sinh viên tại miền Bắc, 1961.

Nguyễn Vạn An. *Vụ án đấu tranh tư tưởng ở miền Bắc* [The trials of the intellectual struggle in the North]. Saigon: privately published, 1960.

Nguyễn Văn Châu. *Giòng lịch sử* [The current of history]. Saigon: Văn chiến, 1961.

Nguyễn Văn Mùi. *Địa lý Việt Nam lớp đệ tứ* [Vietnamese geography for the fourth form]. Saigon: Khai Trí, 1962.

Nguyễn Văn Mùi and Vũ Ngọc Ánh. *Việt sử và thế giới sử lớp đệ tứ* [Vietnamese history and world history for the fourth form]. Saigon: Thăng Long, 1959.

Nguyễn Văn Trung. *Chủ nghĩa thực dân Pháp ở Việt Nam: Thực chất và huyền thoại* [French colonialism in Vietnam: Myth and reality]. Saigon: Nam Sơn, 1963.

Nhị Hùng. *Thanh niên quốc gia dưới ách cộng sản* [Nationalist youth under the *Việt cộng* yoke]. Saigon: privately published, 1956.

Những mặt trận bịp bợm của Cộng sản [The deceitful front organizations of the communists]. [Saigon?]: Bộ Thông tin và Thanh niên, 1956.

Những tội ác của Việt Cộng tại miền Nam Việt Nam [*Việt cộng* crimes in South Vietnam]. Saigon: [1962?].

Những trang hồi ký [Autobiographical pages]. [Saigon?]: Văn hữu Á châu, 1963.

Phạm Văn Sơn [Dương Châu, pseud.]. *Vĩ tuyến 17* [The seventeenth parallel]. Saigon: privately published, 1955.

Phạm Văn Sơn. *Việt Nam tranh đấu sử* [The history of Vietnamese struggles]. 2nd ed. Saigon: Việt Cường, 1959.

Phan Khoang. *Việt Nam Pháp thuộc sử, 1884-1945* [The history of Vietnam under French colonialism, 1884-1945]. Saigon: Khai Trí, 1961.

Phan Xuân Hòa. *Toát yếu địa lý Việt Nam lớp đệ nhị* [A synopsis of Vietnamese geography for the second form]. Saigon: Thụy Đình, 1960.

Quân đội học tập chính trị [Political study for the army]. Saigon: 1956.

Quốc Anh. *Thực chất của Mặt trận giải phóng miền Nam* [The true nature of the National Liberation Front]. Saigon: 1962.

Quỳnh Lưu khởi nghĩa [The righteous uprising of Quỳnh Lưu]. N.p.: Liên minh Á Châu Chống Cộng Việt nam, [1957?].

Số phận trí thức miền Bắc (qua vụ Trần Đức Thảo) [The fate of Northern intellectuals, as seen through the Trần Đức Thảo Affair]. Saigon: Văn hữu Á Châu, 1959.

Sự thật về vụ Phú Lợi [The truth about the Phú Lợi Affair]. Saigon: Văn Hữu Á Châu, 1960.

Sửa sai của Việt Cộng [The *Việt Cộng*'s rectification of errors]. [Saigon?]: Bộ Thông tin, 1958.

Tại sao chống cộng? [Why oppose communism?]. Saigon: Văn hữu Á châu, 1960.

Tăng Xuân An and Nguyễn Thị Hợp [bà Tăng Xuân An, pseud.]. *Địa lý Việt Nam lớp đệ nhị A, B, C, D* [Geography for the second form, A, B, C, and D tracks]. Saigon: Sống mới, 1963.

Tăng Xuân An and Nguyễn Thị Hợp [bà Tăng Xuân An, pseud.]. *Viet sử lớp đệ tứ* [Vietnamese history for the fourth form]. Saigon: Tao Đàn, [1963?]

Tăng Xuân An and Nguyễn Thị Hợp [bà Tăng Xuân An, pseud.]. *Việt sử lớp đệ nhất* [Vietnamese history for the first form]. [Saigon?]: Tao Đàn, 1961-1962.

