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**VIETNAMESE ARCHIVES AND  
SCHOLARSHIP ON THE COLD WAR  
PERIOD: TWO REPORTS**

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Harvard University**

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**COLD WAR INTERNATIONAL HISTORY PROJECT**

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**CHRISTIAN F. OSTERMANN, Series Editor**

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## Vietnamese Archives and Scholarship On the Cold War Period: A Report

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This report explores archival holdings for the Cold War period in Vietnam and the nature of scholarship, scholarly institutions, and historiography in contemporary Vietnam. It is based upon my research trip to Vietnam in the spring and summer of 1992, which was one of the first opportunities for an American scholar to undertake sustained research on Vietnamese foreign policy in Vietnam since 1975.

### Contemporary Vietnamese Research Context

The impact of the current reform process known as *doi moi*, or renovation,<sup>1</sup> fundamentally shapes the nature of research and scholarship in Vietnam. Economic reforms have brought a move toward the market economy and a greater openness to the outside world. Yet few political changes have accompanied this economic transformation as the state seeks to maintain its monopoly on political activity while overseeing and directing the course of economic and social change. As the shift to the market economy, or what most urban Vietnamese more accurately call “primitive chaos,” has produced a certain amount of social instability and demands for more far-reaching reform, the state has attempted with mixed success to tighten its controls on Vietnamese political and intellectual life.

For scholars, these developments under *doi moi* present both problems and opportunities. The move toward greater openness has permitted a somewhat wider range of expression and is directly responsible for allowing foreign researchers to work in Vietnam. The rise of the market economy, however, has had several adverse affects on scholarship. There is a frontier quality to Vietnamese society at the moment as the collective aims of the socialist state are increasingly replaced by a focus on individual, institutional, and family competition for economic well-being. With a significant reduction in the level of state subsidies, research institutes and universities are

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<sup>1</sup>The character of *doi moi*, first initiated at the Vietnamese Communist Party’s Sixth National Congress in December 1986, and its impact on Vietnamese society is thoughtfully addressed by contributors to two recent conference volumes: William S. Turley and Mark Selden, eds., *Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism: Doi Moi in Comparative Perspective* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), and Börje Ljunggren, ed., *The Challenge of Reform in Indochina* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Institute for International Development, 1993).

sometimes forced to augment their incomes by taking on projects in the private sector with little relevance to their research interests. Foreign researchers are also viewed as a potential source of new income, with “fees” charged for assistance, information, and access to research collections that range from the reasonable to the outrageous. Rising corruption in the state sector, which oversees most archives and libraries, has put a premium on research materials. Perhaps most significantly, state and party fears of increased instability under *doi moi* have prompted even tighter restrictions on post-1945 archival collections for both Vietnamese and foreign scholars.

Without doubt, the six year history of *doi moi* points to a long-term trend toward greater openness in Vietnamese society and increasing opportunities to undertake serious research on post-colonial Vietnamese history. But the efforts of still-powerful conservative forces in the Vietnamese state to preserve their monopoly on power, and the commoditization of information and scholarship under *doi moi*, shape the immediate research environment in Vietnam and pose significant challenges for researchers. It is within the context of these larger forces of political, economic, and social change that I formed my impressions of research and scholarship in contemporary Vietnam.

## Archives

It is now possible to identify where the major Vietnamese archival collections for the Cold War period are located and to gain a sense of the types of materials that are housed in these collections. Access to post-1945 archival materials remains quite restricted, however. The bulk of materials simply remains unavailable to researchers, both foreign and most Vietnamese, although there is limited and selected access for some materials. Archival policies are, however, constantly shifting, as they did even in the period while I was in Vietnam, and are somewhat inconsistent. Persistence and diligence on the part of researchers will usually result in some success.

The National Archives in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City house a variety of materials of potential significance for Cold War scholars.<sup>2</sup> The post-1945 section of the National Archives in

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<sup>2</sup>My knowledge of the Vietnamese archives and libraries was immensely aided by the pioneering work of David Marr and Judy Henchy. Marr was the first scholar in the post-war period to undertake serious research in the National Archives in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in 1990; see his survey of Vietnamese archival holdings in “The National Archives of Vietnam.” CORMOSEA Bulletin 19.1 (June 1990), 8-16. I also rely upon the report of Judy Henchy’s important assessment of Vietnamese libraries and archives, particularly in the South, contained in her “Excerpts from ‘Report of a Libraries Research Trip to Vietnam, July-August 1990,’” CORMOSEA Bulletin 19.2 (June 1991): 2-5; the full report was prepared for the Social Science Research Council. A limited circulation”

Hanoi (Luu Tru I) contains more than 1,000 meters of documents generated prior to 1975, organized into fifty separate collections. Of greatest potential significance for diplomatic historians are materials compiled during the 1946 Fontainebleau conference, the 1954 Geneva conference, and the 1968-72 Paris negotiations. Several other collections may also prove useful: the records of the National Assembly from the first elections in January 1946 to the sessions held in 1975; the collection of the Prime Minister's Office (1945-1975), which contains detailed reports including special files on cadre training, border affairs, foreign nationals, and land reform; and the records of the Ministry of Interior (1945-69), containing materials on administration, ethnic affairs, and social welfare. The film and sound recordings section of National Archives in Hanoi contains over 10,000 photographs, several hundred motion pictures and about 1,000 photographs and tapes. Most notable are the more than 100 recordings of Ho Chi Minh, beginning with his speech to overseas Vietnamese in Paris in July 1946.

The National Archives branch in Ho Chi Minh City (Luu Tru II) contains some of the surviving materials from the Bao Dai, Ngo Dinh Diem and Nguyen Van Thieu governments which collectively constitute about six kilometers of shelving. The best of these materials are said to be the political files (1949-50) from the Bao Dai collection and Ngo Dinh Diem's presidential office collection (Diem's brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, was a trained archivist and apparently kept the most valuable items aside). The collections held by National Archives in Ho Chi Minh City are very scattered, with materials from the Bao Dai and Diem periods in more than 140 different locations, although consolidation efforts are underway. Those materials that have been consolidated and inventoried are spread out over six storehouses in Ho Chi Minh City. The archive in Ho Chi Minh City, which was operated by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) from 1955 to 1975, also contains a collection of documents from the USAID mission in Saigon dealing with the Commercial Import Program, public safety, and CORDS.<sup>3</sup> Because only a limited number of AID documents on Vietnam have been released by the U.S. government, this collection may prove valuable for studies of economic and social development policies during the war.

Use of materials in the National Archives in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City is not easy. These archives are directly administered by the Ministry of Interior which significantly complicates archival access since the Ministry is one of the most conservative in the Vietnamese government and controlled by hard-line members of the party leadership who continue to be

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<sup>3</sup> CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support) is the acronym for the U.S. "pacification" program in Vietnam between 1967 and 1968 aimed at extending the control of the South Vietnamese government over the countryside.

highly suspicious of the increasing foreign presence in Vietnam. Access first requires a formal introduction from a suitable Vietnamese research institution. The archive's director then decides whether or not to grant access to inventories and, later, to the documents themselves. There are no twenty-, thirty- or fifty-year rules; rather, each request is approved or denied based on currently perceived party and security requirements.

Periodic oscillations in government views of the United States seem to also play a role in these decisions. In early June 1992, while I was in Hanoi, the government took action against several Vietnamese in the south who had worked quite closely with Americans.<sup>4</sup> From this point onward, my own research encountered certain obstacles, and access to the archives in Hanoi, which had seemed highly probable when I first arrived, was never granted. Other Americans, working on the pre-1945 period, also faced new problems. But there were odd inconsistencies in requests approved and denied by the Ministry of Interior, suggesting the absence of firm policy on archival matters. For instance, one American anthropologist was given permission to undertake field research in a northern Vietnamese village, which certainly held the potential for trouble in the eyes of suspicious Interior officials, but was denied permission to use French materials from the 1920s on this village housed in the Hanoi archives.

