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Propaganda and the People: An examination of persuasion in the struggle for independence in Việt Nam to 1954

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in the Faculty of Asian Studies
Australian National University

Robert James Hurle
December 2004
(Minor corrections September 2005)
Acknowledgements

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Declaration

This is to certify that this thesis is the result of my own work. All sources have been duly acknowledged.

Signed: [Signature]
Date: December 2005
Abstract

Over the years 1946 to 1954, the Vietnamese people largely succeeded in repelling a European invader, the French *colons*, who fought to re-establish a French colony in that land. The Vietnamese fight was led by an indigenous organisation called the Việt Minh, an alliance of a number of groups, chief among them being the Indochinese Communist Party, which succeeded in carrying the bulk of the Vietnamese people along with them. One reason why they were able to do this was the success of the materials of persuasion, the propaganda, that they used. It was aimed squarely at the ordinary people, and successfully convinced millions of them to risk their lives and livelihood to help the fight for Independence. The persuasion techniques elicited a strong response because they were cleverly targeted and designed to appeal to traditions that the people felt connect to them and their daily aspirations. The personality and character of one man, President Hồ Chí Minh, was crucial to the appeal for support from the ordinary Vietnamese citizen but, perhaps surprisingly, he is not at all a major figure in the propaganda materials.
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Propaganda and the People
Chapter 1
Introduction

In his book, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial* published in 1981, David Marr writes:

In 1938 at least eighteen million Vietnamese were being kept in check by a mere 27,000 colonial troops. Yet a scant sixteen years later, colonial forces totalling 450,000 were unable to avoid tactical disaster at Điện Biên Phủ and compulsory strategic evacuation south of the seventeenth parallel. Finally, in the years 1965 – 1975, various combinations of American, Republic of Việt Nam, South Korean, and other allied armed forces totalling up to 1.2 million men were outfoxed, stalemated, and eventually vanquished by the National Liberation Front and the People’s Army of Vietnam.  

Sometime in 1995, I was in Hồ Chí Minh City needing some photocopying. At that time, we were staying in a backpacker hotel that also had some more up-market accommodation. The girl in the photocopy shop was interested to know how much we paid to stay in her city – $15 per night – and I told her that there were also rooms for $90 a night. “Wah!” she cried. “That much”. She thought for a while. “In my life, I could never afford to stay there. We are a poor people”, she said, “a very poor people ... but we are heroes!” Like the girl, many people in Vietnam today use concepts like “heroism” and “national pride”, often referring back to a memory of the August Revolution of 1945. Indeed, CDs and tapes of songs of the Revolution are still popular in present–day Hanoi.

1.1 Scope of This Study

The Việt Minh coalition, in developing the structures of the Vietnamese government that had been declared by Hồ Chí Minh on 2 September 1945, and in resisting French attempts to re–colonise Vietnam after World War II, needed to accomplish a number of objectives. Among these, education and propaganda for the people was at least as important as the other tasks of building the state apparatus, obtaining weaponry and training, and designing and executing tactical and strategic military operations. The propaganda of the Việt Minh took the excitement and enthusiasm of the August 1945 Revolution, and gave it focus for particular ends for the people. Above all, it promoted and reinforced a sense of community, a sense of ordinary people working together to defeat common enemies. Colonialism was one of those enemies. The French people in general were not opposed, unlike those of them who were *colons* and who were

2 Personal interview by me. At that time, a professional engineer after graduating with a bachelor’s degree, would be able to earn the equivalent of about $US20 per month.
3 Personal observation by the author and some of the author’s friends.
supporters of the attempts to form a colonial Government. The other enemies the Vietnamese people faced were hunger and ignorance, and the propaganda was directed against these foes as well. I hope to be able to show that the propaganda used by the Việt Minh was aimed at touching the common heart.

Chapter 1 of this work introduces some of the concepts that are dealt with elsewhere in the thesis, such ideas as propaganda, and vocabulary, and discusses how the source material was found and analysed. Chapter 2 is a small digression into the general subject of persuasion, as it might apply to people everywhere – an attempt to summarise some scientific study into a few aspects of the mechanism of the human mind. Because artists and writers were important in the production of propaganda, and they joined the Resistance against the French so readily, the situation in arts and letters, and the movement towards direction of artists and writers is discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 is a brief discussion of the main forms of propaganda, and the themes that are seen in the material. Chapter 5 raises the question of the use of verse in propaganda, and shows quite a few examples of how it was used to make connections with the people. Songs are another important component in the mobilisation of the people, and a few musical examples are discussed. Pictures are the main subjects in Chapters 6 and 7, and it is shown how the picture material is, again, addressed to the commoner, to the ordinary people, how their lives are portrayed, and related to the Resistance. Chapter 8 attempts to make sense of all the preceding material, to draw it together and to show how this sense of community, this social cohesion, pervades most of the sources discussed, and raises some as yet unanswered questions.