Thái Lăng Nghiêm [Phạm Văn Tâm]. *Bàn về thống nhất dân tộc* [On national reunification]. [Saigon?]: Tủ sách Kinh Dương, 1959.

Thái Văn Kiểm and Trương Bá Phát. *Chỉ nam về Viện Bảo tang Quốc gia Việt Nam tại Saigon* [Guide to the National Museum of Vietnam in Saigon]. Saigon: Bộ Văn hóa Giáo dục và Thanh niên, 1974.

Thái Văn Kiểm. *Cố đô Huế* [The ancient capital of Huế]. Văn hóa tùng thứ 7-8. Saigon: Nha Văn hóa, 1960.

Thanh Lâm. *Những vụ án lịch sử* [Putting history on trial]. [Saigon?]: 1957.

Thanh Thảo. *Tù ngục và thoát ly: Hồi ký ba năm tám tháng* [Imprisonment and liberation: A memoir recounting three years and eight months]. Saigon: 1957.

Thành tích chín năm hoạt động của chánh phủ [The government's nine years of achievements]. Saigon: 1963.

Thành tích Tố Cộng Giai đoạn I: Tổng kết thành tích Tố Cộng trong 3 đợt của giai đoạn I và mở đầu giai đoạn II của chiến dịch [Achievements of the Denounce the Communists Campaign, phase I: A summary of the Denounce the Communists Campaign during the three stages of phase 1 and the opening of phase II]. Saigon: Hội đồng Nhân dân Chỉ đạo Chiến dịch Tố Cộng, 1956.

Thomas, Lowell. *Tây tạng kháng chiến* [The Tibetan resistance]. Translated by Lê Hùng Tâm and Tạ Quốc Tuấn. Saigon: Dziên Hồng, 1962. First published as *The Dalai Lama* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1961).

Thực Đức [Trần Văn Mại]. *Ai gay nên tội: Vụ hai triệu người chết đói năm Ất Dậu* [Who caused the crime: The death by starvation of two million people in the year of the Wood Rooster]. [Saigon?]: privately published, 1956.

Tìm hiểu sự thật [Understanding the truth]. Saigon: 1957.

Tô Văn [Trần Đức Lai]. *Sách lược ba giai đoạn của Cộng-sản* [The three-stage strategy of the communists]. [Saigon?]: Chống cộng, 1956.

Trần Hữu Quảng. *Việt sử và thế giới sử lớp đệ tứ* [Vietnamese history and world history for the fourth form]. Saigon: Nguyễn Du, 1962.

Trần Ích Quốc. *Mặt trận Tổ Quốc: Một chiến thuật sảo quyệt của Việt Minh Cộng Sản* [The fatherland front: A devious strategy of the communist Việt Minh]. Saigon: privately published, 1957.

Trần Kim Trúc. *Tôi giết Nguyễn Bình: Hồi ký Tham mưu trưởng Trung đoàn 25 Bình Xuyên* [I killed Nguyễn Bình: The memoir of the chief of staff of Bình Xuyên regiment 25]. Saigon: Đồng Nai, 1972.

Trần Linh Giang. *ABC đả cộng* [The ABC's of opposing communism]. Saigon: Sa Giang, 1955.

Trần Quốc Bảo. *Cuộc di cư vĩ đại trong lịch sử thế giới cận kim* [The great migration of recent world history]. Saigon: privately published, 1956.

Trần Vũ. *Ngục tù thực dân gông cùm cộng sản* [Colonial prison, communist chains]. Saigon: Ủy ban Bảo trợ Phong trào Chống Cộng miền Bắc, 1957.

Triển lãm quốc tế nhiếp ảnh mỹ thuật nhân dịp lễ Quốc khánh Việt Nam Cộng Hòa 26 tháng 10 năm 1960 [The International Salon of Pictorial Photography for the National Day of the Republic of Vietnam, 26 October 1960]. Saigon: 1960.

Triển lãm thành tích kiến trúc, 1954-1963 [Exhibition of architectural achievements, 1954-1963]. Saigon: [1963?].

