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**‘All For Front Line, All For Victory’:  
An Examination and Evaluation of Leaflets  
used by the North Vietnamese National  
Liberation Front during the Winter-Spring  
Campaign 1967-1968**

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## **‘All for Front Line, All for Victory’**

### **An Examination and Evaluation of Leaflets used by the North Vietnamese National Liberation Front during the Winter-Spring Campaign 1967-1968**



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<sup>1</sup> Taken from E. Lester, 'A Guide to the Microfilm Edition of Vietnam War Research Collection: Vietnam Documents and Research Notes Series', *Vietnam War Research Collection* (1992), p. viii.

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List of Abbreviations

<i>BLVC</i>	British Library Vietnamese Collection
<i>CTZ</i>	Corps Tactical Zones
<i>COSVN</i>	Central Office for South Vietnam
<i>DRV</i>	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
<i>GVN</i>	Government of the Republic of Vietnam
<i>HFPC</i>	Sergeant Major Herbert Friedman's Private Collection
<i>JUSPAO</i>	Joint US Public Affairs Office
<i>LHMA</i>	Liddell Hart Military Archive, London
<i>NVA</i>	North Vietnamese Army
<i>NLF</i>	National Liberation Front
<i>PSYOP</i>	Psychological Operations
<i>PAVN</i>	People's Army of Vietnam
<i>SVA</i>	South Vietnamese Army
<i>VC</i>	Vietnamese Communists, or Viet Cong
<i>VDRN</i>	Vietnamese Documents and Research Notes Series
<i>VWP</i>	Vietnamese Workers Party

## Introduction

By 1966-1967, Hanoi was facing crisis-point in their attempts to liberate South Vietnam and defeat Saigon's American ally. Suffering numerous casualties and a dwindling supply of resources, calls were made for a revision in Hanoi's military strategy. In April 1967, General Nguyễn Chí Thanh the head of Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) had devised a domestic and military strategy labelled General Offensive and Uprising.<sup>2</sup> This strategy focused on the abolishment of protracted guerrilla warfare and pursuit of peaceful negotiations with the US, instead launching a series of offensives targeting major population centres in Corps Tactical Zones (CTZ) I-IV between 1967-68; this was known to the North Vietnamese as the Winter-Spring Campaign. Alongside this military offensive, the campaign consisted of a non-military dimension. *Dich van* as it was called, was a set of non-military activities conducted by the NLF directed at the South in order to create an environment favourable for this military offensive. The Winter-Spring Campaign was launched in the hope of creating the favourable military, political, and psychological conditions that would destroy Saigon's political regime and disintegrate America's political support for the war.<sup>3</sup> North Vietnam would then form a coalition government within the South, heavily dominated by its southern contingent, the National Liberation Front (NLF).

Contrary to the majority of the historiography on the Vietnam War, the campaign did not solely consist of the attacks conducted during the lunar Vietnamese holiday of Tet, or 'The Tet Offensive'. Phase I of the Campaign came during the latter months of 1967, in which a number of large set piece battles in the Binh Long, Kontum, and Quang Nai provinces were launched by the NLF under command of General Giáp. Phase II saw the launch of the Tet Offensive, in which a number of attacks by smaller units on major population centres occurred between January-March 1968. By late February 5/6 autonomous cities and 70 district towns had been hit. The North's forces had succeeded in attacking key cities, governmental administrative structures and the

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<sup>2</sup> M. Pribbenow, *Victory in Vietnam The Official History of the People's Army of Vietnam, 1954-1975* (Kansas, 2002) pp. 371-2

<sup>3</sup> H. Schandler, *America in Vietnam: The War that Couldn't Be Won* (Plymouth, 2009) p. 122



United States (US) military bases.<sup>4</sup> However, by the end of 1968, Giap and the North had lost over 85,000 men. Following the urbanised offensive, the US and South Vietnamese forces quickly re-grouped to inflict heavy losses upon the North Vietnamese. As D. Pike has concluded, there was no 'General Uprising' and damning verdicts on the campaign's military success has subsequently been written.<sup>5</sup>

The overall historiography written on the Vietnam War for the past 40 years has been extensively examined from an American perspective.<sup>6</sup> In regards to the Winter-Spring Campaign a similar situation has emerged; historians have focused their attention on how the Tet Offensive altered America's foreign policy after 1968. Examining the adapted US military approach under Richard Nixon after Tet, the growing American anti-war campaign in the late 1960's, and the political decision to withdraw in 1973, the Offensive has become of key significance in the trajectories of the war for most western historians. Particularly prevalent in this former body of literature are examinations into the media's portrayal of the Offensive, and its impact upon public support for the war in America. The general historical consensus reached is that media intensified a growing movement of public disillusion with the war in America, which led to the beginning of peace talks in Paris shortly after the Offensive.<sup>7</sup>

The Vietnamese media structure during the Vietnam War however has been overlooked. There are only two studies that address such a gap in the historiography. The first, by D. Elliot in 2007, is a micro-history on the rise of peasants in the South and the difficulties faced by the NLF in trying to gain their support. Utilising primary oral accounts from 1960-61, Elliot refers to the use of leaflets as part of the NLF's armed 'propaganda' campaign on the southern peasant population.<sup>8</sup> The evidence provided is limited due to its micro-historical format, focusing on just the leaflets

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<sup>4</sup> These targets included the citadel of Hue, the Presidential Palace, the American Embassy in Saigon, and the Tan San Nhut Air Base.

<sup>5</sup> D. Pike, *War, Peace and the Viet Cong* (Cambridge, 1969) pp.127-9

<sup>6</sup> For recent exceptions to this trend see: W. Duiker, *Sacred War: Nationalism and Revolution in A Divided Vietnam* (New York, 1997); M. Bradley, *Vietnam at War* (Oxford, 2012); D. Elliot, *The Vietnamese War: Revolution and Social Change in the Mekong Delta 1930-1975* (New York, 2007), R. Brigham, *Guerrilla Diplomacy: The NLF's Foreign Relations and the Viet Nam War* (Cornell, 1998); R. Brigham, *ARVN: Life and Death in the South Vietnamese Army* (Kansas, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> D. Hallin, *The 'Uncensored War': The Media and Vietnam* (Boston, 1972); P. Braestrup, *Big Story: How the American Press and Television Reported and Interpreted the Crisis of Tet 1968 in Vietnam and Washington* (Novato, 1994); S. Carruthers, *The Media at War* (London, 2000), p. 116-9.

<sup>8</sup> Elliot, *The Vietnamese War*, 126

deployed in Dong Hao village (1961) and Thanh Phu (1960). The work suffers from its restricted source analysis, examining neither the materials textual nor iconographical content in any detail. D. Elliot can therefore only speculate on the leaflets wider distribution in the South, whilst ignoring any period extending past 1961.<sup>9</sup>

The second study, written by D. Pike in 1966, provides a detailed account of the various media channels utilised by the North Vietnamese in South Vietnam from 1960-1964.<sup>10</sup> Within this study, Pike examines a number of different communicational tools including radio, motion picture, news media organizations and leaflets. Particularly relevant to this study, is Pike's analysis of the NLF's leaflet programme. The NLF to denounce the Government of the Republic of Vietnam (GVN) from 1958-63 distributed leaflets into GVN-controlled areas as a traditional communication tool of the revolutionary. Usually the work of cadres' directives, Pike elaborates on the variety of ways such leaflets were distributed via hand grenade, agit-prop teams, and other non-conventional methods.<sup>11</sup> Pike however, only examines what he labels as the 'first war' period (1960-64). This work - similar to Elliot's - whilst providing useful context for an era prior to the Winter-Spring Campaign, cannot be utilised to understand the NLF leaflet use at a time of increased US intervention.

This study aims to tackle such an issue, examining how the NLF used leaflets, along with other media channels as part of their greater *dich van* activities during the Winter-Spring Campaign. To conduct such an examination, the leaflets rhetorical content and its relation to NLF's broader indoctrination tactics shall be considered. The majority of the source material for this study comes from the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives (London), who in June 1999 released 'The Vietnam Documents and Research Notes Series' (VDRN).<sup>12</sup> Reproduced in microfilm format, the material included Vietnamese Communist (VC) and other North Vietnamese political and military reports, resolutions, programme descriptions and other papers. These were

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<sup>9</sup> Elliot, *The Vietnamese War*, 127

<sup>10</sup> D. Pike, *Viet Cong: the organization and techniques of the national Liberation front of South Vietnam* (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 120-8; 404-6

<sup>11</sup> Pike, *Viet Cong*, 406

<sup>12</sup> London, Liddell Hart Military Archive (LHMA), Vietnamese Documents and Research Notes Series: VDRN/MF/825-830

captured and translated by the Joint US Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) from October 1967 to February 1975.<sup>13</sup> Alongside this material, JUSPAO commentary providing a translation of any text included as well as analysis of the political methodology, infrastructure, and history of the material can be found. Within this notes series, there exists a collection of leaflets produced by the NLF during the Winter-Spring Campaign. This small, yet rich collection contains leaflets distributed within numerous provinces in South Vietnam, ranging from December 1967 to March 1968. These leaflets enable a unique study into the NLF use of this particular media channel during the campaign, whilst developing a greater understanding of the NLF indoctrination tactics used from 1967-68.<sup>14</sup>

Such material is further supplemented by the release of 1960's North Vietnamese Newspaper material by the British Library.<sup>15</sup> The content of this collection derives from provincial and local newspapers from North Vietnam published by the Vietnamese Workers' Party (VWP) in 1964-65. Whilst targeted at the North Vietnamese, this work allows for cross-iconographical and textual examinations alongside a comparison to be made to an ulterior media channel used by the North prior to the Winter-Spring Campaign. Additionally, permission has been granted for the use of Sergeant Major Herbert Friedman's private leaflet collection (HFPC).<sup>16</sup> Within this collection are NLF leaflets used to target American soldiers between 1967-69. Overall, this collective material allows for a thorough examination into the NLF's use of this particular media format during the Winter-Spring Campaign 1967-68. The reports within the VDRN series also contain annotated radio broadcasts, agit-prop accounts, and political addresses by those of the North and the NLF from 1967-75. These shall be drawn upon and compared with the VDRN's leaflet material to

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<sup>13</sup> The Joint US Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) was an inter-agency organisation formed part of the US Mission in South Vietnam. Co-ordinated with the US Embassy in Saigon, one of the JUSPAO main functions was to provide policy guidance to as well as shape US psychological operational efforts through the examination of VC and North Vietnamese documentation.

<sup>14</sup> All leaflets from the VDRN series have been reproduced in Appendix I, alongside the JUSPAO's commentary and translation (when provided) and a revised translation provided by Phạm Thị Huyền.

<sup>15</sup> London, The British Library Vietnamese Collection (BLVC): SU224/18; SU220/13. Thanks to Dr. Sud Chonchirdsin the curator of this material for his interview 19/02/2015 [hereafter Chonchirdsin Interview]

<sup>16</sup> Thanks to Sergeant Major Herbert Friedman for his permission to use his leaflet collection, curated during his service in Vietnam. His collection mainly consists of NLF/VC leaflets from a variety of dates and locations. The majority of his collection can be found at: [<http://www.psywarrior.com/VCLefletsProp.html>] (28/01/2015)

enable a greater understanding of the North's aims and objective for the campaign, whilst understanding why certain societal and military groups were targeted.

Herein my methodological approach in regards to the source material should be somewhat elaborated. To access this foreign archival material in its most organic form, this study has taken steps to try and divorce itself from its own westernised origin. When examining 'the archive of the other', as L. Jordanova has rightly explained, important issues of 'language use, ethnicity, religion and regional variations' arise.<sup>17</sup> It is therefore essential to access this study's archival material in its most organic form, away from any inaccuracies or manipulation. Thus, independent translation of all source material has been conducted.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, to deal with the regional variations in language that may arise when examining this material, a translator familiar with the various regions has been selected.<sup>19</sup> One must stress however that a perfected scenario has not been reached. As language, colloquial terminology and phrases change over time, from a position of posterity, a Vietnamese translator familiar with the historical context under investigation would be used.

The influence of Vietnam's interaction with Asian and Western discourses on the materials rhetorical content is another quintessential aspect to this study. Suffering from extensive periods of colonial suppression by China, France and later America, Vietnamese nationalism has come into contact with a number of different cultural entities during its history. W. Duiker has explored how the construction of Vietnamese nationalism during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was profoundly influenced by Vietnam's direct acquaintance with China.<sup>20</sup> In his hugely influential book, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson has explored the emergence of Francophile anti-colonialism within Vietnam during the 1920's and its impact on later Vietnamese nationalism and their constructions of 'nation-state'.<sup>21</sup> Through analysis of the leaflets textual and iconographical content alongside earlier Vietnamese nationalist rhetoric,

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<sup>17</sup> L. Jordanova, *History in Practice* (London, 2000) p.50

<sup>18</sup> The exceptions to this are the material found in the VRDN series that are only provided in English. Thus the accuracy of its content cannot be clarified.

<sup>19</sup> Thanks to Phạm Thị Huyền for translating all the material for this study. Pham grew up in Ho Chi Minh City but has translated material across the various regions analysed in this study,

<sup>20</sup> Duiker, *Sacred War*, 5-53

<sup>21</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 2006) p.113

part of this study shall examine whether these sources are connected to earlier Vietnamese nationalism, influenced by interactions with both Asian and Western discourses.

Finally, the conceptual framework historians and the JUSPAO have used to describe NLF indoctrination tactics during the war and the campaign shall be examined. The term ‘propagandist’ for such activity has been used recurrently to describe said tactics.<sup>22</sup> The broader question this study shall tackle is whether such a framework is appropriate to encompass this study’s findings or whether one must consider this material as part of a broader historical construction.