1.2 Words About Words

1.2.1 Vietnamese Words

I am not a native speaker of Vietnamese and so must rely upon others for any deep insights into the language of the Kinh people, the largest ethnic group in Vietnam. There are several points of difficulty. First, there are a few cases where the only way to describe what is meant by a word is to use extended descriptions. The word **tuyên truyền** is one such word that gives trouble when trying to give English–speakers a feeling for the meaning behind it. Superficially, it means “propaganda”, but the concepts for the Vietnamese user of the word seem to be quite different for users of the
English-language equivalent. Other examples are the words *thi dua* and *dân quán*, which may be superficially translated as “emulation” and “militia” respectively. These, and other examples, are dealt with in the text as they are encountered.4

The second problem is that words in the 1940s may be used with slightly different meanings, and different usages to that which is shown in modern dictionaries. Some guesswork, and consultation with older native speakers, are usually required to discover what meaning some of these words may have carried at the time they were used. An example is the word *giệt*, which does not occur in modern dictionaries. It could be either *giệt* (“kill”) or *diệt* (“exterminate”), *gi* and *d* having the same pronunciation in the northern areas of Vietnam.5 Again, these cases are dealt with in the text as they occur.

1.2.2 What is “Propaganda”?

Propaganda has a bad name. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* of 1982 has this to say:

*propaganda* *n.* 1. association or organized scheme for propagation of a doctrine or practice; (usu. derog.) doctrines, information, etc., thus propagated.6

At one time, the word “propaganda” was viewed in a much more positive way, and carried a meaning more akin to our present use of the word “promotion” or “promote”, that is to propagate some idea. This is illustrated by the second meaning given in the *Concise Oxford*, for a more specialised use of the word within the contemporary Roman Catholic Church:

*propaganda* *n.* 2. (R C Ch.) (Congregation or College of) the P~, committee of cardinals in charge of foreign missions.

This latter meaning is taken from the Italian for “congregation for propagation of the faith”, reflecting the etymology of the word. At the time of writing, propaganda is a hot topic in newspapers and popular magazines, as the “Iraq War”7 is in full swing, and each side is being accused by the other of providing false information, which is regularly labelled “propaganda”. This contemporary use of the word seems to imply a meaning that involves some deliberate attempt at deception. A more modern version of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (on–line version, based on the printed 1989 edition) supports this more negative view of the word in one of its alternative meanings (number 3):

---

4 See Chapter 5 for these two particular examples.
5 This particular example is seen in Chapter 7.
7 This is the unprovoked invasion of Iraq in 2003 by a coalition of countries led by the United States of America.
propaganda, n. 3. The systematic propagation of information or ideas by an interested party, esp. in a tendentious way in order to encourage or instil a particular attitude or response. Also, the ideas, doctrines, etc., disseminated thus; the vehicle of such propagation.\(^8\)

which reflects the more contemporary view of the word “propaganda”.

Propaganda is viewed differently in Vietnam. When we look for the meaning in Vietnamese – the word is \textit{tuyên truyền} – it is described in a recent Vietnamese dictionary\(^9\) as:

\begin{center}
\textit{tuyên truyền} dg. Giải thích rộng rãi để thuyết phục mọi người tin thành, ủng hộ, làm theo.
\end{center}

that is:

\begin{center}
\textbf{propaganda} v. To explain broadly and clearly in order for each person to approve, contribute, to follow an example.
\end{center}

which is a little more value free than either of the English-language descriptions above.

Most Vietnamese–English dictionaries produced in Vietnam, that I have consulted, translate \textit{tuyên truyền} as a verb. A typical definition from a popular dictionary is:

\begin{center}
\textit{tuyên truyền} Carry out propaganda, propagandize.\(^10\)
\end{center}

Very few include any further qualifications about the word, although sometimes phrases in which an abbreviation is used are given, for example:

\begin{center}
\textit{tuyên giáo} \textit{tuyên truyền và giáo dục (nt)} Carry out propaganda and education.\(^11\)
\end{center}

A closer examination of the uses of the word \textit{tuyên truyền} shows that it is often followed by a qualifier, so that we have, for example, \textit{tuyên truyền lừa dối} (deceptive propaganda) and \textit{tuyên truyền chính trị} (political propaganda), both from another modern Vietnamese–English dictionary.\(^12\) From a 1948 publication discussing matters to do with the resistance war against the French, we have \textit{tuyên truyền giải thích} (explanatory propaganda).\(^13\)

However, as a counter-example, note that a dictionary, recently published in Hanoi, gives the following example of the use of the word \textit{tuyên truyền}:

\begin{center}
dân chúng muốn chính phủ thông tin không phải tuyên truyền
\end{center}

which is:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{tuyên truyền} Đức
\item \textit{tuyên truyền và giáo dục (nt)} Carry out propaganda and education.
\item \textit{tuyên truyền giải thích} (explanatory propaganda).
\item \textit{tuyên truyền lừa dối} (deceptive propaganda).
\item \textit{tuyên truyền chính trị} (political propaganda).
\end{itemize}

---

\(^8\) See \url{http://dictionary.oed.com}.
\(^9\) See the dictionary from the Viện Ngôn Ngữ Học (Institute of Linguistics), 2002, page 1068.
\(^12\) See the Vietnamese–English dictionary compiled by Bùi Phương, 2000, page 2129.
\(^13\) See \textit{Mối vấn đề kháng chiến}, pages 27 ff.
the people want information from the government not propaganda. In this usage, the word *tuyên truyền* definitely carries the same meaning as the English “propaganda”. Possibly this recent example is an indication that the meaning behind the word *tuyên truyền* is changing, and becoming more like that behind the English word “propaganda”.