Notwithstanding these limitations, foreign researchers have had some success in using post-1945 materials in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Even if permissions are granted, however, using the materials can be a time-consuming process, particularly in Ho Chi Minh City. Because the collection in Ho Chi Minh City is scattered among six warehouses, it can take two or three days to receive materials after an initial request has been made. Moreover, the archive has only one car to transport this material and if it is in use, as it often is, the wait can be much longer. One German researcher found himself waiting more than three weeks while the archive's car took the deputy director of the archive to Hanoi and back for a series of official meetings. There have also been sporadic reports of corrupt practices in the Hanoi archives. For a brief period in 1990, researchers were asked to pay one American dollar for each document they used

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<sup>4</sup>It is not yet possible to ascertain what impact, if any, the controversy in the Spring of 1993 over the recent discovery in the Russian archives of a 1972 Soviet intelligence report (purporting to be a Russian translation of a briefing by a North Vietnamese general) on American POWs held in North Vietnam might have on Vietnamese archival policies for foreign, and especially American, researchers. On the suspicions of Americans in the spring of 1992, see "Hanoi Jails Lawyer for Links with Americans," *New York Times*, 7 June 1992, 10. A more serious situation arose for American researchers in the fall of 1989 when scholars who had been working for several months in Hanoi were forced to leave the country and promised research visas were withheld for a six month period. This crackdown, however, was preceded and followed by an increased openness to American scholars, suggesting a general trend toward increased scholarly opportunities despite some oscillation in government policy.



and scenes of foreign researchers with hundreds of American dollars stacked up on their desks became common. This practice was discontinued after several months and has not reappeared.

Archival materials of potentially the greatest importance for researchers of the Cold War period are not held by the National Archives and are largely inaccessible to both Vietnamese and foreign researchers. The Foreign Ministry, Communist Party, and Army collections have not been deposited into the National Archives. The records of the Foreign Ministry are held by the Institute for International Affairs, the research arm of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The records of the Central Committee and the Politburo are held by the Institute of Party History under the direct control of the Vietnamese Communist Party. The Institute for Party History apparently also holds the unpublished diaries of Truong Chinh, the Secretary General of the Party until 1956 and a leading member of the Politburo until his death, which could prove invaluable for Cold War historians. Neither the collections held by the Institute for International Affairs nor those held by the Institute of Party History has been made available to researchers. Since access for Vietnamese citizens is limited solely to researchers affiliated with these institutes, the prospect for more general access in the current political climate seems extremely unlikely.

The Army's records for the French and American wars present a slightly different case. The records of the French war are held by the Institute of Military History, a research organization under Army supervision. The collection on the French war is in the process of being inventoried and some limited access is given to researchers. Materials on the American war, particularly with the salience of the POW-MIA issue for current Vietnamese-American relations, are extremely sensitive and appear to be highly decentralized. I did not pursue information on these collections while I was in Vietnam. The Army Library, though mainly a depository for military publications, does contain a select number of documents on surprisingly sensitive issues. For instance, a number of military reports and assessments of the border war with China in 1979 marked *bi mat*, or top secret, are contained in this collection and were readily available to researchers.

The archival picture for the period of the French war in Vietnam (1946-54) is particularly complicated, with many of the most important primary source materials in France.<sup>5</sup> Most of the records of the French-backed Associated States government under Bao Dai (1949-54), which are critical for assessing non-communist perspectives on this period, were repatriated back to France

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<sup>5</sup> For an extremely useful guide to archival collections on Vietnam in France, see Chantal Descours-Gatin and Hugues Villiers, *Guide de recherches sur le Vietnam: bibliographies, archives et bibliothèques de France* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1983).

after 1955. They are available for use upon special permission from the director of the French National Archives and are located at the Center des Archives d'Outre Mer in Aix-en-Provence.<sup>6</sup> Captured documents from the Ho Chi Minh-led Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) are also held in France and are of particular importance for scholars of the early Cold War period. Shortly after the outbreak of the first Indochina War in 1946, the French captured the records of the DRV that had been left in Hanoi when the Vietnamese government fled to the countryside. These records, now held at the Center des Archives d'Outre Mer, contain invaluable materials on Vietnamese domestic and foreign policies in 1945 and 1946 and are unavailable elsewhere. The Indochina collection at the archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris also holds important captured materials on DRV foreign policy from 1945 to 1954, as does the Archives de l'Indochine, Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, Château de Vincennes, Paris.<sup>7</sup> Even when Vietnamese archival restrictions loosen, these materials from the DRV will remain important because many of them were not preserved in Vietnam. Both jungle and wartime conditions made record-keeping quite difficult during the war with the French and, as the inventories of the Vietnamese National Archives and conversations with archivists at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hanoi made clear, fewer materials from this period have been preserved than from the post-1954 period.

## Libraries and Museums

Several libraries and museums hold rare collections of Vietnamese-language books, newspapers, and journals of critical importance for understanding Vietnamese foreign policy.

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<sup>6</sup> The records of the Associated States government held at the Centre des Archives d'Outre Mer in Aix-en-Provence have not yet been formally catalogued by the National Archives. Researchers wishing to use these materials must first travel to Aix and consult handwritten inventories prepared by the Ministry of Colonies when these documents were sent back to France in 1955. These inventories are not available in the public reading room but must be requested from one of the archivists. The most useful inventories cover documents in the following record groups: Haut-Commissariat de France en Indochine; Conseiller politique; Conseiller politique supplément; Conseiller diplomatique; and Service de protection du corps expéditionnaire. Once the researcher has identified the specific dossiers he or she wishes to use, it is necessary to make a formal request, what the French call a *dérogation*, to the Director of the National Archives. Requests are usually acted upon within a month. In my experience, most requests are approved. Scholars may write to the Centre des Archives d'Outre Mer at: 29, Chemin du Moulin de Testas; 13090 Aix-en-Provence; France.

<sup>7</sup> The procedure for using the captured DRV records in Aix is the same as that outlined for the Associated States materials in the previous footnote. To prepare a *dérogation*, request the handwritten inventory for "Indochine: Gouvernement de fait." The Indochina materials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs archive for the period 1939-1955 are open to researchers without prior permission. The most significant materials on Vietnamese foreign policy are found in dossiers 69-77, 161-67 and 174-78 of the Fonds Asie 1944-55, Indochine. Correspondence on the Foreign Ministry materials may be directed to: Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères; 37, Quai d'Orsay; 75007 Paris; France. On the collection at Château de Vincennes, see *Inventaire des archives de l'Indochine, Sous-Serie 10H (1867-1956), Tome 1* (Château de Vincennes: Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, 1990).

These collections are generally more accessible than those held in the National Archives in part because they are less sensitive politically, but also because many of these collections are under the control of the Ministry of Culture, whose policy of access to information is more liberal than that of the Ministry of Interior. Nonetheless, it is still necessary to arrange for appropriate introductions and permission to use the collections, a process that can take from a few days to several weeks.