Ultimately this study tackles three main research questions: how do the NLF leaflets content relate to 20<sup>th</sup> century Vietnamese Nationalism, why were certain groups targeted by the leaflets, and are these leaflets a form of propaganda? To tackle these questions, this study consists of four chapters. The first chapter examines the potential influence of Vietnam’s interaction with China prior to French colonial rule in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The second chapter assesses the influence of French colonial policy in Vietnam during the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Together, this section examines the origins of the rhetoric used within the NLF leaflets from the rise of Vietnamese nationalism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The third chapter analyses how the NLF indoctrination tactics for the campaign targeted certain Vietnamese. The final chapter examines how the NLF used their media structure to target American troops, their wider portrayal of America, alongside an assessment of the conceptual frameworks used to describe the NLF’s indoctrination tactics during the campaign. Ultimately this dissertation will suggest that the labelling of this NLF material as ‘propagandist’ is a gross over-simplification. Whilst the indoctrination tactics of the NLF during the campaign demonstrate clear propagandist elements, the NLF rhetoric and wider doctrine were influenced by earlier interactions with Western and Asian discourses as part of a growth in Vietnamese nationalism during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This study shall therefore argue that we must consider the material as both a form of propaganda and Vietnamese nationalism.

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<sup>22</sup> Whilst introducing the leaflets, the JUSPAO curators called such activity as ‘typical Viet Cong Propaganda’. Furthermore, D. Pike in examining the NLF Leaflets distributed to the GVN used a similar term; Pike, *Viet Cong*, 405.

## Chapter 1: The Emergence of Vietnamese Nationalism

As has been discussed in the introduction, Vietnam's history is riddled with periods of colonialist suppression from both Western and Asian colonisers. In his chapter on the roots of modern Vietnamese Nationalism, William Duiker suggests how Vietnamese anti-colonial movements during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were influenced by its long and direct acquaintance with Chinese civilisation.<sup>23</sup> This chapter shall consider whether the latter Vietnamese nationalism witnessed during the Winter-Spring campaign was influenced by such an acquaintance, providing useful historical context to help evaluate the broader 'propaganda' question that lies at the heart of this study.

It is important firstly to contextualise North Vietnamese nationalism in the 1880's and how it was influenced by earlier acquaintances with Chinese civilisation. The traditional Vietnamese state prior to colonial intervention was conventionalised in accordance with Confucian social ethics.<sup>24</sup> Through its long and direct acquaintance with the Chinese - stretching back to 111 B.C. when the Chinese Empire conquered Vietnam - the Vietnamese state guaranteed conformity from its villagers based upon the models by Chinese tradition.<sup>25</sup> The state formed itself on authoritarian rule, however its society was the construct of its own literature.<sup>26</sup> However during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, French colonialism sort to abolish this unified Vietnam, dividing it into three parts: *Cochinchina* (the far south), *Annam* (the central region), and *Tonkin* (the north).<sup>27</sup> Following unpopular conflict with China over Tonkin, an agreement was signed between both parties in 1885, securing Chinese recognition of a French protectorate for the Vietnamese lands of Annam and Tonkin.<sup>28</sup> This marked the end of the period of Vietnam's direct acquaintance with the Chinese.

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<sup>23</sup> Duiker, *Sacred War*, 5-13

<sup>24</sup> J. McAlister and P. Mus, *The Vietnamese and Their Revolution* (New York, 1970), pp. 31-41

<sup>25</sup> For an in depth examination into the construction of Vietnamese Linguistics via Chinese influences see M. Alves, 'Sino-Vietnamese Grammatical Borrowing: An Overview. Grammatical Borrowing' in Y. Matras and J. Sake (eds.), *Cross-Linguistic Perspective* (New York, 2007), pp.343-361; M. Alves, 'Sino-Vietnamese Grammatical Vocabulary And Sociolinguistic Conditions For Borrowing', *Journal of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society*, 1, 1 (2009), pp.1-9.

<sup>26</sup> J. McAlister and P. Mus, *The Vietnamese and Their Revolution* (New York, 1970), p. 32.

<sup>27</sup> N. Owen et al. (eds.), *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia: A New History* (Honolulu, 2005), p.335

<sup>28</sup> K. Munholland, "'Collaboration Strategy" and the French Pacification of Tonkin, 1885-1897', *Historical Journal*, 24, 3 (1981), pp. 629-631.

It is within 19<sup>th</sup> century Tonkin where the origins of North Vietnamese 20<sup>th</sup> century nationalism were formed and the influence from its earlier associations with China can be found. For example, as William Duiker rightly argues, Phan Dinh Phung, one of the original resistance leaders against France's early colonial expansion was a Confucian scholar.<sup>29</sup> From the hilltops of rural Tonkin, Phung and his following launched continuous guerrilla attacks against the French colonial regime in the mid 1880's, influenced by the Confucian teachings introduced from China. However, as noted by William Duiker, such attacks were not welcomed throughout the Vietnamese populace.<sup>30</sup> An examination into Phan Dinh Phung's written accounts during this period of emerging nationalism, demonstrates how the rhetoric produced by these early nationalists was profoundly influenced by Vietnam's historical interaction with China. Drawing upon the nation's glorious revolts against Chinese rule under Nguyen Trai and Le Loi, Phung stressed how Confucian morality lay at the heart of victory:

If even China, which shares a common border with  
our territory and is a thousand times more powerful  
than Vietnam, could not rely upon her strength to  
swallow us, it was surely *because the destiny of  
our country had been willed by Heaven itself*.<sup>31</sup>  
[italics added]

Similar rhetoric has also been recorded in the works of latter Vietnamese nationalists throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ho Chi Minh, the most prominent of Vietnamese nationalists during this period, was also brought up on the teachings of Confucian morality. As P. De Caro argued in his examination into Ho's rhetorical career, like Phan Dinh Phung, Ho would regularly make references to historically decisive Vietnamese revolts against the French in order to encourage the North Vietnamese to join the liberation movement against France in the 1940's. Writing in 'A Letter from Abroad', Ho stated:

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<sup>29</sup> For broader analysis of the Can Vuong movement, see D. Marr 'Vietnamese Anti-colonialism, 1885-1925 (London, 1971), pp. 33-77.

<sup>30</sup> An early exchange of letters between Phan Dinh Phung and Hoang Cao Khai act as a useful contemporary representation of the nuances in populace opinion regarding such anti-colonial movements. For full account, see: Duiker, 21

<sup>31</sup> Cited in T. Lam, *Vietnamese Resistance against the French, 1858-1900* (New Haven, 1967), pp. 121-28

Some hundreds of years ago, when our country was endangered by the Mongolian invasion, our elders under the Tran dynasty rose up indignantly and called on their sons and daughters throughout the country to rise as one in order to kill the enemy.<sup>32</sup>

By citing the patriotic victories of the Tran dynasty, Ho aimed to draw out the nationalist that he believed lay deep within every Vietnamese civilian. Ho would end his speech by stating how ‘The sacred call of the Fatherland is resounding in your ears’, inciting the patriotic entity that lay at the heart of his early movement. As De Caro has rightly argued, the effectiveness of this ideological rhetoric lay in its ability to make reference to culturally embodied elements that lay within his subjects, ‘but still addressing a subject which exists beyond one’s body and life span’.<sup>33</sup> The evidence from these early nationalist writings demonstrates that Vietnam’s historical interaction with the Chinese, both in a cultural and rhetorical sense, influenced Vietnamese nationalism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. How then does this compare to the NLF movement in the 1960’s?

When comparing the rhetoric of the NLF leaflets distributed during the Winter-Spring campaign to these early nationalist works, a few similarities and differences arise. Firstly, the term *Tổ quốc* or ‘fatherland’ (*Fig 1 and 2*) is a pertinent phrase used within the material.<sup>34</sup> Similar to Ho Chi Minh’s ideological rhetoric, one can infer from the material that this phrase was used to address the patriotism that lied embedded within the civilians of the South, whilst subtly referencing preceding Vietnamese struggles faced to reclaim ‘the fatherland’. To further encourage irredentism within the South, the morality of the NLF’s objectives in claiming ‘the fatherland’ back from America were stressed - stating how it is a sin against the

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<sup>32</sup> Taken from Ho Chi Minh’s A Letter from Abroad, 1941. Reproduced in full in P. De Caro, *Rhetoric of Revolt: Ho Chi Minh’s Discourse of Revolution* (London, 2000). For full text see Appendix II.

<sup>33</sup> P. De Caro, ‘Ho Chi Minh’s A Rhetoric of Revolution’, *American Communication Journal*, 3, 3 (2000) [<http://ac-journal.org/journal/vol3/Iss3/spec1/decaro.html>] (20/02/2014)

<sup>34</sup> For its appearance within the NLF leaflets, see: VDRN/0386/MF825; VDRN/0391/MF825; VDRN/0394/MF825



fatherland to not rise for such a cause.<sup>35</sup> By using the term *Tổ quốc* - a patriotic term that alluded to the past struggles of Vietnamese nationalism - the North had produced rhetoric that may encourage mass proselytizing in the South. This was essential to the wider military strategy of forming the united 'General Uprising' who would rise up against enemy forces, envisaged by General Nguyễn Chí Thanh in 1967. *Tổ quốc* as a term was also used within a number of NLF's political addresses, who in December 1967 prior to the campaign, stated that their objective was to 'unify the fatherland'.<sup>36</sup> It seems therefore, that the NLF's rhetoric, similar to earlier Vietnamese nationalism still aimed at targeting the patriotic entity that lay deep within the civilians of the South. However, unlike the earlier nationalist works examined, the leaflets rhetoric does not directly reference previous nationalist movements against Chinese rule.

As stated earlier, there is clear evidence to suggest that early 20<sup>th</sup> century Vietnamese nationalism was influenced by Vietnam's direct acquaintance with Chinese civilisation. From analysis of the leaflets rhetoric, it seems that such an argument cannot be extended to cover that of the campaign. Whilst the leaflets make pertinent appeals to the patriotism of the South Vietnamese, there were no direct references to the past anti-colonial struggles faced under Chinese rule. One therefore can't argue that these leaflets rhetoric were influenced by earlier Vietnamese nationalism against Chinese rule, and thus in-turn contradicting the 'propagandist' label that fails to encompass such an influence. A clear transformation in Vietnamese nationalist rhetoric had taken place during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which shall be explored in the next chapter.

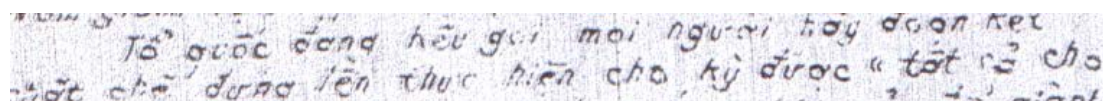


Fig. 1: Anon, VDRN/0386/MF825, *Pleiku*, 1968, © Liddell Hart Military Archive

Translation – 'The fatherland is shouting out *for everybody in close union* to stand up' [italics added]

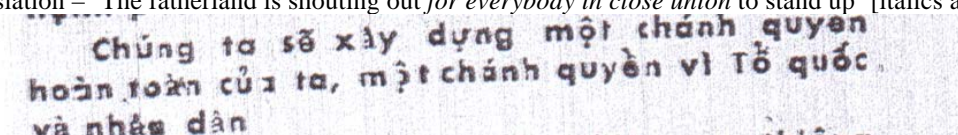


Fig 2: Anon, VDRN/0391/MF825, *Long An Province*, 1968, © Liddell Hart Military Archive

Translation – 'We will build a power regime entirely of our own, a regime for the Fatherland and the People'

<sup>35</sup> VDRN/0391/MF825

<sup>36</sup> Political Program of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front October 1967, VDRN/0215/MF825

## Chapter 2: The Influence of the West

This chapter aims to account for the change in Vietnamese nationalist rhetoric during the 20<sup>th</sup> century that appears within the source material. It considers the adoption of European revolutionary rhetoric and imagery in the leaflets content, alongside the implementation of such rhetoric through Vietnam's various colonial relations during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The positioning of this chapter is to act as a deliberate comparison to the earlier nationalist rhetoric emphasised in the previous chapter, providing further historical context on Vietnam's nationalist rhetoric to help evaluate the leaflets 'propagandist' label.

To begin with, it is important to analyse the body of literature that has examined the changes Vietnamese culture underwent during French colonisation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. N. Jamieson in his in-depth examination into Vietnamese cultural history stresses what he labels as 'a traumatic change under Western influence'.<sup>37</sup> Jamieson especially emphasises the changes and developments of communication and transportation facilities fundamental to a transfigured Vietnam during the 1920's.<sup>38</sup> Important to this study, is how early forms of Vietnamese nationalism during this period were influenced by such cultural change. Key to French colonial policy was the creation of French speaking/writing educated elite populace to sit at the top of Indochina's colonised bureaucracy. This was implemented through the eradication of the Confucian examination system and the introduction of French *lycées* (French Secondary Schools).<sup>39</sup> As suggested by Benedict Anderson, Vietnamese youngsters would not be able to avoid learning about the Revolution and the *philosophes*, marking out these modern bilingual nationalist intelligentsias culturally and linguistically from previous generations.<sup>40</sup> Such a cultural transformation can help explain why the earlier nationalist rhetoric influenced by Chinese acquaintance, deceased from the latter NLF rhetoric during the campaign.