The conclusion from this brief dictionary survey is that we should not assume that Vietnamese works that refer to “propaganda” are referring to campaigns of lies and dissimulation. In fact, many Vietnamese works labelled as “propaganda” should be treated, in the absence of other information, as genuine attempts at explanation, or public education, or general publicity for an idea or group of ideas.

For a perspective on what is called “propaganda” in modern Vietnam, the following news report illustrates a contemporary attitude on the part of a section of the governing apparatus – in this case, the Politburo of the Communist Party. In this article, the Vietnamese word *tuyên truyền* is used, and has been translated as “propagandizing”:

POLITICS & LAW: POLITBURO MEMBER BEMOANS WEAKNESSES IN MASS AGITATION WORKS. 5 March 2003.

Politburo member Phan Dien yesterday criticized the slow progress of mass agitation works in Vietnam, which have proven incapable of uniting people of different minorities and religions and consolidating the people’s faith in ruling bodies.

... Slowness in propagandizing the Party and government policies result in people not understanding the ruling bodies’ goodwill or its desire to improve people’s living conditions, he said. The Politburo member attributed the erosion of people’s faith in the Party and government partly to weaknesses in mass agitation works. Many State officials, who are responsible for propagandizing the Party’s policies to people nationwide and encouraging them to participate in national reconstruction, conduct their tasks in only perfunctory manner.

At least for the Communist Party, “propaganda” is considered a respected activity, a legitimate way to engage the people who are governed. Its application should facilitate a conduit upwards – a means for the people “to participate in national reconstruction”.

14 See the Vietnamese-English dictionary compiled by Bùi Phùng 2000, page 2129.
15 See 2003 Financial Times Information, and Vietnam News Briefs, 5 March 2003. This information was distributed on the mailing list vnnews-l. Information about this list may be obtained by sending e-mail to majordomo@coombs.anu.edu.au and including one line with the message `info vnnews-l` in the body of the message.
1.3 Sources and Methodology

After the Vietnamese victory at Điện Biên Phủ in May 1954, any propaganda material that survived was gathered together, provincial authorities being instructed to forward any material related to the Resistance Against the French to Hanoi for collection. In Hanoi, the building housing the former Indochina Customs Service (constructed in 1917) was converted for use by the newly-established Vietnam Revolutionary Museum (Bảo tàng Cách mạng Việt Nam), which opened its doors to the public on 6 January 1959.16 Present-day staff at the Museum warn that not much material survived, and they point out that “it’s a wonder that anything survived [from the 1940s period] because we’ve had two wars since then and much of the material has been lost”.17 The Museum has a total of 2,100 items on public display, in a display area of some 1,500 square metres, out of more than 70,000 items in total, comprising objects, photographs, documents, posters and the like, dating from 1858 to the present day. There is a team of researchers studying the material, as well as conservators doing their best to preserve the material. Since the early 1990s, the Museum has increased its publishing program, and, in the late 1990s, begun to reprint some of the newspapers from the 1930s and 1940s.18

The old Customs Building in Hanoi which houses the Museum has only very recently had any rooms with any environmental control at all. The staff use various methods to preserve the material, for example some of the paper material is preserved by putting it into large paper folders as a means of slowing changes in temperature and humidity, but time does take its toll. The result is that, in spite of the best efforts of dedicated people, some of the already delicate material is in danger of further deterioration. Photocopying facilities are available, but much of the source material would be damaged by exposure to the photocopying process and, in any case, the material is such that it does not copy well.

For this present study, I have been able to make copies of some of the propaganda material that the Revolutionary Museum holds. Copies of the original material were obtained by using a digital camera,19 and an archive has been built up which can be

---

17 This is a comment from Ms Trần Hải Như of the Museum of the Revolution (as recorded on page 103 of my field notes, 6 November 2002).
18 At the time of writing, Báo Giải Phóng (1934–1935–1936), Báo Việt Nam Dộc Lập (1941–1945) and Báo Độc Chung (1938–1939) had all been published. See Bibliography for details.
made available for further study. A database has also been prepared, with details of the material, some translations, and so forth. As a consequence of this method of collection, each item with which I am working has a catalogue number of the form:

\[
\text{DSCNnnnn/mmm}
\]

where \(\text{DSCNnnnn}\) is the number of the file from the digital camera, and \(\text{mmm}\) is the number in the database. These are the catalogue numbers shown in this study where reference is made to the source material.

The Museum of the Revolution categorises the paper material which they hold into one of four types:

i. Posters – generally designed to be put up on a wall, near a crowded area, school, market, and so on. Most of the posters employ pictures, together with some text, but a few of them have only text, sometimes in the form of slogans.

ii. Pamphlets – generally designed to be handed out as tracts or leaflets, or passed from hand to hand. Illustration 1–1\(^{20}\) below is one such, being about 6cm square, and designed to be passed furtively among the Roman Catholic congregation. It is shown here at close to original size.

The text is:

19 There are no special lighting facilities available at the Revolutionary Museum, and the quality of the reproductions is consequently not perfect. They suffer from some unevenness in intensity of illumination and non-uniform colour across the plates. Nevertheless, the subjective appearance is quite true to the originals. Details of the photographic process are available from the author.