The National Library in Hanoi has two significant collections for diplomatic historians. The first comprises books, newspapers, and journals from the colonial period which provide a revealing look at Vietnamese perceptions of the world in the larger framework of Vietnamese anticolonial political discourse. During two periods of the colonial era when colonial censorship and repression were eased, the 1920s and the late 1930s, there was an explosion of indigenous publishing by moderate and radical nationalist groups. Several hundred newspapers and journals and thousands of books were published in these two periods containing important materials on Vietnamese perceptions of the Soviet Union, China, the United States, and France. They are also extremely useful in assessing the relative importance of Soviet and Chinese influence on Vietnamese political and intellectual elites. Many of these materials are now housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale in France, but some important titles remain in Hanoi and are unavailable elsewhere.<sup>8</sup>

The second important collection in the National Library is of more than 10,000 books printed in the resistance zone by the Democratic Republic in the period 1946-54, many of which after 1950 were works translated from Chinese to Vietnamese. None of these works is held in French libraries. As the Vietnamese had extremely limited information about the outside world in this period, these works, which include a number of accounts of modern history and foreign affairs, were particularly important and influential. They also permit a careful examination of the impact of Chinese thought on northern Vietnamese political and intellectual culture. Most of these works are currently uncataloged, but it is still possible to use them with special permission from the director of the National Library.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Most officially sanctioned vernacular works for the period 1922 to 1954 were deposited in Paris through the *dépôt légal* system. For a catalog of holdings in the Bibliothèque Nationale, see *Inventaire du fonds du dépôt légal indochinois des livres en Quoc Ngu, 1922-1954*. In addition to a paper edition published in 1988, an updated microfilm edition was produced in 1991. The Bibliothèque Nationale also plans to publish a catalog of its Vietnamese periodical holdings in 1993.

<sup>9</sup> The Southeast Asia Microfilm Project of the Center for Research Libraries, located in Chicago, recently obtained permission to microfilm this collection, a project tentatively scheduled to begin in 1994.

There are a number of smaller research libraries in Hanoi that also contain valuable collections. The library of the Revolution Museum has a full run of three extremely rare newspapers published by the party between 1941 and 1945: *Viet Nam Doc Lop (Vietnam Independence)*, *Cuu Quoc (Save the Country)* and *Co Giai Phong (Banner of Liberation)*. They are particularly helpful in tracing party attitudes toward the Soviet Union and United States during World War II. The library of the Institute of History holds a number of important Vietnamese language books and journals from the pre-1945 period that are unavailable at the National Library, as well as rare runs of party newspapers from the post-1945 period. The library of the Institute of Party History has an almost complete collection of party journals dating from 1925 to the present, many of which are unavailable in Western libraries. Permission to use this collection is more difficult to obtain than for most other libraries, but with persistence and patience requests will usually be successful.

The Social Science Library has the most readily available collection of recent Vietnamese publications on international relations. Because press runs of Vietnamese-language academic books are quite small, this collection is invaluable for assessing contemporary Vietnamese scholarship on foreign relations. The library of the recently-opened Ho Chi Minh Museum is unfortunately quite unimpressive, holding a wealth of published material on Ho but few important items that are not available elsewhere. Materials on Ho Chi Minh's relations with the Soviet Union and the United States tend to be photocopies of secondary Soviet and American accounts.

The most important library collection in the south is the General Sciences Library in Ho Chi Minh City. Formerly the National Library of South Vietnam, it contains a large number of pre-1975 books and journals published during the Diem and Thieu periods which are potentially invaluable for assessing the attitudes and policies of the South Vietnamese governments. There is also a 200,000-volume English-language collection made up of donations from USAID between 1955 and 1975 which could prove useful for analyzing the nature of cultural diplomacy and development policies during the Cold War. Access to most pre-1975 materials is limited, particularly for Vietnamese scholars, and materials can only be requested and used in a small "restricted" reading room. The library's post-1975 collection is also of potential value to researchers. Works published in the south by southern scholars, in the same limited press runs common in the north, often are not readily available in Hanoi; a full sense of contemporary southern scholarship on Vietnamese foreign relations requires the use of the General Sciences Library.

The library of the Van Hanh Buddhist Research Institute, and its repository at Xa Loi pagoda, in Ho Chi Minh City is another important southern library collection, particularly for understanding the Buddhist protests and urban dissent against the South Vietnamese government in the 1960s, and includes several runs of Buddhist journals from the 1930s to the 1960s.

### **Major Research Institutes and Scholars**

Contemporary historical scholarship in Vietnam remains regulated, directed, and sponsored by the state. The Vietnam Center for the Social Sciences, which reports directly to the Council of Ministers, oversees the major national research institutes in Hanoi. Reforms under *doi moi* have had little impact on the organization and direction of research, but have affected state financial support significantly. State subsidies to research institutions have fallen precipitously, particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the end of some \$1 billion per year in Soviet aid to Vietnam. Research budgets and salaries, already low (the per capita income in Vietnam remains about \$200 per year), became even tighter and institutes and researchers spend an increasing amount of time on money-generating projects in the private sector that take a significant amount of time away from scholarly research. Most scholars hold two or three jobs outside of their institutes to make ends meet. Foreign researchers are often seen as a way to augment declining institute funds. Fees are now charged for almost every aspect of research, from arranging permission to work in libraries and archives to meeting with scholars and interview subjects. The level of these charges is quite erratic, ranging from recouping reasonable expenses for time and transportation to sometimes exorbitant charges for potential access to research collections and interview subjects.<sup>10</sup>

The contemporary history section of the Institute of History in Hanoi is the major scholarly institution with an interest in the Cold War period. There are several scholars affiliated with the institute who have a strong interest in Vietnamese international relations, including the institute's deputy director, Duong Trung Quoc, and Tran Huu Dinh. Several ongoing research projects may make important contributions to the study of the Cold War in Vietnam, including a history of Vietnamese-American relations during World War II and a study of the war in the south during the Johnson Administration. One of the institute's former directors, Bui Dinh Thanh, is about to finish the first full-length Vietnamese monograph on the

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<sup>10</sup>This contrasted quite sharply to my experience as a researcher in Hanoi in the summer of 1989 when sometimes quite extraordinary opportunities were made available to me for interviews and archival access with only the smallest, quite reasonable charges to recoup expenses.

American war in Vietnam. The institute publishes the leading historical journal in Vietnam, *Nghien Cuu Lich Su [Historical Study]*, which often contains articles on the Cold War period.

Most of the scholars whose work focuses on contemporary history (for the Vietnamese, defined as the post-1945 period) complain privately about their own lack of access to Vietnamese archival sources. In fact, some of the most talented historians prefer to focus on precolonial history where access to sources is less difficult and political considerations for scholarship less burdensome. Of the three leading senior historians in Vietnam, only one, Bui Dinh Thanh, focuses on the contemporary period. For contemporary historians, the opportunity to work in American or European archives is rare but particularly prized. Connections and prestige, however, play an important role in determining Vietnamese access to archives and some scholars, like Mr. Thanh, have been able to use a number of important materials in their work.

Several other research institutes, which are not affiliated with the Vietnam Center for the Social Sciences but rather with particular government ministries, are also undertaking work on the Cold War period. Scholars working with these institutes often have unusual access to archival materials but close government supervision of their work limits the scope of their research and conclusions. The Institute for International Affairs, the research arm of the Foreign Ministry, recently published *Chu Tich Ho Chi Minh voi Cong Tac Ngoai Giao [Ho Chi Minh and Foreign Relations]* (Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban Khoa Hoc Xa Hoi, 1990), the most thorough available account of Vietnamese foreign policy in the Cold War period. But, as one researcher in the institute told me, political pressure from the ministry rather than archivally-driven knowledge shaped many of book's conclusions. Researchers with the institute also mentioned an interest in initiating a Vietnamese version of the *Foreign Relations* series, but this seemed to be a quite distant goal.