By examining the NLF leaflets, this influential French colonial policy had a clear

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<sup>37</sup> N. Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam* (London, 1993), pp.42-100

<sup>38</sup> Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam*, 100

<sup>39</sup> The rest of the population would be educated within a 'Franco-Vietnamese' structure that taught French as a secondary language. See: Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 118-120

<sup>40</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 118

lasting impact on the revolutionary rhetoric deployed during the campaign.<sup>41</sup> When examining the text used in these leaflets, the NLF often refers to the campaign frequently as ‘the revolution’, acting as an ideal term to encapsulate their ‘General uprising’ doctrine<sup>42</sup> - ‘a seizure of power by the people’ against enemy governmental regimes of the South. For example a leaflet distributed in the Phuoc Long Province in 1968 stated how ‘the revolution will win total victory’,<sup>43</sup> drawing upon their teachings of the French revolution stated within Benedict Anderson’s argument.<sup>44</sup> Such ‘western’ discourse was clearly appropriate in the eyes of the NLF to label their campaign during 1967-68. This is further demonstrated by other North Vietnamese publications in 1967. North Vietnam’s Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh published in the April 1967 an issue of the Communist Party within the theoretical journal Hoc Tap, stating that ‘To have peace, our people must carry out the revolution’.<sup>45</sup> Such terminology however was not solely unique to the Winter-Spring Campaign. Previous nationalist uprisings against French colonisers had used such a label,<sup>46</sup> including the August Revolution led by the Viet Minh who, under Ho Chi Minh in 1945, sought to gain independence from the French and unify Vietnam.<sup>47</sup> One can conclude therefore that in a textual sense, the ideas surrounding revolution that exist within French and ‘western’ culture installed under colonial rule, were drawn upon by Vietnamese nationalists to label their anti-colonial movements during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

However, western discourses had a similar impact when it came to the NLF visualising their movement in their leaflets. For example, one particular leaflet

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<sup>41</sup> For this policy’s impact on Vietnamese literature between 1900-1931, see: T.B. Lam, *Colonialism Experiences: Vietnamese Writings on Colonialism 1900-1931* (Michigan, 2000).

<sup>42</sup> A leaflet distributed by the People’s Army of Vietnam (PAVN) – known to many as the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) - operating in the Phuoc Long Province, labelled the North’s Winter-Spring offensive as ‘the revolution’. See: VDRN/0396/MF825

<sup>43</sup> VDRN/0393/MF825; VDRN/0394/MF825

<sup>44</sup> VDRN/0396/MF825

<sup>45</sup> The Position of North-Vietnam on Negotiations, October 1967, VDRN/0211/MF825

<sup>46</sup> Specifically to Le Duan - First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Viet-Nam Workers Party – the Winter-Spring Campaign was historically connected to previous revolutions against colonial rule. Broadcasted by Radio Hanoi on November 4<sup>th</sup> 1967, Le Duan said: ‘For the Vietnamese people, the victories of the October revolution, of the resistance against Fascism, of the August Revolution, and of the Chinese revolution, of the resistance against the French colonialists and the American imperialists at present, are great events in one and the same historical chain.’ Forward under the Glorious Banner of the October Revolution, VDRN/0259/MF825

<sup>47</sup> For further examination into this part of Vietnamese nationalist history, see W. Turley, *The Second Indochina War: A Concise and Political History*, pp.9-21

distributed in the Phuoc Long Province (Fig 3) depicts a horde of Vietnamese civilians, waving the flag of the VC. Such iconography has distinct similarities to western-centric, in particular French, images associated with the revolution, adopting the transnational circularity of Liberty's image (Fig 4). It therefore seems clear that the NLF during the campaign also made visual connections between their movement and that of the French Revolution.



**Top Left:** Fig 3: Anon, VDRN/0397/MF825, *Phouc Long Province*, est. 1967-1968, © Liddell Hart Military Archive

**Top Right:** Fig 4: Eugène Delacroix, *La Liberté guidant le peuple* (*Liberty Leading the People*), 1830, The Louvre Museum, France

The NLF also drew upon broader western discourse during the Winter-Spring Campaign, alongside values essential to western constructions of nation-state to form part of their rhetoric. The prominent themes alluded to within the leaflets are that of western *independence* and the *freedom* of its people. For example, leaflets distributed in the Pleiku region called for 'all people in the South to gain the confidence and *freedom* to unite'.<sup>48</sup> In the Quang Ngai Province, the rhetoric drew upon the ownership of such 'freedom', calling for the Vietnamese people to 'fight to get the *freedom* back'.<sup>49</sup> Leaflets distributed in the Hue region, called for further democracy and independence to be granted to the Vietnamese people<sup>50</sup>:

<sup>48</sup> VDRN/0384/MF825

<sup>49</sup> VDRN/0388/MF825

<sup>50</sup> 'Our struggle's objective is to win independence for the people, peace for the country, democracy and happiness for the people'. VDRN/0391/MF825

‘We just would like *to have the independence and the sovereignty, the freedom and democracy*, the peace and neutral’<sup>51</sup> [italics added]

As De Caro has examined, western discourse had a similar influence on Ho Chi Minh’s rhetoric in his public revolutionary addresses; a man who would later go on to form the Viet Cong movement in the 1960’s. Ho’s early address for the newly created Vietnamese provisional government in Ba Dinh Square, 1945, contrasted the revolutionary ideals of western liberty with what he categorised as eighty years of French colonial oppression.<sup>52</sup> His speech opened with:

‘This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. In a broader sense, this means: All the peoples on the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have a right to live, to be happy and free.

The Declaration of the French Revolution made in 1791 on the Rights of Man and the Citizen also states: “All men are born free and with equal rights, and must always remain free and have equal rights.’

Ho’s speech would end by stating ‘that Vietnam has the right to be a free and independent country’.<sup>53</sup> As Mark Bradley has rightly argued when examining Ho’s rhetoric, this textual content acted as ‘a reminder of the yawning chasm between French rhetoric and colonial realities’ for its audience.<sup>54</sup> It seems that within the leaflets and Ho’s rhetoric, an imagined western nation-state occupied a central place in their anticolonial political discourse. The values of ‘freedom’ and ‘independence’ that lay at the heart of these nation-states, acted as a symbol of the qualities Vietnamese revolutionaries thought were critical to re-shaping and unifying their

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<sup>51</sup> VDRN/0389/MF825

<sup>52</sup> M. Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam & America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950* (London, 2000), p.4

<sup>53</sup> Taken from Ho Chi Minh’s Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (See Appendix III for full speech).

[<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5139/>] (2/03/2015)

<sup>54</sup> Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam & America*, 4;6

own Vietnam.<sup>55</sup>

By accounting for the appearance of ‘westernised’ rhetoric within the source material, alongside the findings of the previous chapter, this study has so far accounted for the various forms of rhetoric found in the leaflets of the NLF Winter-Spring Campaign, in parallel with their appearance in earlier Vietnamese nationalism. In doing so, this has provided clear evidence to suggest that the leaflets rhetoric had a direct relation to earlier Vietnamese nationalism, blurring our judgement on whether the NLF leaflets are a form of propaganda or another product of Vietnamese nationalism. Through French colonial policy, a new generation of Vietnamese nationalists were produced in the 1920’s, who lacked access to the Chinese teachings of their former generation. These modernist, westernised currents of revolutionary Vietnamese nationalists went on to form and influence the latter NLF nationalism of the Winter-Spring Campaign. As demonstrated in Chapter 1 however, these NLF nationalists still occasionally made references to their cultural traditionalism as part of their patriotic appeal. The next section shall analyse how such rhetoric fitted into the NLF tactics for the Winter-Spring Campaign, and further evaluate the conceptual framework many have used to label the NLF indoctrination efforts during the Vietnam War.

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<sup>55</sup> Chonchirdsin Interview

### Chapter 3: The NLF Indoctrination Tactics for the Southern Vietnamese

Having examined the origins of the leaflets rhetorical content, this chapter aims to account for why certain Southern Vietnamese social and military groups were targeted by the NLF leaflets as part of their indoctrination efforts during the Winter-Spring Campaign. These ‘groups’ fall into two criteria: the urban and rural Southern Vietnamese civilians and the troops and officials of the Southern Vietnamese Government. In doing so, this chapter shall continue to consider the ‘propagandist’ conceptual frameworks that many have used to label such indoctrination tactics and the media forms used to deploy it.

Firstly, it is important to examine the indoctrination tactics of the North prior to the Winter-Spring Campaign. Similar to the *dich van* activities deployed in 1967-68, a variety of media channels were used by Hanoi to reiterate on mass, messages to the Northern inhabitants. Sud Chonchirdin has examined how the Vietnamese Workers Party (a branch of the VC, VWP) used newspapers to encourage popular support to assist in their goals from 1964-65. To aid the North’s ultimate political aim in the 1960’s to transform Vietnam into a socialist state under the influence of Marxist-Leninist teachings, rural civilians were encouraged to increase crop production to counter-act the food shortages that existed in the North during the mid 1960’s (*Fig 5*).<sup>56</sup> If the VC were to mount any sort of offensive against America, the North had to first tackle the contemporary societal problems facing them in 1965.<sup>57</sup> Similar messages were relayed to the South through Radio Liberation, stating that a new society was emerging who relied upon ‘cooperative, mutual-assistance labour and production’ from the people.<sup>58</sup> With an ever-growing U.S. presence in Vietnam during 1965, the North’s indoctrination tactics were also aimed at gaining support from the North’s inhabitants for the imminent fighting against the U.S. For example, in the Northern newspaper of *Hải Dương Mới*, cartoons depicted civilians ‘Pushing up

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<sup>56</sup> London, The British Library Vietnamese Collection (BLVC): BLVC/SU224/17 Hà Giang, 9/09/1965. A number of cartoons were produced in the Hà Giang newspaper that tried to encourage food production. For example one cartoon produced in 1965 called for ‘Weeding, fertilizing for the rice of main crop’. See: London, The British Library Vietnamese Collection (BLVC): BLVC/SU224/17 Hà Giang, 9/09/1965.

<sup>57</sup> Chonchirdsin Interview

<sup>58</sup> Taken from a Radio Liberation announcement in 1965. See: A Study Of Prospects For The Viet Cong, December 1966, VDRN/0076/MF825

the production. Ready for fighting.’<sup>59</sup> By controlling the provincial and central media outlets from Hanoi in the mid 1960’s,<sup>60</sup> the regime were able to direct and control the messages relayed to the populace, enlisting mass support whilst building socialism within Vietnam.<sup>61</sup>

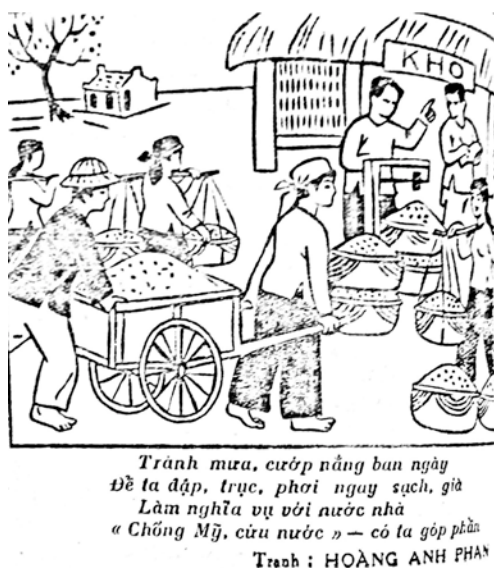


Fig 5: Anon, Hải Dương Mới, 26 May 1965, The British Library Vietnamese Collection, SU224/18



Fig 6: Anon, Hải Dương Mới, 21 July 1965, The British Library Vietnamese Collection, SU224/18

<sup>59</sup> Hải Dương Mới, 21/07/1965. See: BLVC/SU224/18 (Fig 6)

<sup>60</sup> Sud Chonchirdsin has also stressed how the North tightly supervised Vietnamese artists who created these pieces iconography. For further examination into the controlled nature of Vietnamese War Art, see:

[<http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/asian-and-african/2014/01/vietnam-war-art.html>] (20/03/15)

<sup>61</sup> Chonchirdsin Interview



By 1967, these indoctrination tactics were somewhat heightened within the South with the launch of numerous *dich van* activities, in which ‘the communists sought to take the initiative’.<sup>62</sup> Using a number of media channels, the NLF continuously informed both rural and urban Southern populations that it stood for:

‘The overthrow of the Thieu Government;  
regaining National sovereignty and building  
an independent South Vietnam.’<sup>63</sup>

From such messages, it seems clear that the North felt that the time was right to launch a general offensive to deliver total victory in 1968. To make sure of such victory, the indoctrination tactics were targeted at forming the ‘General Uprising’, or *Khoi Nghia*, mentioned in previous chapters.<sup>64</sup> By encouraging mass support during the military urbanised offensives, the North would be able to reclaim and maintain key military strongholds and overthrow the Thieu government of the South - as laid out in General Giap’s *People’s Army, People’s War*.<sup>65</sup> D. Pike concluded in his 1966 study on the VC, that the ‘The General Uprising Campaign’ faded away from their doctrine in 1963. However, it appears from the leaflets that such doctrine formed a key base of the NLF indoctrination campaign between 1967-68. Unlike previous terminology this ‘General Uprising’ offensive was labelled as *thoi coi* or ‘time opportunity’ (Fig 7).<sup>66</sup> Such a label signified to the leaflets recipients that the Winter-Spring Campaign was an ‘historically decisive moment – the time period in which a long-sought opportunity may become a reality’.<sup>67</sup> As G. Porter rightly concludes, such a term provided a ‘short-term’ label for a piece of doctrine that was similar to many early Vietnamese uprisings.<sup>68</sup> However by placing such historical significance to this offensive, the NLF hoped to secure support from rural and urban Southern Vietnamese civilians, who were quintessential to securing any victory during the campaign.

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<sup>62</sup> A Study Of Prospects For The Viet Cong, December 1966, VDRN/0079/MF825

<sup>63</sup> D. Pike, *War, Peace and the Viet Cong* (London, 1969), pp. 20-21

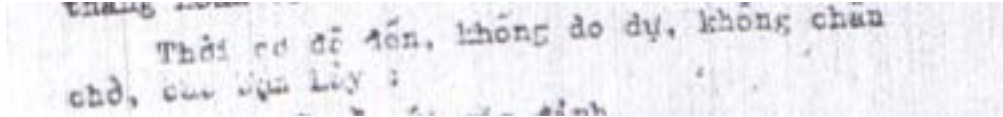
<sup>64</sup> For further examination into the ‘General Uprising’ as part of VC doctrine during the Vietnam War, see D. Pike, *War, Peace and the Viet Cong* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 110-121.

<sup>65</sup> V. Giap, *People’s War People’s Army*, (New York, 1962), pp.182-7

<sup>66</sup> See: VDRN/0384/MF825; VDRN/0389/MF825; VDRN/0391/MF825; VDRN/0395/MF825.