Trực Ngôn. *Việt Nam đẫm máu vì Chiến tranh Thực dân, 1945-1954* [Vietnam is soaked in blood from the colonial war]. Saigon: privately published, 1956.

Tuấn Giang [Hồ Bá Cao]. *Vượt đường biên giới: hồi ký kháng chiến* [Crossing the border: A memoir of the resistance]. [Saigon?]: Quốc Khánh, 1961. Reprint, Công đàn, 1963.

Uyên Châu. *Người cộng sản có yêu nước không?* [Do Communists Love Their Country?]. [Saigon?]: 1957.

Viện Đại học Huế. *Kỷ niệm đệ nhất chu niên* [Commemoration of the first anniversary]. [N.p.]: 1958.

Vĩnh Noãn. *Chúng tôi muốn sống* [We want to live]. Saigon: Tân Việt, 1956; Westminster, Calif.: privately published, [2002?], DVD.

Vũ Quốc Thúc. "Vấn đề kinh tế thiếu mở mang" [The problem of economic underdevelopment]. In *Hiện tượng chậm tiến* [Underdevelopment], edited by Nguyễn Cao Hách, 25-49. Saigon: Hoài Bảo, 1960.

Vũ Thược. *Giai đoạn suy tàn của cộng sản Việt Nam* [Decline of Vietnamese communism]. Saigon: Hoa Mai, 1956.

Other Vietnamese-Language Sources

Bùi Diễm. *Gọng kìm lịch sử: Hồi ký chính trị* [The jaws of history: A political memoir]. Paris: Cơ sở xuất bản Phạm Quang Khải, 2000. Originally published as *In the Jaws of History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

C.B. and Đ.X. *Đế quốc Mỹ đáng ghê tởm, đáng căm thù, không đáng sợ* [The American Empire is worthy of disgust and hate, not fear]. Hanoi: Sự Thật, 1955.

Chống âm mưu bắt ép dụ dỗ di dân của đế quốc Mỹ và bè lũ Ngô Đình Diệm [Countering the strategy of forced migration by the American empire and the Ngô Đình Diệm clique]. Hai Phòng: Tuy Tuyên truyền Hải Phòng, 1955.

"Đài 'Tiếng Nói VN Hải Ngoại' Phỏng Vấn Đạo Diễn Vĩnh Noãn: Ra Sách, Dvd Phim 'Chúng Tôi Muốn Sống' Sau 50 Năm" [The 'Voice of the Overseas Vietnamese' radio station interviews director Vĩnh Noãn: Issuing the book and DVD of *We Want to Live* after 50 years]. *Việt Báo online* [Vietnamese newspaper online] (18 Dec 2002). Accessed 17 July 2011. http://www.vietbao.com/D_1-2_2-282_4-43782/.

Đinh Gia Trinh. *Hiến pháp Mỹ-Diệm: Một công cụ nô dịch nhân dân miền Nam* [The American-Diệm constitution: An instrument for enslaving the people of the South]. Hanoi: Sự Thật, 1959.

Đỗ Mậu. *Việt Nam máu lửa quê hương tôi: Hồi ký chính trị* [My homeland Vietnam in the midst of blood and fire: A political memoir]. Calif.: privately published, 1986.

Đồng Tân [Trần Thái Chân]. *Tìm hiểu đạo Cao Đài* [Understanding Caodaism]. St. Albans East, Australia: Cao Hiên, 1997.

Hoàng Trúc Tâm. "Tiểu sử và Sự Nghiệp" [Life and work]. In *Tìm về sinh lộ* [Seeking the Path to Life], by Kỳ Văn Nguyên, 321-334. USA: privately published, 1996.

Koestler, Arthur. *Đêm hay ngày* [Night or day]. Saigon: Tân Á, 1952. Originally published as *Darkness at Noon* (New York: Macmillian, 1941).

Lâm Lễ Trinh. "Truất phế Bảo Đại và khai sinh Đệ Nhất Cộng Hòa: Ký ức 50 năm sau" [Deposing Bảo Đại and declaring the birth of the First Republic: A memoir from fifty years later]. *Định Hướng* [Orientation] 45 (winter 2005): 64-82.