The Institute of Military History, which operates under the control of the Army, is also an important scholarly actor on Cold War issues. It is more independent than most Vietnamese research institutions, reflecting the relatively liberal character of Army policy on intellectual and cultural matters. In conversations with the institute's director, Col. Hoang Phong, I found him to be particularly forthright and informative about the military dimension of the Cold War period in Vietnam. The institute's journal, *Tap Chi Lich Su Quan Su [Journal of Military History]*, regularly publishes important revisionist scholarship on Vietnamese military history and the military's relationship with the Soviet Union and China. For example, in an issue reassessing the Tet Offensive, the journal featured an essay by General Tran Van Tra, the commander of the NLF forces during the American war. Tra's historical writing since the war has often taken issue

with existing interpretations in Hanoi and has been quite critical of the Hanoi leadership's advice and support for the NLF during the war.<sup>11</sup>

There are several important scholars at the Universities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City whose work bears on the Cold War period. Pham Xanh and Do Quang Hung, historians at the University of Hanoi, are doing interesting work on relations between Stalin and Ho Chi Minh. Beginning with the rise of the ultra-leftist revolutionary line adopted at the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern in 1928, Xanh and Hung argue (based on limited access to archives of the Comintern and the Vietnamese Communist Party), Stalin criticized Ho's emphasis on national liberation rather than proletarian social revolution and remained skeptical of Ho's aims for Vietnam until Mao effected a rapprochement between Stalin and Ho in 1950.<sup>12</sup> At the University of Ho Chi Minh City, historian Vo Van Sen is perhaps the leading authority on the Cold War period in the south. His most recent and, for the Vietnamese, controversial research challenges existing Vietnamese historiography on the American war by considering the ways in which U.S. economic and development aid strengthened the infrastructure and business climate of the south and now serves as a critical factor in explaining the relatively greater prosperity in the south since the reforms under *doi moi*.

### **Vietnamese Cold War Scholarship**

Vietnamese scholarship on the Cold War period must be considered within the larger framework of contemporary historiography and the nature of publishing in Vietnam. Much of Vietnamese historiography follows what one scholar has termed a "master narrative" which stresses uniformity in historical scholarship aimed at demonstrating the homogeneity and permanence of the post-colonial state<sup>13</sup> and emphasizing the historical inevitability of

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<sup>11</sup>Tran Van Tra's *Nhung Chang Duong cua "B2-Thanh Dong": Tap V, Ket Thuc Cuoc Chien Tranh 30 Nam [Stages on the Road of the B2-Bulwark, vol. 5, Concluding the 30 Years War]* (Ho Chi Minh City: Van Nghe Publishing House, 1982) was quickly recalled by the Saigon authorities shortly after its publication and none of the other four volumes has been published. General Tra is part of a group in the south known as the Club of Former Resistance Fighters, all of whom served in the army of the National Liberation Front but grew dissatisfied with Hanoi's policies after reunification in 1976. An English-language version of General Tra's essay on the Tet Offensive was recently published in the United States as "Tet: The 1968 General Offensive and General Uprising" in Jayne S. Werner and Luu Doan Huynh, eds., *The Vietnam War: Vietnamese and American Perspectives*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 37-65.

<sup>12</sup>Do Quang Hung explores aspects of the relationship between Stalin and Ho in the 1930s in "Chu Tich Ho Chi Minh Trong Thoi Ky 1934-1938, Roi Sang Them Cho Van De Dan Toc Hay Quoc Te?" [Ho Chi Minh in the Period 1934-38, Clearly for Nationalism or Internationalism?] in *Ho Chi Minh: Anh Hung Giai Phong Dan Toc Danh Hanh Van Hoa* (Hanoi: Social Science Publishing House, 1990), 28-36.

<sup>13</sup>Patricia M. Pelley's forthcoming thesis, *Writing Revolution: The New History in Post-Colonial Vietnam* (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University) carefully examines the role played by historians to legitimate the historical novelty of the newly independent Vietnamese state. Focusing on the development of a nationalist and

Vietnamese victory in the Indochina wars. The complex processes of decolonization in Vietnam are usually rendered in solely Marxist terms or by reference to the heroic resistance of the Vietnamese masses.

Most scholarly monographs follow research agendas set by research institutes or the state Social Science Committee and are carefully vetted before publication. Scholars wishing to submit a manuscript to a journal must first obtain permission from the director of their research institute and append the director's comments on the manuscript. Financial considerations limit the number of works published each year and even those monographs approved for publication may wait several years before coming into print. Three publishing houses produce most of the existing materials on the Cold War period. Most scholarly monographs are produced by the Social Sciences Publishing House, supervised by the Vietnam Committee for the Social Sciences. The Armed Forces Publishing House releases most military histories, official documents from the French and American wars, and fiction and poetry on the Indochina wars written by members of the Armed forces. The Party uses its Truth Publishing House to print official documents and the works of the top leadership.

More forthright, vigorous, and sometimes pointed historiographical debate emerges in private discussions with historians. Private manuscripts, often quite critical of established historical interpretations, are circulated informally among colleagues and form an important counterpoint to the largely formulaic printed discourse. Public seminars and academic conferences also reflect a wider range of opinion than that reflected by printed scholarship, though the written proceedings of conferences almost never explicate the nature of what is usually termed a "lively debate." The Institute of International Affairs staff seemed the best informed on Cold War issues of the researchers I met in Vietnam and my private conversations with them yielded quite interesting interpretations which significantly challenged existing Western and Vietnamese accounts of key developments.

Most studies of foreign relations are highly politicized and only very infrequently display an independent point of view. In most of the scholarly literature from 1955 to the mid-1980s, appellations such as "colonialists" for the French, "fascists" for the Japanese, and "imperialists" for the Americans substitute for a careful analysis of Vietnam's relationship with the Great

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culturalist conception of the Vietnamese state after 1955, Pelley convincingly suggests that the stress on state homogeneity and permanence in Vietnamese historiography obscures the presence of historically conditioned internal divisions such as ethnic heterogeneity, differing historical settlement patterns in the North and South, and the tenuous links between regional economies.



Powers. Since 1986, the changing international outlook of the Vietnamese government under *doi moi* is also reflected in scholarship. As the Vietnamese state seeks better relations with Japan, the United States, and the Southeast Asian region, periods of harmony in relations with these countries are now stressed in recent historical scholarship. Increasing attention is focused on the World War II period in Vietnamese-American relations, with frequent scholarly articles in journals and the popular press focusing on Roosevelt's Indochina policy and the activities of the OSS units in Vietnam. Little new material from the Vietnamese side emerges in these articles, nor do Vietnamese and American aims and policies receive rigorous critical scrutiny; rather, many of these works seem designed to assert a remembered golden past at a time when the current government policy seeks closer ties to the United States.<sup>14</sup>

Some of these articles, however, play an important scholarly function within Vietnam. With limited access to Vietnamese and Western primary sources and Western interpretive accounts, Vietnamese historians use these articles to introduce their colleagues to the European and American scholarly literature on Vietnamese international relations. They are also an important way to draw attention to published collections of American and French documents that, for the Vietnamese audience, contain valuable new source materials.<sup>15</sup>

Scholarship on Vietnamese relations with the Soviet Union and China is more revealing. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and a conscious attempt by the state to distance itself from Soviet failures, scholars now have freer reign to explore more critically the nature of Soviet-Vietnamese relations. Though archival access to Vietnamese sources is still limited, some scholars, many of whom were originally trained in Moscow, have been able to use the recently opened Comintern archives. While much of this work remains suggestive, and awaits confirmation in Vietnamese source material, it marks a significant departure from the relatively uncritical analysis of Soviet relations prior to 1990. Among the most interesting interpretations to emerge are the works of University of Hanoi historians Pham Xanh and Do Quang Hung

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<sup>14</sup>See, e.g., Nguyen Xuan Bon, "Bac Ho Voi Ngoai My Truoc Cach Mang Thang Tam" [Ho Chi Minh and the Americans Before the August Revolution], *Quan He Quoc Te [World Affairs]* 7 (May 1990), 8-12, as well as frequent articles in the daily national newspaper *Nhan Dan* beginning in 1990. Studies of relations with Japan and Southeast Asia also follow this pattern. Recent histories of relations between Vietnam and Japan stress the education of Vietnamese nationalists in Japan as part of the Go East Movement in the early part of the century rather than the more difficult World War II period. For Southeast Asia, timeless cultural parallels are emphasized rather than recent and present-day political and social differences; see, for instance, Nguyen Duy Quy, ed., *Unity in Diversity: Cooperation between Vietnam and other Southeast Asian Countries* (Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 1992).