<sup>67</sup> Taken from JUSPAO commentary. See: VDRN/0383/MF825

<sup>68</sup> G. Porter, ‘Hanoi’s Strategic Perspective and the Sino-Vietnamese Conflict’, *Pacific Affairs*, 57, 1 (1984), pp.7-9



*Fig 7: Anon, VDRN/0395/MF825, Phuoc Long Province, 1968, © Liddell Hart Military Archive*  
Translation – ‘The time-opportunity has come. Without hesitation, without indecision friends, you should:’

The rural and urban populations of the South were not the only groups targeted by NLF indoctrination tactics during the campaign. Essential to the success of *thoi coi* was the deterrence and support from South Vietnamese Armed Forces. Coinciding with their *ad hoc* Revolutionary Guerrilla Warfare, the NLF targeted a number of leaflets at Southern Vietnamese Military groups or ‘brothers of the puppet government of Saigon.’<sup>69</sup> The leaflets commanded these targets to ‘cooperate with the liberation army in order to fight and kill stubborn individuals’.<sup>70</sup> Alongside such commands, the leaflets denounced the Thieu government with propagandist terminology to deface the enemy’s regime.<sup>71</sup> By encouraging such deterrent activity - alongside mass support from the general populace - these indoctrination efforts in the eyes of the NLF regime would lead to ‘total victory’.<sup>72</sup>

Similarly to the North in 1964/65, the NLF’s media structure in which these groups were targeted was also tightly controlled and centralised under order from Hanoi. One merely has to examine the public addresses by General Giap made before and after the campaign to see these controlled messages in action. Giap stated in 1967 how ‘we are winning and will surely win complete victory.’<sup>73</sup> Even after the heavy defeats the VC faced during the Campaign, Giap opened his speech in December 1968 with a similar message – ‘Troops and people are winning extremely great Victories’.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, throughout the leaflet collection and other media channels, there is no mention of any military defeats. Such findings partially support D. Elliot’s argument that any losses the VC faced during the Vietnam War were entirely ‘circumnavigated’

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<sup>69</sup> One leaflet distributed to the Southern soldiers and officers in the Phuoc Long Province commanded these troops to ‘*Leave your ranks and return to your families; Refuse to go on sweep operations and rescue operations, refuse to fight liberation troops; Turn your guns to kill cruel tyrants*’ [italics added]. VDRN/0395/MF825.

<sup>71</sup> VDRN/0387/MF825; VDRN/0391/MF825; VDRN/0392/MF825

<sup>72</sup> VDRN/0393/MF825

<sup>73</sup> VDRN/0339/MF825

<sup>74</sup> VDRN/0421/MF825

in their media.<sup>75</sup> The leaflets deployed during the Winter-Spring Campaign as noted by the JUSPAO, would often be formed on the relevant themes sent from Hanoi dependent on which stage the campaign was reaching.<sup>76</sup> By controlling the messages relayed in their media, the NLF aimed to remove any doubt that total victory would emerge for the North, thus creating in their eyes the optimal conditions for populace support.

When one combines the NLF indoctrination efforts for the Winter-Spring Campaign with the media structure used to deploy such a tactic, it seems to have all the makings of a propagandist model. The controlled, agenda driven tactics of the NLF during the campaign propagandised the idea of everyone being equal in the liberation of a unified Vietnam. However the fact that the NLF used similar doctrine in past nationalist movements, and considered the Winter-Spring Campaign as one of ‘the great events in one and the same historical chain’<sup>77</sup> of nationalism, means a number of caveats begin to emerge from a ‘propagandist’ definition. These shall be further considered in the next chapter. One can conclude however at this present moment, that the rural and urban civilians of the South alongside those associated with Southern Vietnamese Government, were targeted to make up the *thoi coi* uprising, a key part of the NLF’s aims in 1968 to ‘unite the entire people, fight the U.S. aggressors, save the country’.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Elliot, *Vietnamese War*, 112

<sup>76</sup> ‘The district must print leaflets and all village that have means of printing leaflets must also work on this. In the case of special incidents, the district will prepare the theme of the leaflet and sent it to the village people to print or write in order to achieve mission promptly. We must guarantee that each month, each enemy soldier shall receive two of our leaflets.’ Sharpening the Third Prong: An Increase of Viet Cong Proselytizing, VDRN/0347/MF825.

<sup>77</sup> VDRN/0255/MF825

<sup>78</sup> Political Program of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front, VDRN/0245/MF825 VDRN 0230

## Chapter 4: Targeting the Enemy and the Problems of Propaganda

This final chapter shall examine how the NLF used their media structure and the leaflets to target their real enemy, America. Furthermore, this chapter shall further consider what conceptual frameworks should be used to label these leaflets and the broader NLF indoctrination tactics during the Winter-Spring Campaign.

To benefit from the weaknesses that existed within America's involvement in Vietnam according to the Northern regime,<sup>79</sup> the VC used the media channels at their disposal to try and deter U.S. military personnel from fighting, creating an anti-war movement within the enemy's ranks.<sup>80</sup> Prior to 1967, radio stations such as Radio Liberation and Radio Hanoi had already featured occasional broadcasts to encourage such deterrent activity.<sup>81</sup> Trịnh Thị Ngọ, or Hanoi Hannah, was a broadcaster that could often be heard across the airwaves encouraging U.S. soldiers to abandon their posts:

American GIs, don't fight this unjust immoral  
and illegal war of Johnson's. Get out of Vietnam  
now and alive.<sup>82</sup>

As Mark Woodruff rightly notes, such a tactic attempted to drive a wedge between those engaged in the fighting and those back at home in America.<sup>83</sup> In doing so, the VC hoped to create a broad anti-war movement that would force America to abandon their position in Vietnam. From analysing Herbert Friedman's private collection of NLF leaflets, one can witness that similar tactics were used as part of the Winter-

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<sup>79</sup> An example of these perceived weaknesses comes from a broadcasted by Radio Hanoi, on September 21 1966, which stated 'The Americans cannot endure a tough, protracted and guerrilla type war in a tropical country far from home'. VDRN/0062/MF825

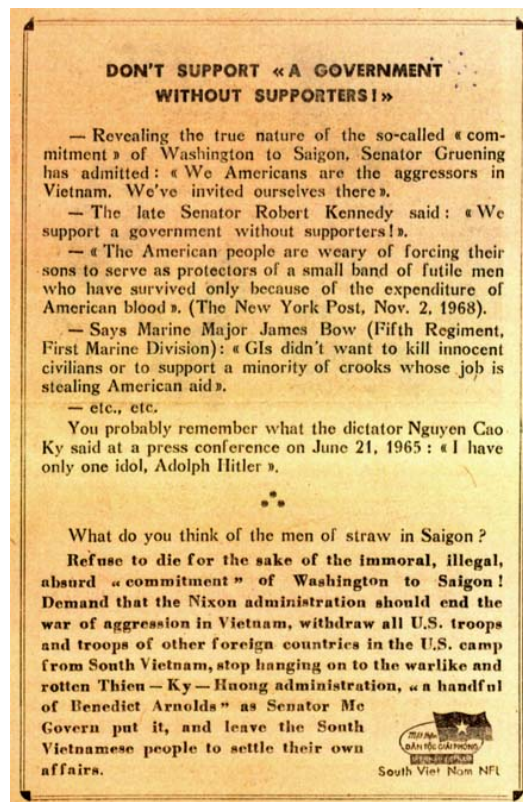
<sup>80</sup> A directive drafted by the Military and Enemy Proselytizing Section of Quang Ngai, outlined the objectives and requirements of the proselytizing programme for the 1967-68 Winter-Spring Campaign. Targeting US military personnel, it stated how their efforts should 'create a broad anti-war movement, especially movements to refuse to go out on operations, or to ask to be sent to the rear, the cities or to the United States.' See: Sharpening the Third Prong: An Increase of Viet Cong Proselytizing (December, 1967), VDRN/0345/MF825.

<sup>81</sup> Pike, *Viet Cong*, 408

<sup>82</sup> Reproduced in D. North, 'Voices from the Past: The Search for Hanoi Hannah', *Viet Nam Generation Journal & Newsletter*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (November 1991). The Sixties Project Website [[http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML\\_docs/Texts/Scholarly/North\\_Hanoi\\_Hannah\\_01.html](http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Texts/Scholarly/North_Hanoi_Hannah_01.html)] (8/4/2015).

<sup>83</sup> M. Woodruff, *Unheralded Victory: The Defeat of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army 1961-1973* (New York, 2005), pp. 231-5

Spring Campaign. Written in English, a number of leaflets contain quotations taken from senior U.S. government officials dictating ‘the true nature’ of U.S. involvement in Vietnam (*Fig 8*). These included quotations from senior American politicians such as Robert Kennedy that juxtaposed any U.S. political justification for their presence in Vietnam.<sup>84</sup> Other leaflets, similar to those targeted at Southern military officials, commanded U.S. soldiers to ‘Refuse to obey all combat orders ... Refuse to interfere in the internal affairs of your Vietnamese brothers’.<sup>85</sup> In regards to the leaflets iconography, an image of Liberty analysed in Chapter 2 has similarly been drawn upon in the make up of its iconographical content (*Fig 9*). However within this example, the General Uprising) is taken from the viewpoint of the American soldier, abandoning his post in the face of a revolutionary mob.<sup>86</sup> The evidence from these leaflets demonstrates clear similarities to the NLF indoctrination tactics targeted at the Southern Vietnamese Army and its officials. By deterring the U.S. soldiers from fighting and denouncing the enemy’s governmental regime, a clear route to victory against American imperialism would emerge.



*Fig 8: Anon, HFPC, est. 1967-1968*

<sup>84</sup> This leaflet had quoted Kennedy as declaring ‘we support a government without supporters’, in an attempt to dampen US military morale. (*See Fig 8*)

<sup>85</sup> VDRN/0395/MF825

<sup>86</sup> HFPC ‘The South Vietnamese people are bound to win’.



*Fig 9: Anon, HFPC, est. 1967-1968*

The illegality of America's imperialist campaign within Vietnam was also referred to in the NLF leaflets, stemming from Marxist-Leninist teachings for earlier Vietnamese nationalists in the 1960's. For example, one leaflet implores the people of South Vietnam to not let 'American invaders' or 'pirates' remain to serve their 'illegal rights'.<sup>87</sup> Further calls in the leaflets distributed in the Quang Nai Province were made for the Vietnamese civilians to re-conquer those possessions taken by the 'American imperialists'.<sup>88</sup> Labelling the Americans as 'imperialists' fitted within VC's Marxist-Leninist teachings and beliefs about the contemporary global revolution in the 1960's. Stated by Le Duan in a radio broadcast in December 1967, the VC saw the Winter-Spring campaign as part of the 'revolutionary tidal waves in Asia, Africa and Latin America attacking the weakest link of the world imperialist system'.<sup>89</sup> America's invasion of Vietnam in the eyes of the North 'constituted the last basic form of colonialism while capitalism is in the thrones of death'<sup>90</sup>, justifying the North's aim to transform Vietnam into a socialist state. Such a belief suggests that this campaign for the North was much more than just a unifying nationalist movement, but a broader global revolution against the world imperialist system of the 1960's. By portraying America to Southern civilians as a pirate, imperialist entity, whilst drawing

<sup>87</sup> 'Can't let American invaders and traitors forever remain in a war to only serve for their illegal rights.' VDRN/0389/MF825

<sup>88</sup> For quotation, see VDRN/0386/MF825. Le Duan during the early stages of the campaign referred to these 'imperialists' in December 1967, connecting said imperialism with previous revolutions in Vietnamese history: 'For the Vietnamese people, the victories of the October revolution, of the resistance against Fascism, of the August Revolution, and of the Chinese revolution, of the resistance against the French colonialists and the American imperialists at present, are great events in one and the same historical chain.' Taken from Forward under the Glorious Banner of the October Revolution, December 1967 VDRN/0255/MF825

<sup>89</sup> Forward under the Glorious Banner of the October Revolution, VDRN/0255/MF825

<sup>90</sup> Forward under the Glorious Banner, VDRN/0261/MF825

upon the loss of possessions under American intervention, the NLF portrayed the US as an evil capitalist system in an attempt to create further support.

The JUSPAO curators of the Vietnam Documents and Research Notes series, when providing commentary on the NLF media structure during the Winter-Spring Campaign, referred to their findings as ‘propagandist’. In an interview conducted with the curator of the BLVC used for this study, Sud Chonchirdin came to a similar consensus.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, D. Pike in his examination into the NLF leaflet programme between 1958-1963 used such a term to describe his findings. However, what must be considered is whether such a westernised conceptual framework is appropriate to such material.<sup>92</sup>

When attempting to clarify the meaning of ‘propaganda’, we quickly become mired by the subtle nuances that exist in definitions associated with such a term. In regards to the body of literature on the Vietnam War, one can infer that the Institute for Propaganda Analysis in 1965 provides an adequate summary of the term’s use: ‘Propaganda is the expression of opinions or actions carried out deliberately by individuals or groups with a view to influencing the opinions or actions of individual groups’.<sup>93</sup> However, due to the lack of definition provided within all the existing scholarship, a concrete conclusion for its use can’t be reached.<sup>94</sup>

If we are to consider this as an adequate term to summarise its use, the evidence provided in this study indicates that such a term may be adequate. Central to this terminological model is the conception of an active communicator-propagandist acting upon a passive inert receiver.<sup>95</sup> The messages deployed by the mass media formations utilised by the NLF, actively projected their opinions upon the ‘passive’ civilians throughout the campaign. The radio broadcasts; public addresses, leaflets

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<sup>91</sup> Chonchirdsin Interview

<sup>92</sup> For an assessment on US propaganda during the Winter-Spring Campaign, see: C. Page, *US Propaganda During the Vietnam War, 1965-73: The Limits of Persuasion* (London, 1996) pp.36-9; 114-7

<sup>93</sup> J. Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes* (New York, 1965) p .xii

<sup>94</sup> This is in reference to M. Ogle’s definition published in 1950: ‘Propaganda is any effort to change opinions or attitudes...The propagandist is anyone who communicates his ideas with the intent of influencing others.’ See: M. Ogle, *Public Opinion and Political Dynamics* (Boston, 1950).