Lê Xuân Khoa. *Việt Nam, 1945-1995* [Vietnam, 1945-1995]. Vol. 1. Bethesda, Md.: Tiên Rồng, 2004.

Liêm Anh. *Bảy Viễn: Một đời ngang dọc* [Bảy Viễn: A fearless life]. Barntrup, West Germany: Nguồn Việt, [1986?].

Lữ Giang. *Những bí ẩn lịch sử đàng sau cuộc chiến Việt Nam* [Historical enigmas of the Vietnam War]. Garden Grove, Calif.: privately published, 1999.

Mối thù Phú Lợi [A debt of blood incurred at Phú Lợi]. Hanoi: Văn học, 1959.

Năm 1966: Quân và dân miền Nam thắng lớn, Mỹ ngụy thua to [1966: A great victory for the people and military of the South and a major defeat for the American-puppet regime]. Hanoi: Quân đội nhân dân, 1967.

Nam Mộc. *Nâng cao cảnh giác, củng cố hòa bình, chặn tay đế quốc Mỹ và tay sai* [Increase vigilance, strengthen peace, and block the American empire and its lackeys]. Hanoi: Sự Thật, 1955.

Nguyễn Khắc Ngữ. *Đại cương về các đàng phái chính trị Việt Nam* [An overview of Vietnamese political parties]. Montreal: Nhóm Nghiên cứu Sử địa, 1989.

Nguyễn Khắc Viện. *Kinh nghiệm Việt Nam và những con đường tiến bộ của các nước chậm tiến* [The Vietnamese experience and the path of progress for underdeveloped countries]. Hanoi: NXB Sự Thật, 1962.

Nguyễn Long Thành Nam. *Phật giáo Hòa Hảo trong dòng lịch sử dân tộc* [Hòa Hảo Buddhism in the current of national history]. Santa Fe Springs, Calif.: Đuốc Từ bi, 1991.

Nguyễn Trân. *Công và tội: Những sự thật lịch sử* [Merit and crime: Historical truths]. Los Alamitos, Calif.: Xuân Thu, 1992.

Nguyễn Vy Khanh. Introduction to *Ngô Đình Diệm, nỗ lực hòa bình dang dở* [Ngô Đình Diệm, the unfinished struggle for peace], by Nguyễn Văn Châu, 7-10. Translated by Nguyễn Vy Khanh. Los Alamitos, Calif.: Xuân Thu, 1989.

Nhị Lang. *Phong trào kháng chiến Trình Minh Thế* [The revolutionary movement of Trình Minh Thế]. Boulder, Colo.: Lion Press, 1985.

Phạm Đình Tân. *Đập tan luận điệu gian trá của Mỹ-Diệm* [Shattering the dishonest arguments of the America-Diệm regime]. Hanoi: Sự Thật, 1955.

Phạm Văn Sơn. *Việt Nam tranh đấu sử* [The history of Vietnamese struggles]. 1st ed. Hanoi: 1949.

Phan Khoang. *Việt Pháp bang giao sử lược* [A brief history of Franco-Vietnamese relations]. [Saigon?]: Nguyễn Văn Bửu, 1950.

Thạch Phương. "Nguyễn Mạnh Côn." In *Những tên biệt kích của chủ nghĩa thực dân mới* [Special agents of neoimperialism], by Vũ Hạnh, et. al., 43-76. Hanoi: Nhà xuất bản Văn hóa, 1980.

Tran, Ham. *Vượt sống* [Journey from the fall]. ImaginAsian Pictures, 2006, DVD.

Trần Huy Liệu, et. al. *Lịch sử thủ đô Hà Nội* [History of the capital of Hanoi]. Hanoi: Sử Học, 1960.

Trần Trọng Kim. *Việt Nam sử lược* [A summary of Vietnamese history]. 1919. Reprint, Thanh Hóa: Nhà xuất bản Thanh Hóa, 2006.

Trần Văn Giàu. *Miền Nam giữ vững thành đồng: Lược sử đồng bào miền Nam đấu tranh chống Mỹ và tay sai* [The South holds fast to the bronze fortress: A brief history of the struggle of the Southern people against the US and the lackeys]. Hanoi: Khoa Học, 1964.