20 Number DSCN0447/42 in my catalogue and 17420/0y14441 in the Museum’s catalogue.

\[\text{Illustration 1–1 Leaflet urging Roman Catholics to join the Việt Minh.}\]
The date on this item is uncertain. The fact that the French are not mentioned may indicate that it was produced after 9 March 1945 (the day of the Japanese coup against the French administration). On the other hand, it is possible that the authors of this little leaflet felt that they did not want to antagonise pro-French elements in the Catholic community.

iii. Songs – the Museum has a few song books from the period of study, but there is evidence from some Việt Minh documents that there was an extensive use of songs as propaganda. For example, a Vietminh document examining the effects of propaganda in the mid-1940s states:

> Apart from the newspaper VNDL and books, the influence of songs is also worthy of special attention. Nothing is more quickly popular with the masses, nor excites them than singing. If a new song appears, then everyone learns it by heart, women, children, all learn it by heart. Very few young people who can read do not have copy books of songs, and singing in local areas springs up like mushrooms. There are no conferences, nor meetings that conclude without expressive or sorrowful songs.

iv. Newspapers – these range from those printed on presses in the cities, some of them from well before World War II, to those that have been done using very primitive materials, and designed to be circulated in the small villages of the Việt Bắc. Việt Nam Độc Lập is probably the most important of these, and the Museum has the original rock and hand roller used for the first issues – it was made with a lithographic process, in the root meaning of the word.

21 See Marr 1995, page 13ff for a description of these events.
22 Abbreviation for Việt Nam Độc Lập.
23 See Văn Kiện Động 1930–1945 (Lưu Hành Nội Bộ) - Tạp 3 (1977), page 472. Unfortunately there is no date on this particular document, which has the title Experiences of the Vietminh in the North of Vietnam. Internal indications put it at about 1943–1945. A translation of the section of this document that deals with propaganda appears in Appendix IV.
Of these four categories, I have collected 49 “sets” of posters from various places, but most from the Vietnam Revolutionary Museum in Hanoi. Most of these sets have only one poster each, but a few have more, up to 15 in one case, and the total number of posters collected is 100. I was able to collect about 40% of the Museum’s holdings of posters. As for pamphlets and tracts, only 20% of the Museum’s holdings in this category could be copied (this was a Museum rule at the time of collection), and so the total number of this type of material in my collection is 38 – comprising a total of 64 pages – a very few from places other than the Museum of the Revolution. Of the song books, I have collected eight, but some of these are collections of ca dao, and have no music associated with them. As to newspapers, again I have been able to sample only 20% of the Museum’s collection (the same Museum rule applied as for pamphlets and tracts). However, the National Library in Hanoi also has some newspapers, and there are copies in some libraries outside Vietnam. In addition, the Museum of the Revolution is engaged in a publishing project to produce transcribed copies of some of the newspaper material, copies of which are, unfortunately, often available only in limited print runs.

The Museum’s catalogue numbering system makes no distinction between the four types of paper–based material described above, and the catalogue numbers are in the following format:

nnnnnn/Gymmmm

where nnnnnn is a serial number for the item, and mmmmm is the acquisition number for material of type “Gy” – in these cases “Gy” is Giảy (paper). The items which are catalogued may be posters, leaflets, booklets, sets of posters, and so forth, which is slightly different to my cataloguing scheme described above. In my scheme, an “item” is a picture from the digital camera so that, for example, a set of 14 posters will have 14 entries in my catalogue, but only one in that of the Museum. In this study, I have quoted both the Museum’s catalogue numbers and my own.

Reference was made above to a Việt Minh document and its discussion of songs. The document notes five kinds of propaganda in the following words:

24 November 2002.
25 See, for example, Hùng (ed.) 2000a, 2000b and 1998.
26 Báo Việt Nam Đông Lập, for example, was published in transcription form in 2000, but only 1000 copies were printed.

Propaganda and the People
On the propaganda side, in Northern Vietnam there was the newspaper *Independent Vietnam*, books, songs, exhibitions and the *Red Wind* propaganda team.\(^{27}\)

I have not been able to detect traces of the “exhibitions”, nor of the “*Red Wind* team” (presumably a performance troupe), but further investigations, perhaps in the National Archives in Hanoi, may bear fruit. The document’s reference to “books” is probably to pamphlets, tracts and leaflets, and there is no mention of posters. The fact that posters were not mentioned probably indicates that they became an important part of the propaganda materials at a later stage than the production of this document – that is, after about 1944. The importance of songs and of *Việt Nam Độc Lập* have already been mentioned, and these topics are taken up again in Chapters 5 and 4 respectively.

Another Việt Minh document from a slightly later period lists the propaganda vehicles as conversation, newspapers (read aloud), wall newspapers (including posters), songs, poetry and plays, and slogans.\(^{28}\) Some of these matters are taken up in later chapters.

### 1.4 The Writing of Vietnamese History

This work deals mainly with the propaganda produced for consumption by the Vietnamese people during the period from the early 1940s to about 1954. Writing about the material which I have collected, and the responses to it, is rewarding, interesting, puzzling sometimes, but there is not a lot of other views about it which have to be accommodated. One of the most difficult tasks involved in writing about the propaganda is to provide some meaningful background. There is no shortage of material on which to draw for this background, but the problem is to identify and to include all of the assumptions, the points of view, the prejudices, the lies and half-truths that weave their way through these accounts. To begin with, I should identify what I see as my own prejudices.