<sup>95</sup> J. Carey, ‘Mass Communication Research and Cultural Studies: an American View’, in J. Curran, M. Gurevitch and J. Woollacott (eds.), *Mass Communication and Society* (London, 1977), p.412

and other political manifestoes demonstrate deliberate intent to conduct emotional possession of its mass audience in encouraging a revolution in the South.<sup>96</sup> In regards to the NLF's tactics for the enemy, their attempts to drive a wedge between the enemy soldiers and their political affiliations further emphasises such an argument. The centralisation of these media structures from Hanoi, alongside the controlled, thematic nature of the messages it produced gives further credence to a theory that propaganda is the right term to be used.

However, from this study's understanding on the origins of the leaflets rhetoric and the doctrinal beliefs within the NLF during the Winter-Spring Campaign, the previous definition becomes somewhat obsolete. As Hanoi Hannah expressed in a recent interview describing her 'propagandist' messages, she stated how she was merely warning U.S. personnel "to not interfere in the affairs of the Vietnamese".<sup>97</sup> From the NLF's Marxist-Leninist influence, it seems clear that the North in the 1960's felt this was a contemporary struggle against the neo-colonialism of the West. This struggle for independence and the constructions of these nationalists rhetoric, stretched back to the earlier struggles felt under French rule, marking the Winter-Spring Campaign as another stage of Vietnamese nationalism. However, whilst their rhetoric was clearly influenced by Western discourse, the NLF still made occasional subtle references to their cultural traditionalism, stemming from Vietnam's earlier acquaintance with Chinese civilisation.

When one combines these factors that influenced the NLF leaflets of the Winter-Spring Campaign, we become marred by an overlap between nationalism and propaganda that most Western historians have failed to comprehend. By labelling such material as propaganda, this term inhibits further historical examination and provides an over-simplification for a far more complex historical construction.

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<sup>96</sup> This process of persuasion by appealing to the human emotions is further explored in H. Blumer's, 'The Mass, The Public and Public Opinion', in B. Berelson and M. Janowitz (eds.), *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication* (New York, 1966), p. 45-7

<sup>97</sup> Full interview can be at:  
[<https://web.archive.org/web/20080822082921/http://www.thanhniennews.com/features/?catid=10&newsid=41272>] (26/04/15)



## Conclusion

In conclusion, it seems clear that the NLF leaflets produced within the Winter-Spring Campaign are part of far more complex historical construction than a 'propaganda' label fails to encompass. When analysing North Vietnam's media output during the Vietnam War, historians such as M. Bradley, D. Pike and D. Elliot label its output as 'propagandist'. Similarly within the archival commentary, the curators of the note series (JUSPAO) used similar westernised notions to conceptualise their findings. This study has argued that to do so, is to impose western notions and definitions about propaganda upon a society that is completely alien to our own both culturally and socially. Furthermore, imposing such a term on the material is to ignore the viewpoint of its creator, the NLF, and the Northern regime. Whilst the structure itself was a tightly controlled, thematically driven system from the North as noted by D. Pike and M. Bradley, the origins of its rhetoric derive themselves from earlier periods of colonial and Chinese interaction. Through the eradication of previous Confucian society and the infiltration of westernised discourse, it is plausible that these earlier colonial interactions formed the nucleus for the latter revolutionary organisations.<sup>98</sup>

From analysing the leaflets, VC and NLF political manifestos, alongside radio broadcasts during 1967-68, it is clear that the NLF perceived the struggle of the Winter-Spring Campaign to be part of a much longer historical chain in Vietnamese nationalist history. By utilising indoctrination tactics that targeted specific civilian and enemy groups alongside their *ad hoc* Revolutionary Guerrilla Warfare military tactics, the North believed that the Winter-Spring Campaign was the 'time-opportunity' for total victory. Civilians, as well as southern and northern military personnel would overrun the Thieu regime and their American ally, forming a unified Vietnam under NLF domination. Through their Marxist-Leninist teachings, this movement however conceptualised their revolution as part of a much wider geo-political struggle against the world imperialist system that still existed in the 1960's. It therefore seems more appropriate to label the NLF leaflets in a term that encompasses both its propagandist and nationalist elements.

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<sup>98</sup> D.Y. Chang, *The Nature and Characteristics of the Communist Revolution in South Vietnam* (Michigan, 1969), p.44

A fundamental methodological aim for this study has been to endeavour to divorce itself from one's own Western origins when dealing with the archive. Such an aim has been attempted so as to deliver and examine this material from an 'Asian-centric' perspective.<sup>99</sup> For the materials linguistic content, a Vietnamese translator has been used to reach a scenario that enables an understanding of its content in its basic colloquial form. For the commentary provided by the JUSPAO within the archive, a fundamental part to this study has been 'to extol the professional myth of impartiality, neutrality, and objectivity' when approaching their findings.<sup>100</sup> By abolishing this notion of archival neutrality, comprehending that certain elements might be privileged whilst others marginalised, a more un-biased understanding of this archive and its material has been reached.

As Nicholas Tarling argues in *Historians and Southeast Asian History*, even to date, history being written on Asian and Southeast Asian history 'is history in the Western tradition'.<sup>101</sup> This study has supported such a claim for the Vietnam War, for whilst there lacks historiographical analysis into this particular genre of media during the Winter-Spring Campaign, historians writing on the Vietnam War are indissolubly tied to the whole Western cultural base. If a different sort of history is to be written on this period of Vietnam's history, then a revolutionary reappraisal of the current historical methodological techniques alongside further archival examination has to be conducted.<sup>102</sup> This study however, through its methodological techniques has suggested a possible way to which historians can go about beginning such a reappraisal, whilst offering a different narrative on the NLF's strategies for the Winter-Spring Campaign.

Unfortunately due to restrictions in access to other archival material, an evaluation on the reception of these leaflets cannot be concluded with any accuracy. For such a judgement to be formed, greater personnel accounts from the leaflets recipients would have to be analysed, alongside a broader collection of leaflets than those used for this study. This study however has provided a comprehensive investigation into a form of

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<sup>99</sup> J. Smail, 'On the Possibility of an Autonomous History of Modern Southeast Asia', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 2,2, (July 1961) pp.72-102

<sup>100</sup> J. Schwartz and T. Cook, 'Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory', *Archival Science*, 2, 1, (2002), pp.1-19; 2

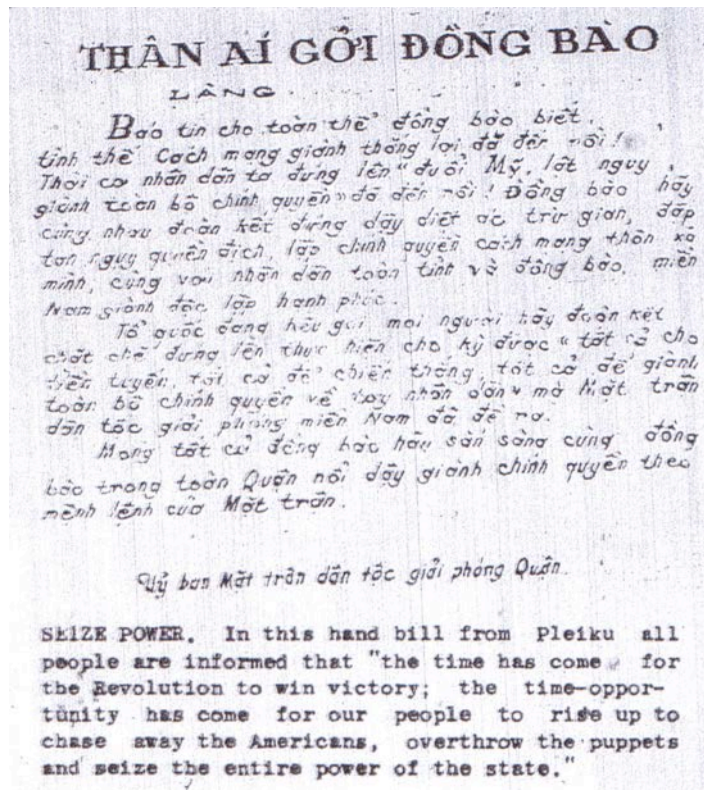
<sup>101</sup> N. Tarling, *Historians and Southeast Asian History* (Auckland, 2000), pp.47-56

<sup>102</sup> Tarling, *Historians and Southeast Asian History*, 52

media the NLF used at a key time during the Vietnam War, and its relation to Vietnam's greater history. One may argue that a rather pessimistic line is deduced from this study regarding the current body of literature on Vietnam. However, this study should be used as a calling for contemporary historians to continue to strive to tackle an eternal issue that may forever plague our field – how can a western historian go about approaching 'the archive of the other'?

Appendix I: NLF Leaflets from the Winter-Spring Campaign, 1967-68

VDRN/0386/MF825:



Phạm Thị Huyền Translation:

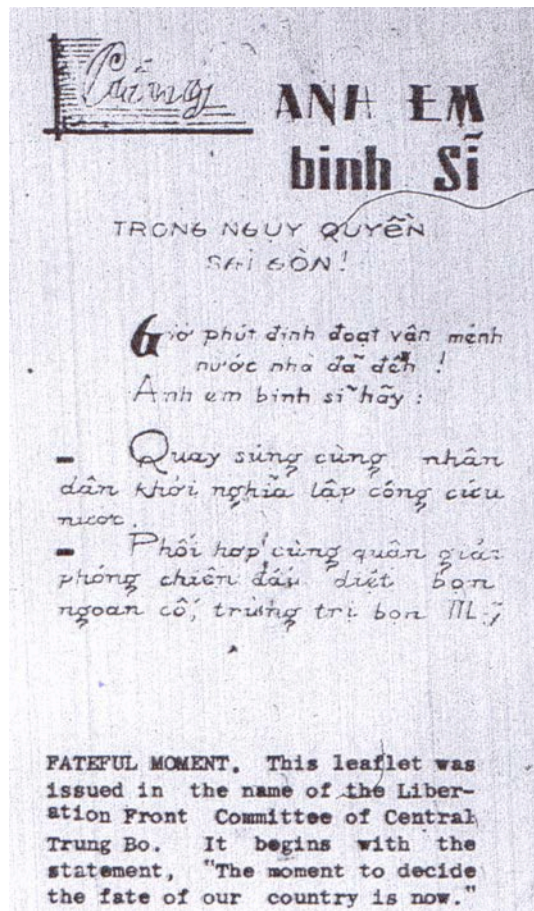
Dear all residents,

I am pleased to announce to you that the situation for resolution getting the victory has come, the time for residents to stand up to drive away American army and quisling troops out of our country and gain the government has come. Let be united together and stand up to kill cruel and dishonest elements, completely defeat the government of quisling, establish the authorities at our own communes, and combine with whole residents in province and all people in the south to gain the confidence and freedom.

The fatherland is shouting out everybody for close union to stand up to carry out up to whenever we got "all for front line, all for victory, all for getting the whole government to the hand of resident" as targeted by South Liberation National Front of Vietnam.

Hopefully, all residents will be ready with all people for rising up to gain the government in accordance with the demand of the Front.

The Committee of District Liberation National Front.



Phạm Thị Huyền Translation:

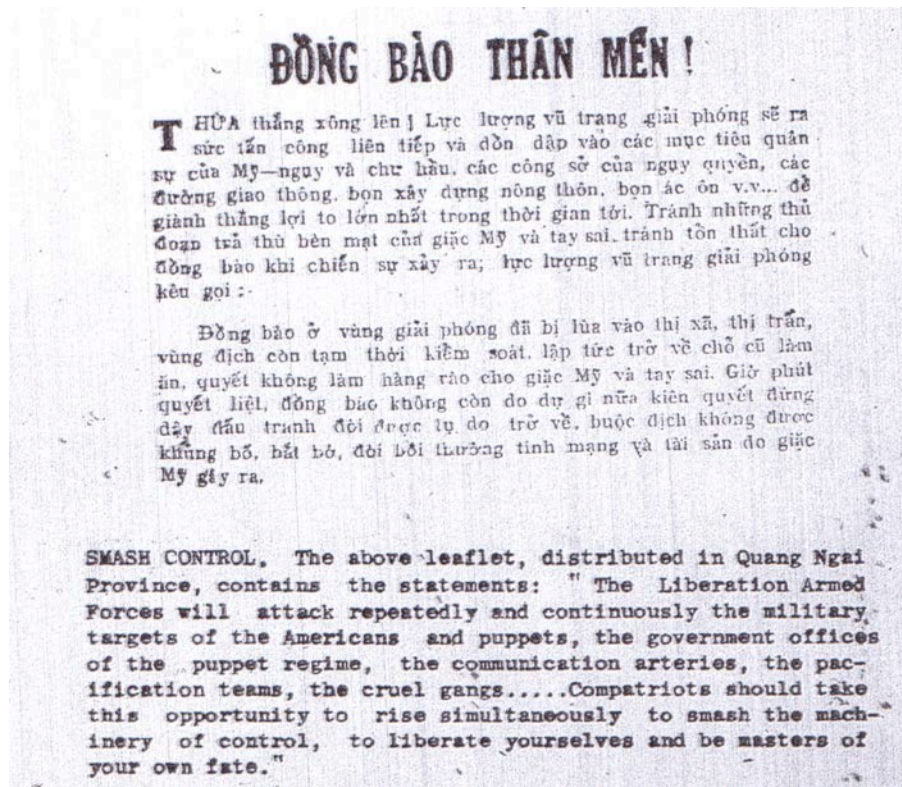
With soldier brothers in puppet government of Saigon

The time to decide the fate of our country has come!

Soldier brothers let:

- Turn back the gun and combining with residents to rise up, achieve a feat and save the nation.
- Cooperating with the liberation army in order to fight and kill stubborn individuals, and punish American groups.