Trường Sơn. *Vì sao quân dân miền Nam thắng lớn, Mỹ và ngụy thua to trong mùa khô 1965-1966* [Why the military and people of the South were victorious and why the US and the puppets lost badly in the dry season of 1965-1966]. Hanoi: Quân đội Nhân dân, 1966.

Ủy ban Nhân dân tỉnh Lâm Đồng. *Địa chí Lâm Đồng* [Gazetteer of Lâm Đồng]. Hanoi: Nhà xuất bản Văn hóa Dân tộc, 2001.

Vĩnh Noãn. *Chúng tôi muốn sống* [We want to live]. Westminster: privately published, 2002.

Võ Phiến. *Hai mươi nam văn học miền Nam, 1954-1975* [Twenty years of Southern literature, 1954-1975]. Westminster, Calif.: Văn Nghệ, 1986.

Võ Văn Tùng. "Tưởng nhớ cố đạo diễn Vĩnh Noãn: Đôi lời về một người anh" [Remembering deceased director Vĩnh Noãn: A few words about an elder]. *Việt Báo online* [Vietnamese newspaper online] (10 November 2003). Accessed 10 Jun 2011. http://www.vietbao.com/D_1-2_2-282_4-61965.

Vương Kim. "Chánh trị: Việt Nam Dân Chủ Xã Hội Đảng" [Politics: The Vietnamese Democratic Socialist Party]. Chapter 16 in *Đức Huỳnh Giáo Chủ* [Patriarch Huỳnh]. N.p.: VP Phật Giáo Hòa Hảo/HN, 1997. Accessed 4 Dec 2012. http://www.phatgiaohoahao.net/dhuc-huynh-giao-chu/phan-ii-su-nghiep/thien-v-su-nghiep-ve-mat-dhoi-cong-nghiep-canh-mang/chuong-xvi-chanh-tri-viet-nam-dan-chu-xa-hoi-dhang.

Chinese-Language Sources

Hanyu da cidian bianji weiyuanhui, ed. *Hanyu da cidian* [Comprehensive Chinese dictionary]. Fine print ed. 3 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2009.

Qian Jiang. *Mimi zhengzhan: Zhongguo junshi guwen tuan yuan Yue kang Fa jishi*. [The secret campaign: A real account of a Chinese Military Advisory Group helping Vietnam resist France]. Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1999.

Qian Jiang. *Zai shenmi de zhanzheng zhong: Zhongguo junshi guwentuan fu Yuenan zhengzhan ji* [In the midst of a mysterious war: A record of the Chinese Military Advisors Group going to Vietnam to campaign]. Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1992.

Wang Yanquan. "Yuenan bianjie zhanyi qianhou de Chen Geng tongzhi" [Comrade Chen Geng throughout the Battle on the Vietnamese Border]. In *Zhongguo junshi guwentuan yuan Yue kang*

Fa shilu [Records of the Chinese Military Advisory Group helping Vietnam resist the French], edited by Zhongguo junshi guwentuan yuan Yue kang Fa shilu bianji zu, 106-132. Beijing: Zhong gong dang shi chubanshe, 2002.

Zhang Guanghua. "Zhongguo junshi guwentuan yu Yuenan kang Fa zhanzhen" [The Chinese Military Advisors Group and the War of Vietnamese Resistance to the French]. In *Zhongguo junshi guwentuan yuan Yue kang Fa shilu* [Records of the Chinese Military Advisory Group helping Vietnam resist the French], edited by Zhongguo junshi guwentuan yuan Yue kang Fa shilu bianji zu, 243-269. Beijing: Zhong gong dang shi chubanshe, 2002.

Zhou Enlai. "Zai Yan'an gejie juxing de 'shuang shi er' jinianhui shang de jiangyan" [Lecture at a meeting in Yan'an held by people from all walks of life to commemorate the December 12th Incident], 12 December 1946. In *Zhou Enlai xuanji* [Selected works of Zhou Enlai], vol. 1, 247-250. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1980).