\(^{27}\) See Văn Kiện Đảng 1930-1945 (*Lưu Hành Nội Bộ*) - Tập 3 (1977), page 471 (my translation – see Appendix IV).

\(^{28}\) See Mười văn đê kháng chiến 1948, pages 28–30.
Vietnam has a long history, much of it a source of pride for the Vietnamese people, as they see themselves, their people, fighting off invaders of one kind and another. Western histories referencing Vietnam tend not to see the depth of the country’s history that the Vietnamese people see, and are unfortunately often too closely focussed on one of the most recent of the battles to fend off invaders – that which is known as Kháng chiến chống đế quốc Mỹ, “The War of Resistance Against American Imperialism”, or the “American War” (somewhat curiously, called the “Vietnam War” in the West).

There has been a tendency among writers of histories of Vietnam in the period of decolonisation to assume a model whereby the Communist Party seized power, and exercised it by proxy through the Việt Minh, often receiving their instructions from the Comintern (Communist International), directed largely from Moscow. In this model, the Communist Party achieves almost absolute power in a more-or-less smooth transition, and governs centrally in a very top-down manner. A rather extreme example of this kind of writing is that by Donald Duncanson in his description of the August Revolution:

[After the Japanese surrender in August 1945] the forces of disorder, on the other hand, required no previous planning for their work of destruction and set to with a will, each to grab what pledges for the future he could. Ho Chi Minh and his comrades immediately moved down from their caves to Hanoi to occupy the power vacuum and, declaring themselves to be a National Liberation Committee, set in train a series of rapid moves purporting to establish an independent Government. On 25 August they persuaded the Emperor Bao Dai at Huế [sic] to denounce the treaties with France and then to abdicate.29

and later:

The Communists’ procurement of the Emperor’s abdication was most probably prompted less by foresight than by the doctrinaire example of the Russian Revolution.30

Other writers give a more nuanced account of a complex situation. Ellen Hammer, for example, writes of the Việt Minh liberated zones:

But it [the new Government] did not countenance sporadic violence, which tended to divide rather than unite the population; and for this reason it frowned upon attempts at social revolution in the countryside. When local People’s Committees made their own revolutionary policy, seizing land and property, the Viet Minh central committee intervened, doing its best to temper them.

29 See Duncanson 1968, pages 157–158. The reference to “caves” is obviously meant to be pejorative. In May 1945, the headquarters of the Việt Minh had been established in Tân Trào (New Tide) village (renamed from Kim Lũng) in Tuyên Quang province. See Marr 1995, page 228, and Duiker 2000, page 298.
30 See Duncanson 1968, page 158.
To strengthen its position, the Viet Minh carried on an intensive propaganda campaign in favor of national unity and independence under Ho Chi Minh. It trained a popular militia and continued the organization and indoctrination of the young people of the country which had been begun during the Japanese occupation.31

Shawn McHale has made some observations on writing the history of the rise of Communism in Vietnam:

As time passes, it becomes increasingly clear that the standard accounts of Vietnamese communism, from Huỳnh Kim Kháng’s *Vietnamese Communism, 1925–1945*, to the numerous memoirs of events, need to be updated.32 As Huy Tam Ho Tai has pointed out, their retrospective vision has shaped the story of communism as one of inevitable triumph and masked the early diversity of radicalism.33

McHale goes on to point out that:

Vietnamese communism emerged out of competing, highly autonomous groups, often defined by friendships as well as lineage, village, and regional ties. Initially, these groups had little sense that they should all adhere to a common Party center, follow similar organizational policies, or even stress the same ideology.34

The propaganda, which is the subject of this present study, was aimed at these “competing, highly autonomous groups”, and it should be possible to get some impression, from a study of the text of the propaganda, of the diversity of the groups at whom the propaganda was aimed.

My own position is similar to that of McHale’s. The story is that of the Vietnamese people, and it is one that involves considerable complexities in Vietnamese society, with shifting perceptions, understandings, alliances and loyalties. Vietnamese sources are indispensable in trying to explicate the story, and I have tried to use them wherever possible.

1.5 Summary

This chapter has introduced the question that I am trying to investigate, that is, how did the propaganda produced by the Việt Minh interact with the people of Vietnam, to produce the result that French colonisation of the country was terminated. It has also

32 McHale notes: “Since Kháng published his book, scholars have been able to gain access to far more documents on the Vietnamese revolution than were once available. Some of this material is leading to serious revision of views, for example, on Hồ Chí Minh’s role in the revolution and of the extent of communist and Việt Minh success by 1945.” See McHale 2004, page 205.
34 McHale 2004, page 104.
introduced some questions about what is meant by “propaganda”, and it is apparent that, in the Vietnamese context of the late 1940s and early 1950s, it meant something like “education” or “explanation”. I will also argue in a later chapter that we can use the more respectable, to modern ears at least, term “marketing” to describe the activities of the Việt Minh in this area.