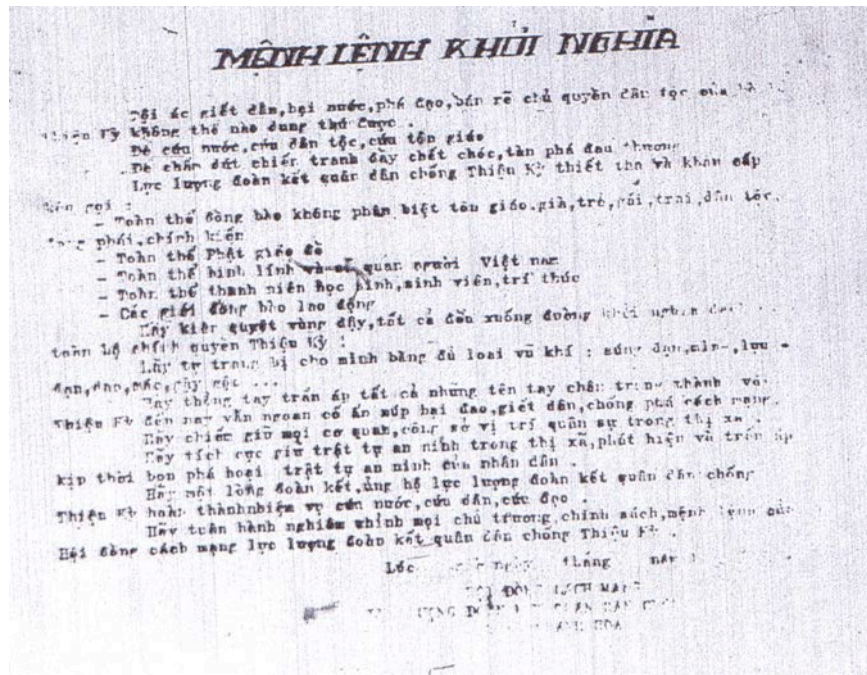
Phạm Thị Huyền Translation:

My dear residents,

Take advantage of the success to rush forward. The liberated armed forces will try their best to fight consecutively and intensively against military targets of Americans and puppets, the offices of puppet government, transportation routes, individuals buildings in the countryside, cruel gangs, etc in order to gain the greatest victory in our history. Avoiding mean practices using for the revenge from American army and lackeys. Avoid the damage, residents, when the fighting happens. The liberated armed forces calls on:

The residents who are living in liberated areas and areas that were temporally controlled by the enemy, have to immediately turn back the old working and make the barricade for American army and lackeys. Now is a drastic moment, the residents haven't been hesitated any more, let resolutely rise up and fight to get the freedom back, and force the enemy in not terrorizing and arresting, require the compensation for the death and properties caused by American army.

VDRN/0387/MF825:



Phạm Thị Huyền Translation:

The crimes of the Thieu-Ky clique which kills the people, harms the country, sabotages religions, cheaply sells our national sovereignty, are unforgivable.

In order to save the country, the people and the religions;

In order to end the war which is full of killings, destruction and sorrows;

The Force of People-Army Union Against Thieu-Ky earnestly and urgently appeals to:

- All compatriots regardless of religion, age, sex, nationality, party, political tendencies,
- All Buddhist faithful,
- All soldiers and officers who are Vietnamese,
- All youths, students, intellectuals,
- All laboring compatriots,

To rise up with determination, to take to the streets in uprising (khôi nghĩa), to seize the whole power system of the Thieu-Ky clique.

Arm yourselves with every kind of weapon: gun, mine, hand grenade, knife, stick.....

Pitilessly repress all of the faithful henchmen of Thieu-Ky who until now have stubbornly and covertly harmed religion, killed the people, sabotaged the revolution.

Occupy all government offices and military installations in the city.

Positively keep order and ensure security in the city, discover and repress in time those who sabotage the people's security.

Be one-minded in uniting with and supporting the force of People-Army Union Against Thieu-Ky in accomplishing the mission of saving the county, the people and the religion.

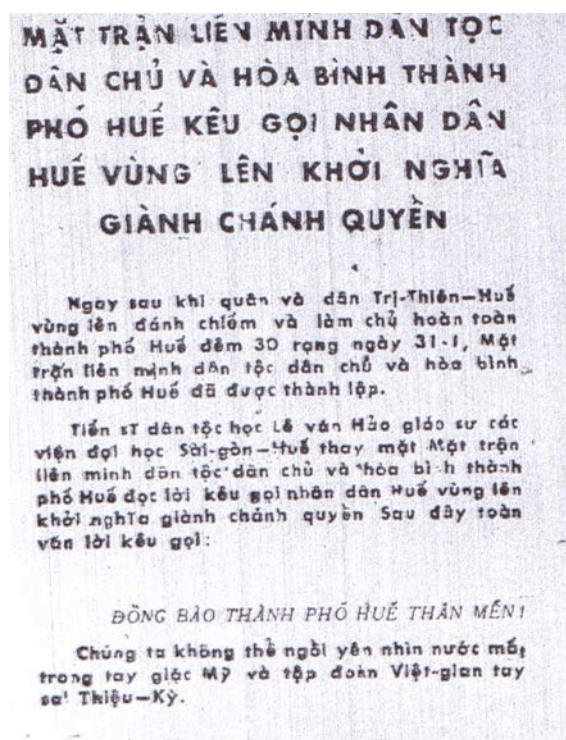
Strictly comply with all policies, directives, orders of the Revolutionary Council of Force of People-Army Union Against Thieu-Ky.

Candidate Number: 56612

At . . . . . hour, day . . . . . month . . . . . year . . . .  
The Revolutionary Council  
Force of People-Army Union Against Thieu-Ky  
Khanh Hoa Province



VDRN/0389/MF825:



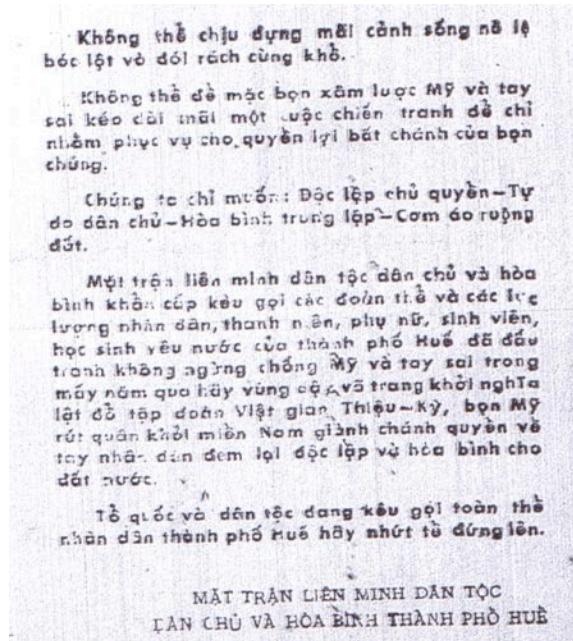
Phạm Thị Huyền Translation:

Peaceful Democratic National Coalition Front of the city appeals to residents to rise up and gain the government.

After rising up and totally owning Hue City in the night of 30th and the early morning of 31th of January, by the army and residents in Tri-Thien-Hue (name of their provinces in middle of Viet Nam at that time), the Peaceful Democratic National Coalition Front of Hue City has been established. Dr. Le Van Hao, professor of Saigon-Hue universities on behalf of Peaceful Democratic National Coalition Front of Hue City read the appeal to residents of Hue city for rising up and gaining the government. The content of the appeal is as follows:

Dear residents of Hue City!

We can't still sit here and look at our country in the hand of American army and the traitor corporation - Thieu-Ky.



Phạm Thị Huyền Translation:

We can't still sit here and look at our country in the hand of American army and the traitor corporation - Thieu-Ky.

We can't bear forever the slave situation, the hunger and poverty. We can't let American invaders and traitors forever remain in a war to only serve for their illegal rights.

We just would like to have the independence and the sovereignty, the freedom and democracy, the peace and neutral, the rice, clothes and land fields.

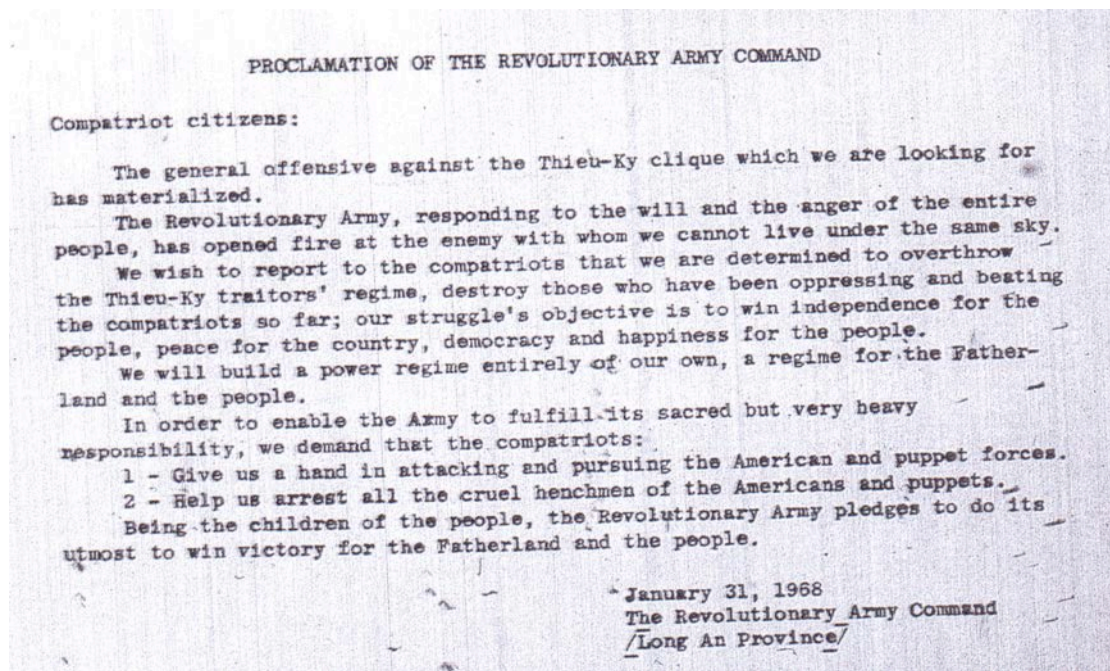
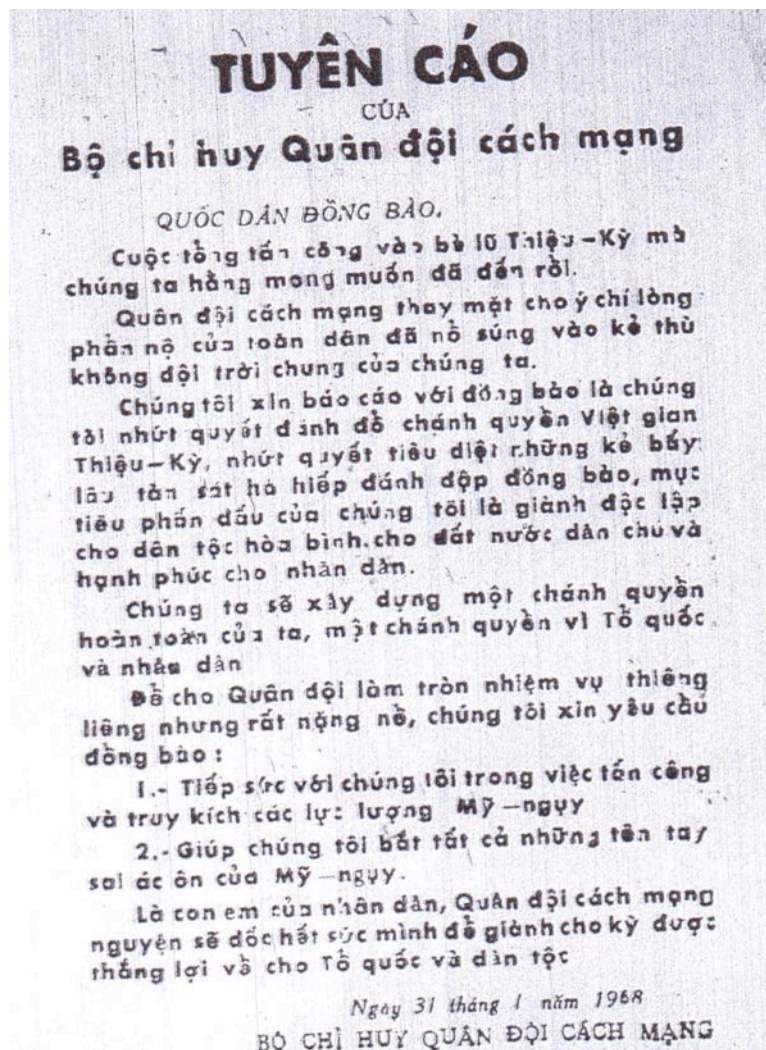
Peaceful Democratic National Coalition Front urgently appeals to organizations, youths, women and students in Hue City who love the fatherland and are continuously fighting against the American army and its traitors for some years to rise up and overthrow the traitor Thieu Ky Corporation, the Americans to withdraw their army back out of the South, take the government to the hand of residents and bring the independence and peace to the country.

The nation and the Fatherland are appealing to all residents of Hue city for the simultaneously stand- up.

The Front of National, Democratic and Peace Alliance of Hue City



VDRN/0391/MF825:



Candidate Number: 56612

Phạm Thị Huyền Translation:

Dear compatriot citizens:

The general offensive against the Thieu-Ky clique who we are looking for has come.

The Revolutionary Army, on behalf of the entire people's will, has opened fire on our enemy whom we can't live under the same sky.

We would like to notify the compatriots that we will resolutely overthrow the Thieu-Ky traitors' regime, destroy those who have been oppressing and beating the compatriots so far; our struggle's objective is to win independence for the people, peace for the country, democracy and happiness for the people.