<sup>15</sup> Examples of this sort of work include Tran Huu Dinh, "Tiep Xuc Viet-My 1945" [Vietnamese-American Encounters in 1945], *Nghien Cuu Lich Su* 4 (1990), 44-49 and Ngoc An, "Bo Doi Viet-My" [The Vietnamese-American Army], *Tap Chi Lich Su Quan Su* 10 (September 1986), 18-19, 31.

discussed earlier. Increased attention has also been devoted to Vietnamese-Chinese relations, drawing in part on recently published Chinese memoirs and monographs. A Vietnamese edition of a work first prepared in China, *Ho Chi Minh voi Trung Quoc [Ho Chi Minh and China]* (New Morning Publishing House, 1990), contains important new material on relations between Vietnam and the PRC in the 1950s and early 1960s.

A number of important memoirs, published documents, and official histories are now available on the Cold War period. Luu Van Loi, who was a member of the Vietnamese delegation to the Paris peace talks, has published the first volume of his memoirs entitled *Tiep Xuc Bi Mat Viet Nam-Hoa Ky Truoc Hoi Nghi Pa-ri [Secret Negotiations between Vietnam and the United States before the Paris Meetings]* (Hanoi: Vien Quan He Quoc Te, 1990). The second volume, which focuses on the negotiations in Paris, is scheduled for publication in 1994. Hoang Van Hoan, who organized Vietnamese communist activities in Thailand and served as Ambassador to China, defected to China and published his memoirs there as *Giot Nuoc Trong Bien Ca (Hoi Ky Cach Mang) [A Drop in the Ocean (Memoirs of Revolution)]* (Beijing (?): Tin Viet Nam, 1986). Bui Tin, a veteran of the French and American wars, former deputy editor of the party daily *Nhan Dan*, and the highest ranking recent defector from Vietnam, has published his memoirs as *Hoa Xuyen Tuyet: Hoa Ky [Flowers Through the Snow: Memoirs]* (Irvine, CA: Ban Nhan Quyen, 1991). The full text of his extensive interviews with the BBC shortly after his defection to France was published as *Thanh Tin Tran Tinh [Tranh Tin (pseudonym for Bui Tin) Sets the Record Straight]* (Paris: Doan Ket, 1991). A planned English-language edition of his memoirs, to be published in 1994, reportedly contains additional new materials. On the centennial of Ho Chi Minh's birth in 1990, the publication of Ho's complete works was completed in Hanoi as *Ho Chi Minh Toan Tap, Tap 1-10* (Hanoi: Su That, 1984-1990). These volumes contain a number of significant materials unavailable in previous English, French, and Vietnamese-language collections of his works.

Collections of official documents with useful material on the Cold War period include: *Tai Lieu Tham Khao Lich Su Cach Mang Can Dai Viet Nam, Tap 1-12 [Research Documents on the History of Vietnam's Modern Revolution, Vols. 1-12]* (Hanoi: Van Su Dia, 1955-58); *Tai Lieu Tham Khao Cach Mang Thang Tam (Tong Khoi Nghia o Hanoi va Cac Dia Phuong), Tap 1-2 [Research Documents on the August Revolution (in the General Uprising in Hanoi and Other Regions), Vols. 1-2]* (Hanoi: Van Su Hoc, 1960); *Van Kien Dang, 1945-54, Tap 1-3 [Party Documents, 1945-54, Vols. 1-3]* (Hanoi, 1979); and *Van Kien Dang ve Khang Chien Chong Thuc Dan Phap [Party Documents on the Resistance War against the French Colonialists]* (Hanoi: Su That, 1986). An important compilation of party newspapers articles

covering the period from September 1945 to July 1954 with frequent reference to foreign affairs is *Cuoc Khang Chien Than Thanh cua Nhan Dan Viet Nam, Tap 1-4 [The Sacred Resistance War of the Vietnamese People, Vol. 1-4]* (Hanoi: Su That, 1958-60).

Important official studies of the French and American wars include: *Ba Muoi Nam Dau Tranh cua Dang, Tap 1-2 [The Party's Thirty Years of Struggle, Vols. 1-2]* (Hanoi, n.d.); *Cuoc Khang Chien Chang Thuc Dan Phap va Can Thiep My o Han Noi [The Resistance War Against French Colonialism and American Intervention in Hanoi]* (Hanoi, 1980); and *Lich Su Quan Doi Nhan Dan Viet Nam [History of the People's Army of Vietnam]* (Hanoi, Quan Doi Nhan Dan, 1974).

### **Fiction, History, and Counter-Hegemonic Discourse**

The nature and aims of Vietnamese literature have profoundly shifted under the *doi moi* reforms, with important implications for understanding Vietnamese perceptions of the Cold War period. The Vietnamese Communist Party's decision in December 1986 to permit greater literary freedom has resulted in the appearance of several new major literary figures in northern Vietnam whose work significantly departs from the social realism that had characterized Vietnamese literature since the 1940s. The works of these authors, poets, and dramatists, often sharply critical of contemporary Vietnamese society and the recent Vietnamese past, have become hugely popular with Vietnamese readers.<sup>16</sup> Unlike historians and other scholars whose work tends to be quite carefully regulated by the state, these writers have been allowed a great deal of freedom of expression and their works appear particularly popular as they give voice to what has largely been a muted, counter-hegemonic discourse.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>For two excellent analyses of the literature of dissent in contemporary Vietnam, see Greg Lockhart, "Introduction" in Nguyen Huy Thiep, *The General Retires and Other Stories* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1-38; and Peter Zinoman, "Nguyen Huy Thiep's 'Vang Lua' and the Nature of Intellectual Dissent in Contemporary Vietnam," *Viet Nam Generation* 4.1-2 (Spring 1992), 61-4.

<sup>17</sup>There have been significant oscillations in state policy toward literature since 1986. In December 1988, the editor of *Van Nghe (Literature and Art)* was sacked for publishing short stories deemed too critical of corruption in government, an action that dampened literary activity for a number of months. In 1991, one of the leading new writers, Duong Thu Huong, was held under house arrest for six months for her public attacks on "the pretense of a proletarian dictatorship" in Vietnam. Most recently, a short story entitled "The Prophecy," which moved beyond criticism of particular weaknesses in Vietnamese society to call into question Ho Chi Minh's vision for a socialist Vietnam, dominated discussion at a party plenum in January 1993 and prompted renewed demands by the party to curb the critical scope of literature. These efforts have met with only mixed success. Works of key dissident writers remain easily available in Hanoi and new works continue to appear which bear little or no evidence of official censorship.

Novels by Le Luu, Duong Thu Huong, and Bao Ninh<sup>18</sup> on the American war in Vietnam consciously attempt to move beyond revolutionary heroism, the guiding trope not only of literature but also most historical accounts of the war. Rather than portraying the war as a heroic struggle by noble Communists against American puppets, these works focus on individual suffering and responsibility, the minimal importance of ideology for soldiers in the field, and the complex and sometimes savage wartime relations between northerners and southerners. All three authors--including Duong Thu Huong, who is a women--are veterans of the American war, giving their novels particular authority and immediacy. Given the constraints on current historical scholarship, these novels are particularly important for understanding Vietnamese perspectives on the nature of the Cold War.

An earlier novel by Duong Thu Huong, focusing on the land reform campaign of the mid-1950s, is also significant for scholars of the Cold War period.<sup>19</sup> The novel crosscuts between the narrator's experiences as a guest worker in the Soviet Union in the 1980s and the experiences of the narrator's extended family during and after the land reform campaign. The excesses of the land reform campaign, organized on Leninist principles and implemented under Chinese guidance, were perhaps the major failure of the Vietnamese Communists before 1975. Only recently have people in the north spoken openly of this period in which many thousands were killed and arrested, and Huong's novel gives voice to the stories of family tragedy that emerge in private conversations. Soviet and Chinese influence in the land reform campaign was extremely important and Huong's novel is particularly helpful in considering the impact of the Cold War at the level of social history.