Subsequent chapters will consider more closely some general features of persuasion, that hopefully apply more–or–less universally, and discuss the salient features of the intellectual environment in Vietnam at the time of the the Resistance War Against the French. The middle chapters cover the actual materials, the recovery of which has been described in this chapter. They show some of the literary and visual techniques used in the propaganda, and consider the ways in which these materials connect with, and interact with the ordinary people of Vietnam, with the possibility of changing the way the people perceived the task of ridding the country of an enemy widely regarded as piratical. On this last point of perception, I suspect, but cannot show conclusively, that the way in which the people, particularly the peasant people, were treated by their leaders in the Việt Minh changed their perception of themselves, and hence made them willing to risk everything, in millions of individual cases, leading to a widespread opinion that “we are heroes”.

Propaganda and the People
Chapter 2
How Does Persuasion Work?

Propaganda is one way in which people can be persuaded to change their belief systems, and hence their actions. In Western universities and research institutes, there have been several attempts to formalise the study of persuasion, and to try to draw out some general principles of methods that work, and the conditions under which they work. This Chapter considers some of the results of these investigations as a background to the study of the propaganda work of the Việt Minh. The assumption is that techniques of persuasion rely upon some characteristics which are universally found in humans and that, although the techniques may differ from society to society, the fundamental human needs that cause us to respond to propaganda are the same everywhere. This is not to say that techniques of propaganda can easily be transported from one society to another, without careful consideration of the internal dynamics of particular cultures. Some techniques will have more appeal in one society than in another, some people are more prone to accept appeals to them as individuals, whereas others are more inclined to be receptive to persuasive techniques which call upon a community spirit.

This Chapter will consider a wide range of persuasive techniques, and we begin with a particular example from Vietnam, which uses two quite different techniques of appeal, both in the same location.

2.1 Persuasion

We are surrounded by propaganda. It may be advertising in one of several forms, or media releases dressed as “News”, or statements from our Governments, but all of these are attempts to persuade – they are propaganda. Persuasive techniques are intimately tied with the culture in which they are embedded, and the picture shown in Illustration 2–1 (below) is an example of what we may call two sub–cultures in present–day Vietnam.

The governments in Vietnam (National and local) are trying to bring traffic problems in the larger cities under control by introducing cheap and plentiful public transport, accompanied by a persuasion campaign to encourage people to take to this new phenomenon. At the end of 2002, new bus stops were appearing around Hanoi, and the space on them was sold for commercial persuasion, as well as being used for the campaign to try to get people on to the buses. This pair of advertisements is taken from
Illustration 2–1. Advertising at a bus stop in Hanoi.

a bus stop in Hanoi in Nguyễn Chí Thanh Street, in December 2002. On the left is an advertisement for the buses, in a style composed almost entirely of slogans, and which reads:

谛 xe bus là góp phân
* kiểm chế tai nạn
* giảm 旗下 tắc giao thông
* hạn chế ô nhiễm môi trường
* tiết kiệm chi phí xã hội

Taking the bus is a contribution to
* restraining accidents
* reducing traffic jams
* limiting environmental pollution
* economizing on social costs

Here, the appeal is to people to contribute to society, for no personal gain, but for the benefit of all.

Contrast this with the commercial advertisement for Sunsilk hair shampoo “with perfect balance”, a style of propaganda that will be familiar to all Western readers.

These two examples, in the one location, illustrate how persuasive techniques have changed in Vietnam over the years. The old, largely text–based, appeal to community values contrasting with the new visual appeal to individual benefit. Nevertheless, it is possible that there are universal principles which apply to persuasion – principles which transcend cultures and are embedded in the psychology of humanity. This chapter will explore some recent thinking about how humans persuade one another to change their actions and their values.
The question of what makes people change their viewpoint has received some scientific and critical study during the last half-century. Of course, many of us have some ideas on this, and we have all changed our viewpoints as we travel through our lives. Experience with our mothers, our parents, siblings, fellow-travellers, the education system, and other life experiences all build our sense of what is, and of our place in it all.

Of concern here are attempts to deliberately modify people’s views, perhaps to mould them to comply with some view more amenable to acceptance of that which was formerly of no interest, or even unpalatable. Such attempts are often made by people whom we can call “compliance practitioners,” people such as religious leaders, sales people, politicians, parents, teachers, and the like. Attempts to modify attitudes are also sometimes labelled as “propaganda”, which has a negative connotation in many contexts. Consider this quotation from a 1948 textbook:

Propaganda can be called the attempt to affect the personalities and to control the behaviour of individuals toward ends considered unscientific or of doubtful value in a society at a particular time. (I think the author uses “unscientific” as a pejorative term). The same author makes a distinction between “propaganda”, “education” and “persuasion”, but these distinctions seem somewhat artificial (even to Doob, the author of the above quote), and the following seem to be implied:

“propaganda” is equal to “persuasion” plus evil intent;
“education” is equal to “persuasion” plus good intent.

where the definitions of “good” and “evil” are left in the air. Robert Jackall, in his recent book Propaganda, makes a distinction between propaganda up to the start of the First World War in 1914, and the burgeoning of the use of propaganda techniques from then on. For the purposes of this Chapter, I propose to use the term “persuasion”, but much of what will be discussed is also called “advertising”, “propaganda”, “education”, among other terms.