We will build a power regime entirely of our own, a regime for the Fatherland and the people.

In order to enable the Army to fulfil its sacred but very heavy responsibility, we demand the compatriots:

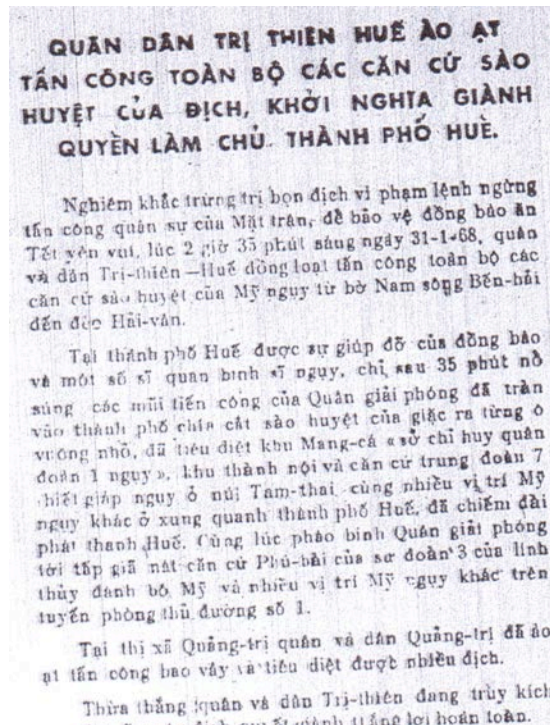
- 1) Give us a hand in attacking and pursuing the American puppet forces.
- 2) Help us arrest all the cruel henchmen of the Americans and puppets.

Being the children of the people, the Revolutionary Army pledges to do its utmost to win victory for the fatherland and the people.

January 31 1968

The Revolutionary Army Command

VDRN/0393/MF825:



Phạm Thị Huyền Translation:

The army and citizens of Hue City impetuously attacked all den bases of the enemy, rose up to gain the mastery of Hue City.

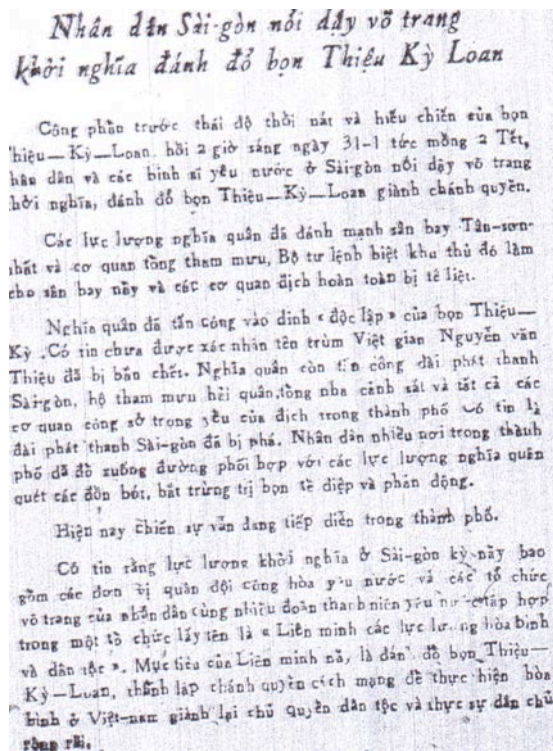
Strictly punishing enemies violating the offer for stopping the military attack on Front in order to protect citizens to have a happy Tet holiday, at 2:35 AM dated 31 January 1968, the army and the citizens of Hue City together attacked all den bases of American army and quisling troops from the south bank of Ben Hai river to Hai Van pass.

At Hue City, with the help of citizens and some officers of quisling troops, just after 35 minutes of firing, the attack teams of the liberation army came into the city and isolated the enemy troops into small square areas, killed the gill area which is "the headquarter of army corps No.01 of Southern troops". The urban area and base of regiment No.07- the amour of Quisling troops in Tam Thai mountain as well as many other areas of American army around Hue City, occupied the radio station of Hue city. At the same time, the artillery of liberation army consecutively broke down the base "Phu Bai" of division 3 which belonged to American marines and many other positions of American army and quisling troops at the defense line in route No.01

At Quang Tri town, the army and citizens impetuously attacked, surrounded and killed many enemies.

Taking the advantage of the victory, the army and the citizens are strongly pursuing the enemies with the determination to win total victory.





Phạm Thị Huyền Translation:

sd

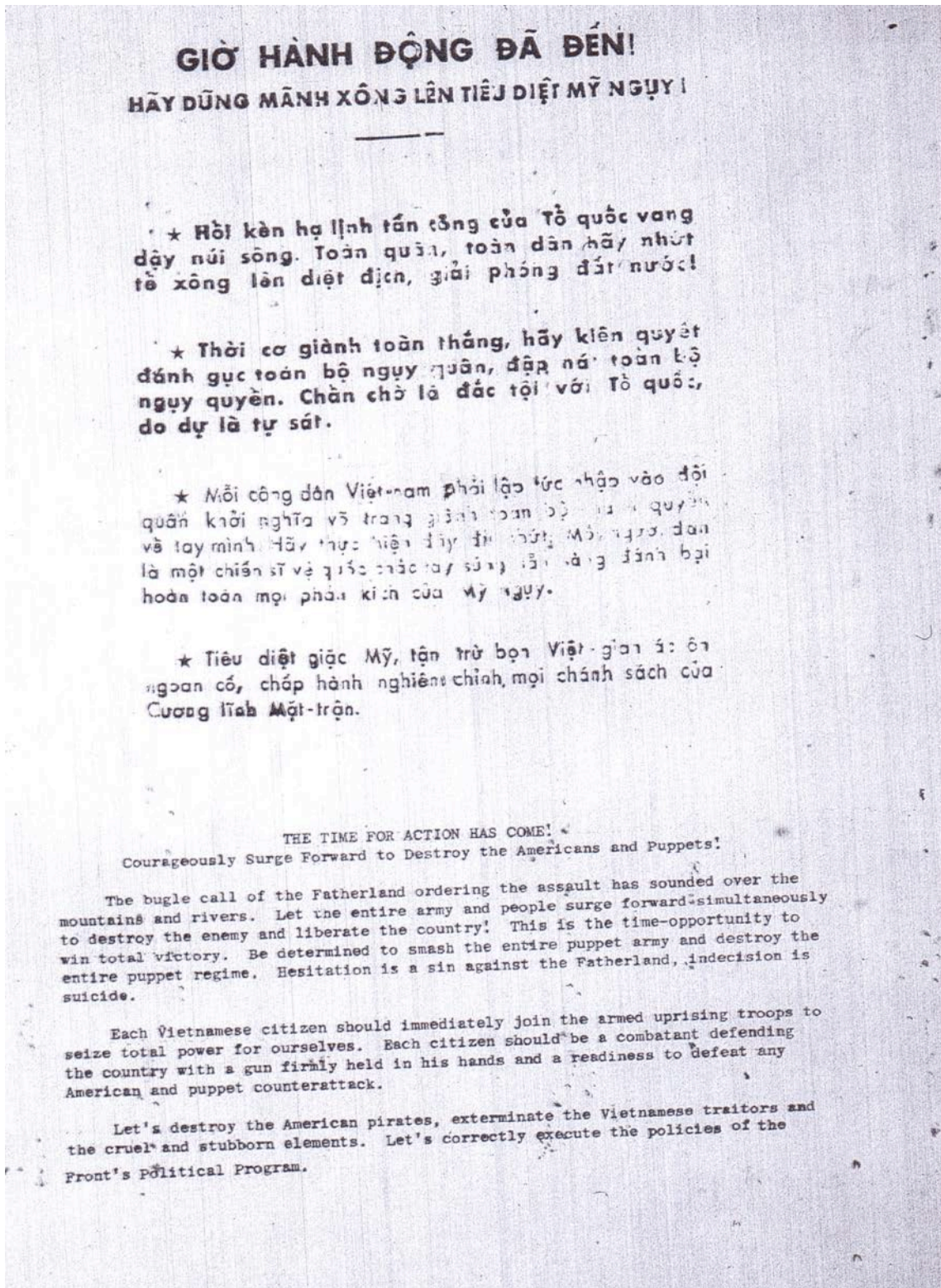
Saigon citizens rose up and using the armed uprising to demolish Thieu-Ky Corporation.

Feeling indignant before the corruptive and combative attitude of Thieu-Ky. At 2:00 AM on 31 January (means 2nd of January in lunar calendar), citizens and patriotic soldiers in Saigon rose up to win the government.

The militarism forces strongly attacked Tan Son Nhat airport and the office of general staff. The closed administrative-territorial entity command of the capital took this airport and enemy departments were totally paralyzed.

The militarism attacked "the independent palace" of Thieu-Ky-Loan corporation. There was information that hasn't been confirmed that the leader of quisling troops-Nguyen Van Thieu had been shot. The militarism also attacked Saigon radio station, the general command of marines, general office of Police and all main offices of the enemy in the city. It also been told information that Saigon radio station had been demolished. The citizens from many areas in the city had to go out to the streets and cooperate with the militarism forces to spread on the enemy's posts.

This combat is still happening in the city at the moment.



Phạm Thị Huyền Translation (confirmed the validity of the JUSPAO translation, no changes of note).



VDRN/0396/MF825:

**LƯU BÍNH SĨ, SĨ QUAN**  
**THUỘC QUÂN QUẢN TRỊ PHƯỚC LONG**

Năm 1967 Mỹ-Ngụy thua to hơn các năm trước: 365.000 tên bị diệt, với 53 tiểu đoàn, hàng trăm đại đội, 3.200 máy bay, 8.500 xe quân sự bị phá hủy v.v...

Thế lực hiện nay của Mỹ-Ngụy không quân và bộ tác. Chúng phòng thủ không xong, tấn công không nổi, hậu cứ bị uy hiếp, bị tấn công dồn dập. Rõ ràng Mỹ đã thua, cách mạng sẽ thắng hoàn toàn.

Thời cơ đã đến, không do dự, không chần chừ, các bạn hãy:

- Bỏ ngũ về với gia đình.
- Chống lệnh không đi căn, không đi tiếp viện, không chống lại quân giải phóng.
- Quay súng diệt ác ôn; phá đồn bót lập công trở về với nhân dân.

Một trận sẵn sàng hoàn nghênh những kẻ nhụt, dấn vị có hành động chống lại cứu nước.

Đó là con đường duy nhất, các bạn nên suy nghĩ để hành động.

**ỦY BAN MẶT TRÁN DÂN TỘC GIẢI PHÓNG**  
**TRỊ PHƯỚC LONG**

---

**SOLDIERS AND OFFICERS OF THE PUPPET ARMY IN PHUOC LONG PROVINCE**

In 1967 the U.S. and puppets suffered heavier defeats than in the previous years; 365,000 of them were destroyed, with 53 battalions and hundreds of companies put out of action. 3,200 aircraft and 8,500 military vehicles destroyed, etc.

The U.S. and puppets are in a difficult, stalemate situation. They are unable to defend themselves or launch offensives, their rear bases are under pressure or under constant attacks. It is obvious that the Americans are being defeated and that the revolution will win total victory.

The time-opportunity has come. Without hesitation, without indecision, friends, you should:

- Leave your ranks and return to your families.
- Refuse to go on sweep operations and rescue operations, refuse to fight the liberation troops.
- Turn your guns to kill cruel tyrants, destroy the army and police posts, achieve merits and return to the people's side.

The Front stands ready to welcome all individuals and units engaged in acts opposing the Americans and serving national salvation.

This is the only road for you, friends. Please think it over and act accordingly..

**National Liberation Front Committee  
for Phuoc Long Province**



Phạm Thị Huyền Translation:

In 1967 the U.S. and puppets suffered heavier defeats than in the previous years; 365,000 of them were killed and 53 battalions, hundreds of companies as well as put 32,000 aircraft and 8,500 military vehicles destroyed, etc.

The U.S. and puppets are in a difficult, stalemate situation. They are unable to defend themselves or launch offensives, their rear bases are under being defeated and that the revolution will win total victory.