### **An American In Vietnam**

The drive to learn English and the craze for things American was in full-force during my 1992 trip to Vietnam.<sup>20</sup> Most people seem to feel the American embargo will be lifted sooner rather than later and expect, quite unrealistically I think, a flood of U.S. investment and businesses. Vietnamese attitudes toward Americans are very friendly and it was relatively easy

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<sup>18</sup> Le Luu, *Thoi Xa Vang [The Old Days]* (Hanoi: Tac Pham Moi, 1987); Duong Thu Huong, *Tieu Thuyet Vo De [Untitled]* (Stanton, CA: Van Nghe, 1991); and Bao Ninh, *Noi Buon Chien Tranh [Sorrows of War]* (Westminster, CA: Hong Linh, 1992). All three novels are tentatively scheduled for publication in English-language editions by British and American publishers in 1994. Portions of Duong Thu Huong's *Untitled* were recently published in *Grand Street* 45 (1993), 11-44.

<sup>19</sup>Duong Thu Huong, *Paradise of the Blind* (New York: William Morrow, 1992).

<sup>20</sup>This marked a sharp contrast with my research trip in 1989, when spoken English was extremely uncommon and most people seemed quite reticent to have contact with foreigners except through official channels.

to meet and socialize with colleagues and their families in their homes. Public expression of bitterness over the war is rare. In what almost became a mantra, practically every Vietnamese I met, from government officials to rural villagers, told me that the Vietnamese had never disliked the American people, only the policies of the American government.

Several experiences, however, convinced me that Vietnamese attitudes toward the war and Americans were considerably more complex. Some incidents were comical and seemed to represent a certain confusion among party officials about the correct line to take toward Americans. At a luncheon ceremony honoring the Buddha's birthday at Quan Su pagoda, the largest Buddhist temple in the north, one party leader's speech celebrated the Vietnamese victory over the "American imperialists." When the other guests interrupted him to point out he was sitting next to me, there was general laughter and some embarrassment all around.

Other incidents were more troubling and complicated. One morning I sat with two older women on a bench near the lake in the center of Hanoi. Conversation turned to who I was and what I was doing in Vietnam. One of the women quickly began an angry and forceful denunciation of Americans for their role in the war. Her companion immediately tried to quiet her down and hurriedly raised the usual distinction between the American government and people. Similarly, lay leaders of a Buddhist temple just outside of Hanoi that sustained heavy American bombing during the war spoke quite negatively about Americans and American policy during the war but welcomed the state's current efforts to seek closer relations with the United States.

While the state policies concerning archival access posed significant limitations for my work in Vietnam, I found many of the researchers I worked with eager to assist me in my research and extremely willing in private conversations to discuss historiographical issues quite forthrightly. On the whole, I was spared some of the larger "fees" that some foreign researchers have been asked to pay. In part, I believe this is a result of having worked in Vietnam in 1989. The relationships with scholars I formed then deepened in 1992 and I believe these scholars sometimes shielded me from the more avaricious state officials who sometimes supervised the libraries and archives in which I worked. Nonetheless, like many researchers, I spent a considerable amount of time bargaining down officials for photocopying costs, user fees, and other research costs.

Living expenses for foreigners have shot up since my work in Vietnam in 1989. At that time, it was possible live in Hanoi for between \$50 and \$75 per month. With the heightened

presence of UN and NGO officials and European and Asian businesspeople since 1990, living expenses are now much higher. A reasonable monthly rent for a small and none-too-luxurious set of rooms is at least \$300 per month and, with food, probably closer to \$500 per month. While Ho Chi Minh City has begun to take on many of the less pleasant attributes of larger cities in Southeast Asia like Bangkok and Manila, the older sections of Hanoi dating from the pre-colonial and colonial periods remain extremely pleasant. Also, Hanoi's preeminence as the artistic and intellectual center of Vietnam along with the relatively small size and openness of Hanoi's intellectual elite makes it easy for foreigners to mix in intellectual circles and attend Vietnamese theatre, musical concerts, and artistic exhibitions.

Freedom to travel into the countryside is also much greater than it was in 1989 and is constantly improving. In 1989, it was extremely difficult to travel out of major urban centers. By the spring and summer of 1992, it was possible to gain permission to visit outlying areas on day-trips and researchers were receiving permission to undertake sustained village-level field work. Recently, almost all travel restrictions for foreigners have been dropped and visits to rural areas can easily be undertaken without the time-consuming process of obtaining official permissions.

### **Potential Collaborative Projects on the Cold War**

International projects of scholarly assistance and collaboration can play an important role in addressing some of the problems encountered in Vietnam by local and foreign researchers on the Cold War period. The reduction in funding for research, the lack of access to important research collections, and the isolation of the Vietnamese research community from Western methods and sources inevitably introduces a certain parochialism into Vietnamese scholarship. Several existing projects aimed at improving archival and library collections and staff training are likely to address some of these problems. A consortium of international libraries is working to develop an international union catalog of Vietnamese books housed in collections in Vietnam, Western Europe, Australia, and the United States; it will eventually result in a computerized database accessible to scholars in the West and Vietnam.<sup>21</sup> Several existing training programs

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<sup>21</sup> The Vietnam Union Catalog project was initiated at a conference on Vietnamese literature held at Harvard University in 1982 and currently includes the participation of libraries in Vietnam, France, the United States, and Australia. At a June 1993 meeting of the project in Bangkok, libraries in Great Britain, Singapore, and Japan indicated interest in joining the project. The American effort, funded by the Henry Luce Foundation, is currently headed by Fe Susan Go, the Southeast Asian librarian at the University of Michigan. The *CORMOSEA Bulletin*, a publication of the Association for Asian Studies' Committee on Research Materials on Southeast Asia, provides regular updates on the progress on the Union catalog. The

for Vietnamese archivists and librarians in Australia, France, and the United States have improved curatorial practices markedly.<sup>22</sup>

Fewer international efforts have been directed to the research needs of Vietnamese scholars, particularly historians of contemporary history with greatest interest in the Cold War period. Two recently-initiated projects are likely to be important in facilitating scholarly exchanges between Vietnamese and American researchers. First, the *Journal of American History (JAH)* has recently appointed a Vietnamese contributing editor as part of its ongoing internationalization project. Current Vietnamese scholarship on the Cold War period, both monographs and journal articles, will now be listed in *JAH* on a quarterly basis along with similar information on works by American scholars. The journal will also be distributed to major research institutes and libraries in Vietnam. Second, several American publishers have indicated interest in publishing English-language translations of important Vietnamese monographs and memoirs, including those discussed earlier by Bui Dinh Thanh and Luu Van Loi.

While these projects are important first steps toward a greater appreciation for Vietnamese scholarship on the Cold War period, much more could be done. Two projects would be especially valuable for Vietnamese and American scholars. Given the declining level of funding for research in Vietnam, however, both would require almost exclusive funding on the American side. First, a number of contemporary historians in Vietnam would benefit immensely from a period of research and training in the United States. Not only are Vietnamese historians eager to become more familiar with Western methodologies and interpretative approaches, but they are keen to use available source materials in the United States. This is particularly true for contemporary historians whose scholarship is significantly hampered by Vietnamese restrictions on archival access. While both Cornell and Harvard Universities now bring Vietnamese scholars to the United States on a regular basis, neither program seeks out historians of the Cold War period; of the more than one hundred scholars that have come to the United States through the Harvard program, only one has been a specialist in contemporary Vietnamese history.