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1 It may seem strange to separate “mothers” as a separate group to “parents”, but it makes sense when we consider mother’s unique influence during very early babyhood, contrasted with family influences in early and late childhood.
2 The term is not mine, but was coined by Robert Cialdini (see Cialdini 1993, page xiii). He also uses the term “compliance professional”.
3 See Doob 1948, page 240.
4 See Doob 1948, pages 253–255.
Formal studies concerning persuasion and persuasive techniques have been included in the field of Social Psychology for the best part of the past 7 or so decades, and some conclusions and summaries have been developed, which have found particular application in various fields in Europe, the United States, and other areas where commercial activity, in the form of Western capitalism, is particularly strong. However, although the researchers in the field hope that they are studying characteristics which are universally human, it is not obvious whether the results will apply in a study of persuasion in Vietnam during Revolutionary times. The results of studies of persuasion are reviewed in this Chapter, and later Chapters will attempt to see if they have relevance to the winning of independence in Vietnam.

2.2 A Classification of Techniques of Persuasion

Robert Cialdini, in his book *Influence: the Psychology of Persuasion*, discusses six common techniques used by humans as they try to persuade others to change their behaviour and/or their beliefs:

1. Reciprocation;
2. Commitment and consistency;
3. Social validation;
4. Liking;
5. Authority;

These are not the only methods used to persuade our fellow humans to our point of view, and Cialdini’s explanation for the effectiveness of these particular techniques of persuasion is that humans generally will use partial information (“short cuts”) to process the constant stream of incoming data. These particular prompts which have been singled out by Cialdini are, he claims, the most reliable in our daily lives, and consequently can be used by compliance practitioners in convincing us to change our views. Most often our reliance upon such cues leads us to correct conclusions, but occasionally our assumptions are not correct, and it is in these times that we are persuaded to buy or believe something that is inappropriate. Cialdini tells us that

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7 The terms used here are Cialdini’s, from Cialdini 1993, and Cialdini 2001.
9 Cialdini 1993 has many examples.
experiments have shown a certain cultural invariance in the operation of the six key factors, however there is some evidence that the relative importance of each factor differs in different cultures.\textsuperscript{10}

Cialdini is not the only social psychologist working in this area, but I have chosen his classification scheme because it is simple, and it is empirically based – that is, it does not rely upon a (possibly untestable) model of the inner workings of the mind. In this sense, it is more akin to the psychological work of the behaviourists, such as B. F. Skinner, and unlike that of the psychoanalytic school. Zimbardo and Lieppe are a little more inclined to use a “middle way” by hypothesising an “Attitude System”, where an attribute called “attitude” is at the centre of the psyche, surrounded by other factors called “behaviour intentions”, “behaviours”, “cognitions” and “affective\textsuperscript{11} responses”, which all affect and are affected by the “attitude” attribute.\textsuperscript{12} However, the overall approach is quite empirical, and they also use a classification system similar to that used by Cialdini, but it has greater complexity.

A word is needed about methodology. Social psychologists working in the area of persuasion commonly use two techniques in their investigations – experiment and survey. Experiments are designed to provide some insight into the psychological processes involved, but because the number of variable is necessarily greatly reduced from real-life situations, there can be some doubt about the general applicability of the results in any wider social setting. Further, experimental subjects are often drawn from a limited population – typically university and college students, prisoners and army recruits. In particular, experiments are usually designed to try to eliminate personality variables. Cohen warns “variables of personality are important factors in the effectiveness of appeals that arouse needs”.\textsuperscript{13} On the other hand, survey results do not often provide insights into the psychological processes that may be occurring, and can involve variables to do with personality and deep belief, but may not be able to examine the effects of such variables. The best accounts in this area draw from both methodologies.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{11} The word “affect” is here used in the psychological sense.
\textsuperscript{12} See Zimbardo and Lieppe 1991, pages 32ff.
\textsuperscript{13} See Cohen 1964, page 22.
\textsuperscript{14} Cohen 1964, pages 129–134 has an excellent discussion of some of these issues, and has a good survey of experimental data current at the time it was written. Cialdini 1993 draws his data from both experiment and survey.
2.2.1 Reciprocation

The reciprocation method of persuasion\(^\text{15}\) is very familiar to those of us who drive cars around Canberra and are regularly offered a windscreen cleaning service while we wait for the traffic lights to change. The way this works is that we are offered a free gift – a clean windscreen – and we are told that we do not need to pay, unless we feel that we want to. Many people do so, impelled by the need to reciprocate for the service which they have received. The technique has many applications in present–day society in the sales area, including supermarket tasting sessions, free magazines through the post, and so on, where some reciprocation for the free gift is expected.

A more subtle form of this method of persuasion is where a very large request is made, and usually rejected. This is followed by a smaller request which, studies show, has a much higher chance of acceptance. Here, two factors are at work: (a) the gift of a concession in the form of a scaling down of the original request and, (b) the perceptual contrast principle, whereby the second request seems more reasonable because it is compared with the first.\(^\text{16}\) Cialdini gives an intriguing example, in the story of G. Gordon Liddy’s request of the Nixon 1972 re–election campaign in the US for “a $1 million program that included (in addition to the bugging of the Watergate) a specially equipped ‘chase plane’, break–ins, kidnapping, and mugging squads, and a yacht featuring ‘high–class call girls’ to blackmail Democrat politicians”.\(^\text{17}\) Liddy’s original large request was refused, and he had to settle for the (some would say, equally bizarre) less expensive break–in at the Watergate Building. He was successful in using the reciprocation and perceptual contrast principles in persuading the re–election committee to go ahead with his, ultimately, disastrous plan.