The time- opportunity has come. Without hesitation, without indecision, friends, you should:

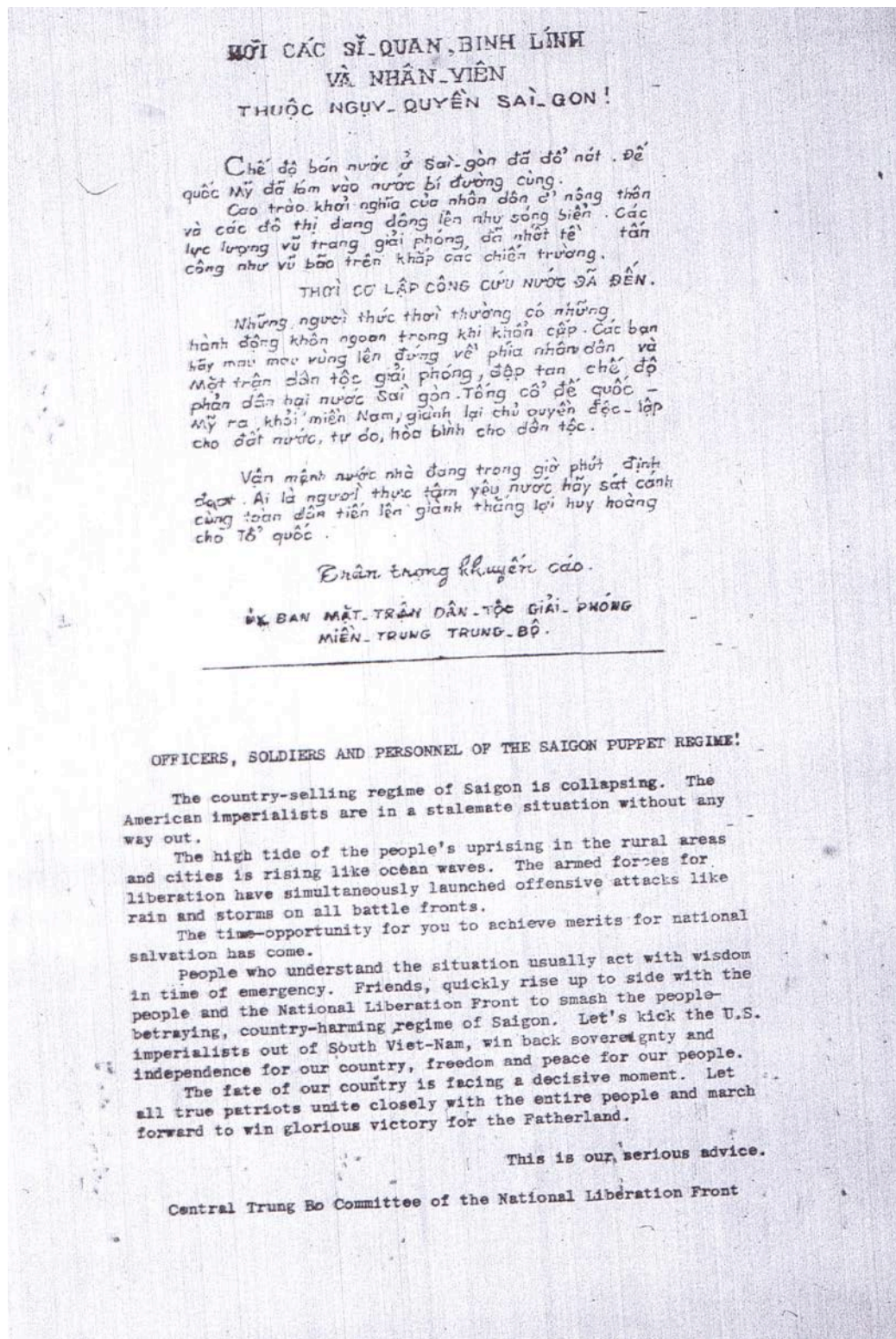
- leave your ranks and return to your families
- refuse to go on sweep operations and rescue operations, refuse to fight liberation troops
- turn your guns to kill cruel tyrants, destroy the army and police posts, achieve merits and return to the people's side.

The Front is always ready to welcome all individuals and units engaged in acts opposing the Americans and serving national salvation.

This is the only road for you, friends. Please think it over and act accordingly ...

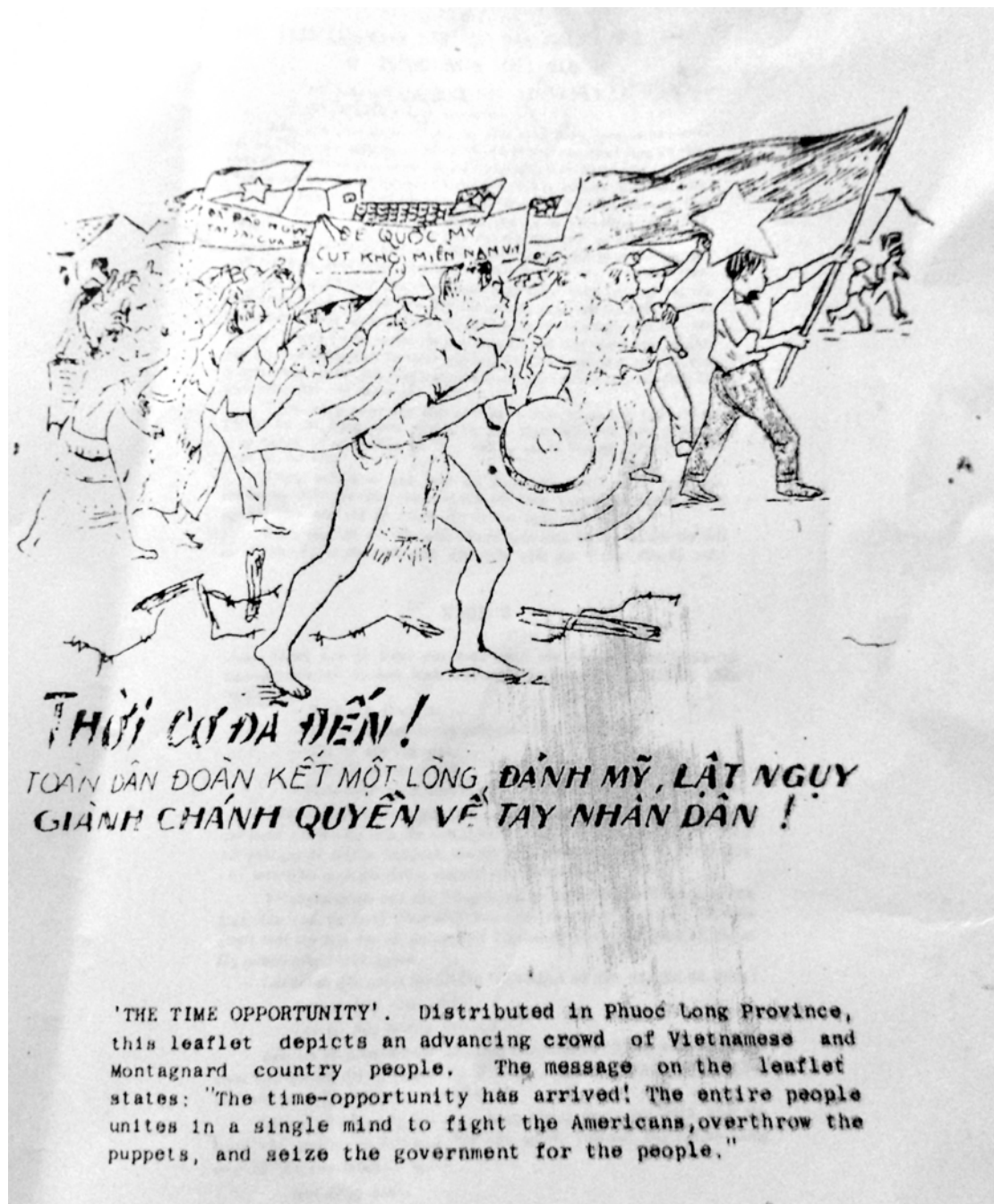
National Liberation Front Committee for Phuoc Long Province

VDRN/0396/MF825:



Phạm Thị Huyền Translation (confirmed the validity of the JUSPAO translation, no changes of note).

VDRN/0397/MF825:



Phạm Thị Huyền Translation (confirmed the validity of the JUSPAO translation, no changes of note).



Appendix II: Ho Chi Minh's Letter from Abroad, 1941

Elders!  
Prominent personalities!  
Intellectuals, peasants, workers, traders, and soldiers!  
Dear Compatriots!

Since the French were defeated by the Germans, their forces have been completely disintegrated. However, with regard to our people, they continue to plunder us pitilessly, suck all our blood, and carry out a barbarous policy of all-out terrorism and massacre. Concerning their foreign policy, they bow their heads and kneel down, shamelessly cutting out land for Siam; without a single word of protest, they heartlessly offer our interest to Japan. As a result, our people suffer under a double yoke: they serve not only as buffaloes and horses to the French invaders but also as slaves to the Japanese plunderers. Alas! What sin have our people committed to be doomed to such a wretched plight!

Living in such painful and lamentable conditions, can our people bind their own hands to doom themselves to death? No! Certainly not! More than 20 million sons and daughters of Lac Hong are resolute to do away with slavery. For nearly eighty years under the French invaders' iron heels we have unceasingly sacrificed ourselves and struggled for national independence and freedom. The loyal and heroic spirit of our predecessors such as Phan Dinh Phung, Hoang Hoa Tham, and Luong Ngoc Quyen is still alive; the heroic feats of our revolutionaries in Thai Nguyen, Yen Bai, Nghe An, and Ha Tinh provinces remain forever in our memory. The recent uprising in the South and at Do Luong and Bac Son have testified to the determination of our compatriots to shed their blood as their glorious predecessors did, heroically to annihilate the enemy. If we did not succeed, it was not because the French invaders were strong, but only because the situation was not yet ripe and our compatriots throughout the country did not yet have the same heart and mind.

Now, the opportunity has come for our liberation. France itself is unable to dominate our country. As to the Japanese, on the one hand they are bogged in China, on the other they are hamstrung by the British and American forces and certainly cannot use all their forces to contend with us. If our entire people are united and single-minded, we are certainly able to smash the picked French and Japanese armies.

Compatriots throughout the country! Rise up quickly! Let us follow the heroic example of the Chinese people! Rise up quickly to organize the Association for National Salvation to fight the French and the Japanese.

Elders!  
Prominent personalities!  
Some hundreds of years ago, when our country was endangered by the Mongolian invasion, our elders under the Tran dynasty rose up indignantly and called on their sons and daughters throughout the

country to rise as one in order to kill the enemy. Finally they saved their people from danger, and their good name will be carried into posterity for all time. The elders and prominent personalities of our country should follow the example set by our forefathers in the glorious task of national salvation.

Rich people, soldiers, worker, peasants, intellectuals, employees, traders, youth, and women who warmly love your country! At the present time national liberation is the most important problem. Let us unite together! As one in mind and strength we shall overthrow the Japanese and French and their jackals in order to save people from the situation between boiling water and burning heat.

Dear compatriots!

National salvation is the common cause to the whole of our people. Every Vietnamese must take part in it. He who has money will contribute his money, he who has strength will contribute his strength, he who has talent will contribute his talent. I pledge to use all my modest abilities to follow you, and am ready for the last sacrifice.

Revolutionary fighters!

The hour has struck! Raise aloft the insurrectionary banner and guide the people throughout the country to overthrow the Japanese and French! The sacred call of the Fatherland is resounding in your ears; the blood of our heroic predecessors who sacrificed their lives is stirring in your hearts! The fighting spirit of the people is displayed everywhere before you! Let us rise up quickly! Unite with each other, unify your actions to overthrow the Japanese and the French.

Victory to Viet-Nam's Revolution!

Victory to the World's Revolution!

Appendix III: Ho Chi Minh's *Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam*

All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among them are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. In a broader sense, this means: All the peoples on the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have a right to live, to be happy and free.

The Declaration of the French Revolution made in 1791 on the Rights of Man and the Citizen also states: "All men are born free and with equal rights, and must always remain free and have equal rights."

Those are undeniable truths.

Nevertheless, for more than eighty years, the French imperialists, abusing the standard of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, have violated our Fatherland and oppressed our fellow-citizens. They have acted contrary to the ideals of humanity and justice.

In the field of politics, they have deprived our people of every democratic liberty.

They have enforced inhuman laws; they have set up three distinct political regimes in the North, the Centre and the South of Vietnam in order to wreck our national unity and prevent our people from being united.

They have built more prisons than schools. They have mercilessly slain our patriots; they have drowned our uprisings in rivers of blood.

They have fettered public opinion; they have practiced obscurantism against our people.

To weaken our race they have forced us to use opium and alcohol.

In the field of economics, they have fleeced us to the backbone, impoverished our people, and devastated our land.

They have robbed us of our rice fields, our mines, our forests, and our raw materials. They have monopolized the issuing of bank-notes and the export trade.

They have invented numerous unjustifiable taxes and reduced our people, especially our peasantry, to a state of extreme poverty.

They have hampered the prospering of our national bourgeoisie; they have mercilessly exploited our workers.

In the autumn of 1940, when the Japanese Fascists violated Indochina's territory to establish new bases in their fight against the Allies, the French imperialists went down on their bended knees and handed over our country to them.

Thus, from that date, our people were subjected to the double yoke of the French and the Japanese. Their sufferings and miseries increased. The result was that from the end of last year to the beginning of this year, from Quang Tri province to the North of Vietnam, more than two million of our fellow-citizens died from starvation. On March 9, the French troops were disarmed by the Japanese. The French colonialists either fled or surrendered showing that not only were they incapable of "protecting" us, but that, in the span of five years, they had twice sold our country to the Japanese.

On several occasions before March 9, the Vietminh League urged the French to ally themselves with it against the Japanese. Instead of agreeing to this proposal, the French colonialists so intensified their terrorist activities against the Vietminh members that before fleeing they massacred a great number of our political prisoners detained at Yen Bay and Caobang.

Notwithstanding all this, our fellow-citizens have always manifested toward the French a tolerant and humane attitude. Even after the Japanese putsch of March 1945, the Vietminh League helped many Frenchmen to cross the frontier, rescued some of them from Japanese jails, and protected French lives and property.

From the autumn of 1940, our country had in fact ceased to be a French colony and had become a Japanese possession.

After the Japanese had surrendered to the Allies, our whole people rose to regain our national sovereignty and to found the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

The truth is that we have wrested our independence from the Japanese and not from the French.

The French have fled, the Japanese have capitulated, Emperor Bao Dai has abdicated. Our people have broken the chains which for nearly a century have fettered them and have won independence for the Fatherland. Our people at the same time have overthrown the monarchic regime that has reigned supreme for dozens of centuries. In its place has been established the present Democratic Republic.

For these reasons, we, members of the Provisional Government, representing the whole Vietnamese people, declare that from now on we break off all relations of a colonial character with France; we repeal all the international obligation that France has so far subscribed to on behalf of Vietnam and we abolish all the special rights the French have unlawfully acquired in our Fatherland.

The whole Vietnamese people, animated by a common purpose, are determined to fight to the bitter end against any attempt by the French colonialists to reconquer their country.

We are convinced that the Allied nations which at Tehran and San Francisco have acknowledged the principles of self-determination and equality of nations, will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Vietnam.

A people who have courageously opposed French domination for more than eight years, a people who have fought side by side with the Allies against the Fascists during these last years, such a people must be free and independent.

For these reasons, we, members of the Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, solemnly declare to the world that Vietnam has the right to be a free and independent country—and in fact is so already. The entire Vietnamese people are determined to mobilize all their physical and mental strength, to sacrifice their lives and property in order to safeguard their independence and liberty.



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