Second, a conference that gathered Vietnamese and Western scholars to discuss sources and interpretations of the Cold War period would be invaluable, particularly as Vietnamese

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*CORMOSEA Bulletin* address is c/o Association for Asian Studies; 1 Lane Hall, University of Michigan; Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

<sup>22</sup> During the 1993-94 academic year, six librarians from the National Library in Hanoi, and the General Sciences Library in Ho Chi Minh City, and the Social Science Committee library in Hanoi, will study at Simmons College School of Library and Information Science in a program funded by the Harvard-Yenching Institute. Upon their return to Vietnam, they will oversee Vietnamese participation in the Vietnam Union Catalog.

scholars tend to speak with more candor in discussions than in their written work. By organizing a conference in Asia rather than the United States, the likelihood of drawing in a larger number of Vietnamese scholars from both northern and southern Vietnam and generating a greater diversity of viewpoints would be enhanced. As I suggested earlier, there is a great deal of quite interesting unpublished work on Vietnamese relations with the Soviet Union and China that could form a useful part of the agenda for such a conference. Sessions with directors of leading archives in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City could also play an important role in encouraging increased archival access. While the setting for such a conference could be Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City, a conference held in neighboring Thailand might allow the Vietnamese participants to speak more freely than they would in Vietnam on what remain quite sensitive foreign policy issues.



## **The Archives of Vietnam and the Indochina Wars**

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Scholars of the Indochina Wars, 1945-1979, can now locate and consult extensive and useful materials in Vietnam. Since 1989, the Hanoi government has made a commitment to a policy of openness toward foreign researchers. Under this refreshing new program, a handful of Western historians<sup>23</sup> has been permitted to read materials related to the wars at the National Archives Center, and various libraries, museums, and research institutes in Hanoi. The vast majority of policy documents, however, are still controlled by the Ministry of the Interior which has been the least cooperative of all government ministries to foreign researchers. Furthermore, the records of the Foreign Ministry and the Army have not been deposited in the national archives and remain closed to researchers. The dossiers of the Vietnam Workers' Party (VWP) Central Committee and Politburo are also closed.<sup>24</sup> A systematic archival search of the key Party decisions during the war years remains, therefore, impossible.

### **National Archives**

For research at the National Archives Center, foreign scholars must first receive a research visa from one of the institutes of the Social Sciences Committee of Vietnam.<sup>25</sup> A short abstract of the project should accompany the original visa request, although a more detailed plan of study will be requested in the initial interview at the institute. Visiting researchers should be warned that the institute and archives will not have prepared in advance for your research. With limited funds, the Social Sciences Committee desires to use its resources judiciously so it will not start gathering secondary works, bibliographies, people to be interviewed, etc., until the researcher actually arrives in Hanoi and has the initial interview. Patience and good humor are the two most important items that foreign scholars can bring with them to Hanoi.

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<sup>23</sup> Mark Bradley, Harvard University; Robert Brigham, University of Kentucky; David Marr, Australian National University; Patricia Pelley, Cornell University; Stein Tonnesson, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies; and Peter Zinoman, Cornell University.

<sup>24</sup> These materials are held by the Institute of Party History which is under the direct control of the Vietnamese Communist Party.

<sup>25</sup> For addresses consult: *Viet-Nam Committee for Social Sciences: Resume* (Hanoi: Social Sciences Committee, 1989).

At the first meeting with the institute staff, visiting scholars are assigned a Viet colleague to guide them through the maze of possibilities, opportunities, and obstacles of research in Vietnam and to introduce them to the archive's director. The director grants scholars access to the archive's directories, and, later, to the documents themselves. In general, if permission is granted to view documents from the archives, the historian then surveys the inventory list and fills out request forms for individual dossiers. There is no specific twenty- or thirty- year rule. The archive's director approves or rejects each request solely on the current sensitivity of the documents. Usually, there is a one-day wait between submitting the dossier request and actually reading the documents at the archives. The reading room at Archives Center has good natural lighting, but is hot and humid from June through October. Although the reading room can hold up to twenty people, there were never more than four at one time while I was there. In fact, the archives only averages one hundred researchers per month and seventy percent of these request dossiers related to specific government economic programs or construction projects.<sup>26</sup> (I was told by the History Institute staff that there have been less than ten Americans in the archives in recent years and that I was the first dealing with the period 1960-1975.) There is a photocopier available, but it is often in need of repair. The cost is \$0.35 per page plus an additional \$5.00 service charge. The electrical current in Vietnam will not support most Western-made portable computers without a special adapter. Since the availability of electricity is always questionable and the climate harsh, researchers will do well to take notes on cards. All material leaving the archive must be cleared by the reading room director. This includes most note cards, a policy to which many scholars have objected.

The National Archives Center in Hanoi (Luu Tru I) is divided into two major sections: colonial and post-colonial documents.<sup>27</sup> There are over forty different collections in the pre-1945 section, the largest being that the Gouvernement General de l'Indochine. Historians of the colonial period will want to examine the collection of the Residence Superieure au Tonkin. City and provincial administrative documents from 1886-1945 have been preserved in the archive along with court documents from Hanoi, Haiphong, and Da Nang. The archive contains the records of several leading colonial

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<sup>26</sup> Duong van Kham, ed., *Trung Tam Luu Tru Quoc Gia-1*, [National Archive Center Number One], (Hanoi: State Archival Bureau, 1989).

<sup>27</sup> For more information on the National Archives Center-1, scholars should consult Duong van Kham, ed., *Trung tam Luu Tru Quoc Gia-1* [National Archive Center Number One] (Hanoi: State Archival Bureau, 1989).

enterprises, including the Yunnan Railway Company, Nam Dinh Textile Company, and Hon Gia Coal Company. The engineering plans of colonial buildings, roads, prisons, bridges, canals, and railroads are contained in a special science and technology section of the archive.

The post-1945 section is organized into fifty different collections. Documents from the Democratic Republic of Vietnam's National Assembly (1945 to the present) are the most complete, but the collection of the Prime Minister's Office also contains hundreds of important files on such matters as propaganda, international relations, land reform, and domestic politics. The collection of the Ministry of the Interior is strong on local administration, ethnic affairs, and social welfare and domestic security issues. The archive also houses important documents of the Ministry of Finance, the State Planning Commission, and the Ministry of Education, along with more than 9,000 volumes of post-1945 publications, including the complete set of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam/Socialist Republic of Vietnam's *Cong Bao* [Official Journal].

Unfortunately, many of these collections remain closed to scholars. In 1989 and again in 1992, I did not have access to a significant number of Party documents and materials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Viet historians have also been denied the use of these dossiers.<sup>28</sup> My dissertation is a study of the National Liberation Front's (NLF) foreign relations and their impact on the conduct and outcome of the American War in Vietnam.<sup>29</sup> Naturally, I wanted to consult reports of the NLF's Foreign Relations Commission, the papers of Front diplomats, minutes from key Party Congresses, and the dossiers on the Paris peace talks.<sup>30</sup> Although many of my requests remained under consideration at the time of my departure, history Professor Vu Huy Phuc and an assistant at the Archives, Dao Thi Dien, skillfully guided me to several important documents in Party publications, officially-sanctioned histories, historiographical essays, and numerous periodicals.<sup>31</sup> Much to my surprise, many of the dossiers closed to researchers in the National Archives have been published or preserved elsewhere.

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<sup>28</sup> Author interview with Viet historians in July 1989 and in June and July 1992 at the History Institute in Hanoi.

<sup>29</sup> Robert K. Brigham, *The National Liberation Front's Foreign Relations and the Viet-Nam War*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of History, The University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky.

<sup>30</sup> Before my 1992 research trip to Hanoi, I had done a source survey in Vietnam in 1989. I had also completed a systematic investigation into materials at the Indochina Archive in Berkeley, California, and the Echols Collection at Cornell University.

<sup>31</sup> For example, *Lich Su Khong Chien Chong My, Cuu Nuoc, 1954-1975* [History of the anti-American War of Resistance for the National Salvation of the Fatherland, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Su That, 1991); Luu Quy

For example, in December 1963, the VWP held its Ninth Central Committee Meeting in Hanoi to discuss the future of the revolution in the South. At this meeting, the Party decided in favor of a greater military role for the North in the southern struggle because the NLF had not brought about Diem's collapse. The VWP was also critical of the Front's foreign relations and was particularly incensed by NLF Secretary General Nguyen van Hieu's calls for South Vietnamese neutralism. As a result, the VWP "regularized" or "communized" the NLF and many of its outspoken diplomats were re-assigned to insignificant posts. The minutes from these important meetings are closed in the National Archive, but are summarized in the February 1964 issue of *Hoc Tap* [Study], the Party's theoretical journal, and in the 21 January 1964 issue of *Nhan Dan* [The People]. In addition, selected VWP documents are also available to Western researchers through Party-sanctioned compilations including *Viet-Nam Nhung Su Kien Lich Su* [Viet-Nam's Historical Events], *Cach Mang Can Dai Viet-Nam* [Viet-Nam's Modern Revolution, Volumes One-Five], and *Lich Su Dang Cong San Viet-Nam* [History of the Viet Communist Party].<sup>32</sup>

Naturally, there are serious problems with official Party histories, especially when dealing with the National Liberation Front. Because of Hanoi's postwar policy of neglect toward the revolutionary contribution of the NLF, little documentation is available in Vietnam on the origins, character, nature, and policies of the Front that is not seen through VWP lenses. The Party has concluded that its own history will read better if its role in the southern revolution is inflated, a position ironically supported throughout the war by American policy makers.<sup>33</sup> The job, therefore, of scholars interested in the NLF is

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Ky, "Cang Ngoan Co va Gian Doi De Quoc My Cang Them co Lap!" [The American Imperialists Stand in Isolation Because of Our Cause!], *Hoc Tap* 150 (July 1968), 74-81; Phan Hien, "Vua Danh, Vua Dam Trong Chong My, Cuu Nuoc" [Fighting and Negotiating During the anti-American War for National Salvation of the Fatherland], *Lich Su Quan Su* 25 (January 1988), 74-95; Tran Huy Lieu "Gan Lien Cuoc Chien Tranh Nhan Dan Vi Dai Cua Ta Voi Su Ung Ho To Long Cua Cac Ban Quoc Te" [Join the anti-War Peoples of the United States and the International Community in Support of Our Revolution], *Nghien Cuu Lich Su* 109 (April 1968), 1-4; and "Danh va Dam" [Fighting While Negotiating], *Nghien Cuu Lich Su* 111 (June 1968), 1-14.

<sup>32</sup> *Viet-Nam Nhung Su Kien Lich Su* (Hanoi: Su That, 1990); *Cach Mang Can Dai Viet-Nam*, vols. 1-5, (Hanoi: Su That, 1940-1966); and *Lich Su Dang Cong San Viet-Nam* (Hanoi: Su That, 1980).

<sup>33</sup> There exist only a few documents and histories that tell the story of the founding of the NLF that is now so readily accepted in the West. According to these sources, in January 1959 Party leaders in Hanoi decided to change tactics in the South and approved of the addition of military struggle to the political struggle movement. This decision evolved into an operational directive in May 1959, and in September 1960, at the VWP's Third National Congress, the decision to create the NLF was made. Unfortunately, most Western studies have relied on limited studies created in Hanoi such as *An Outline History of the Vietnam Workers' Party, 1930-1970* (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1970), 108-109; *Cuoc Khang Chien Chong My Cuu Nuoc, 1954-1975: Nhung Su Kien Quan Su* [The Anti-U.S. Resistance War

to piece together its history through a combination of non-traditional sources. I interviewed several former members of the Front, gained access to all of its radio broadcasts and press releases, searched the photographs in the archive, and consulted the growing literature of its former members. What emerges from this study is the realization that the NLF was both communist and southern. Its leaders often disagreed on tactics and strategy with Party officials in Hanoi and there were significant psycho-cultural differences that promoted regional tension within the revolution. These factors had a tremendous impact on the development and implementation of the NLF's foreign relations, and, therefore, played an important role in the conduct and outcome of the Second Indochina War.

### **Libraries, Museums, and Institutes**

The most important aspect of any research trip to Vietnam is the contact with the staff at the host institute. Generally, visiting scholars are assigned a colleague with similar research interests. In my own case, Professor Phuc guided me on tours of the Ho Chi Minh Museum, the Museum of Revolution, and the National History Museum; at each of these stops, I asked for photocopies of materials on display and received them within twenty-four hours. Interviews with Viet scholars and government officials, such as Pham van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap, and Nguyen thi Binh, are easily arranged. At the initial interview, a bibliography is developed and these items are photocopied or purchased for scholars by the Institute staff. I returned to the United States with thirty to forty books, over one hundred essays, and scores of unpublished NLF documents. Toward the end of each visit, foreign researchers are joined by Viet scholars in "roundtable" discussions. These seminars are invaluable and proved to be the highlight of my trip to Hanoi.

### **Future of Research**

The staff at the various research institutes and the director of the National Archives are eager to develop cooperative arrangements with foreign scholars and institutions. Such agreements already exist with the National Archives of France, Cornell

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for National Salvation, 1954-1975: Military Events] (Hanoi: People's Army Publishing House, 1980), 45-46; and Le Duan, "Political Report of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party," *Third National Congress of the Vietnam Workers' Party, Documents*, vol. 1, (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1961), 62-63.

University, the State University of New York at Binghamton, the University of Washington, the University of Wisconsin, the publisher and editor of *Vietnam Generation* and *Vietnam Forum*, and the universities affiliated with the Southeast Asian Summer Studies Institute (SEASSI).<sup>34</sup> The United Nations has shown sporadic interest in microfilming various materials in Vietnam as has the staff of the Echols Collection at Cornell University. In 1990, the Japanese government promised funds for a new archive building and technical equipment in Ho Chi Minh City, but work had not begun as of mid-1992.<sup>35</sup> More recently, the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, located in Copenhagen, has begun to develop a European network (EUROSEAS) to advance the study of Vietnamese history and facilitate closer contacts between Vietnamese and foreign scholars. On 18-20 August 1993 the institute hosted a conference on “Vietnam Between China and the West” that gathered over a hundred scholars, including about ten from Vietnam, to discuss recent scholarship based on newly available sources; plans also exist to hold a conference on sources on Vietnamese studies in Aix-en-Provence, France, in late 1994 or early 1995.<sup>36</sup>

Still, despite the increasing contact with foreign scholars, there is a desperate need for more adequate care and preservation of Vietnam’s collections. With increased use by foreign scholars, perhaps archivists and historians can persuade international institutions and the Hanoi government to take a more active interest in Vietnam’s documented past. Accompanying preservation and conservation projects, however, must be a dramatic change in Hanoi’s access practices.

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<sup>34</sup> Kali Tal is the publisher of *Viet-Nam Generation* and Dan Duffy serves as its editor. Duffy also edits *Viet-Nam Forum*. Correspondence can be addressed to: 18 Center Road, Woodbridge, Connecticut, USA 06525. Universities participating in the Southeast Asia Summer Studies Institute include: Arizona State University; the University of British Columbia; the University of California-Berkeley; Cornell University; the University of Hawaii at Manoa; the University of Illinois-Champaign; the University of Kentucky; the University of Michigan; Northern Illinois University; Ohio University; the University of Oregon; the University of Washington; the University of Wisconsin-Madison; and Yale University.

<sup>35</sup> There already exists a second archive in Ho Chi Minh City, National Archive-2. This collection contains the Nguyen Dynasty Collection, the papers of the Cochinchina Governors, some of Bao Dai’s papers, and the documents of the First (1955-1963) and Second (1963-1975) Republics of the Republic of Viet-Nam.

<sup>36</sup> For further information, contact the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, Njalsgade 84, 2300 Copenhagen-S, Denmark, Fax: (+45) 32-96-25-30.

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