2.2.2 Commitment and Consistency

A public commitment to a particular stance has been shown to increase compliance markedly. Cialdini quotes an example from a restauanteur whose business was disrupted by people who would reserve a table and then cancel without notification. The receptionist at the restaurant changed the request to patrons from: “Please call if

\(^{16}\) See Cialdini 1993, pages 11–16.
\(^{17}\) Cialdini 1993, pages 42–45 has the full story.
you have to change your plans” to a question which required a commitment: “Will you please call if you have to change your plans?” A measurable change in patrons’ behaviour occurred.18

Cialdini provides some powerful examples from the war in Korea during the 1950s, whereby American prisoners were coaxed to make concessions towards the ideals held by their Chinese captors, and he points out that public commitments were accompanied by a change in behaviour and belief.19 He continues his argument by reference to some experiments in Iowa concerning householders’ use of electricity, and concludes that it is the self-image of the subjects that is changed by the commitment, and that this is the reason why a public commitment is so strong a vehicle for behavioural and belief change.20

Arthur Cohen, writing some years before Cialdini, explored the question of self-identity further.21 He introduces the terms “cognitive dissonance” and “discrepant behaviour” in his treatment of the commitment principle that Cialdini has noted. He describes it this way:

If a person is led to express outwardly an attitude which is discrepant from his [sic] actual private attitude, a state of dissonance results. Since the behaviour is fixed, dissonance in such a setting can be reduced by changing one’s attitude so that it becomes consistent with the behaviour one has engaged in publicly. There is no dissonance remaining because private attitude and public expression are now consistent with each other.22

Cohen points out that experimental data shows that when there is some pressure for us to agree to perform some action, and the pressure may be an offer of reward or threat of punishment, change in attitude (that is, in self-identity) is more likely to be permanent if the pressure is mild than if the pressure is heavy. Cialdini finds the same result, and we may hypothesise that the underlying mechanism is the initial agreement of the subject – where heavy coercion is employed, there is no internal agreement, and therefore no change in self-identity.

20 I have summarised a number of Cialdini’s findings he details on pages 100–103 in Cialdini 1993.
2.2.3 Social Validation

Social validation is the tendency for people to seek validation for their actions by reference to the actions of others. Examples from compliance practitioners in the advertising world abound in those who would tell us that their product is the “largest-selling”. The almost slavish use of Microsoft software, in the face of the demonstrated superiority of other products, is another example.24

Cialdini gives a chilling example of another dimension to this tendency, in his recounting of the death of a woman in a public place in New York:

Her assailant had chased and attacked her in the street three times over a period of thirty-five minutes before his knife finally silenced her cries for help. Incredibly, thirty-eight of her neighbors watched the events of her death unfold from the safety of their apartment windows without so much as lifting a finger to call the police.25

Cialdini explains the inaction of the neighbours by reference to the social validation rule, that people tend to act (or not, in this case) according to what they see their fellows do (or not do). He introduces another very important factor into this story by pointing out that this tendency is stronger at times of uncertainty. People will determine appropriate responses to an uncertain situation by reference to the actions of those around them “In times of such uncertainty, the natural tendency is to look around at the actions of others for clues”,26 and so help was not called for this unfortunate victim.

Research with staged emergency events has reinforced these findings. Cohen expresses the same idea thus: “the nature of social life is such that we inevitably rely on others for information, opinions, and advice, particularly in the absence of unequivocal signposts for behavior”.27

Cohen sums up the human social condition thus:

Finally, every person depends upon others for his view of the world around him, for his standards of right and wrong, and for the establishment of his ideals and aspirations. Thus we are all part and parcel of the social world about us; for human beings, social reality is an ever-present determinant of behavior.28

23 Cialdini uses the term “social proof” in his 1993 book.
24 Unauthorised access to Microsoft servers on the Internet accounts for an inordinate proportion of service disruption. Something like 60% of all “hacker attacks” are on Microsoft servers, whereas they comprise less than 30% of the servers open to attack.
26 Cialdini 1993, page 133.
Our children are raised in an environment full of other people, and everything that they know, about the world and about themselves, is formed in this social environment. In a very real sense, we are what others see.

Another way of looking at this “social validation” characteristic of human behavior is by consideration of what is regarded as “normal”. Propaganda – and advertising is but one form of propaganda – can make use of “social validation” by making a representation of what is to be considered “normal”. This variant on the “social validation” technique could also be called “constructing the norms”, because it works by re-presenting a particular situation as “normal”. The propagandist hopes to engage the consumers of the propaganda in such a way that these targets see themselves as part of the new scenario, conforming to it, and seeking social validation through this new conformance. Thus behaviour changes. The new “normal” as represented needs to be close enough to the old “normal”, as perceived by the target, so that the target can imagine themselves to be enmeshed in this new set of values, conditions, or whatever. The skill of the propagandist or advertiser lies in presenting a new situation that is not so different from the target’s perception of their own situation as to arouse a feeling of social distance in the target. That is, the principles of “social validation” must continue to hold, and the target should, ideally, be able to look to the presentation made by the propagandist for validation of their own ideas. Modern television advertising abounds with examples, and the “construction of the norm” is probably the most commonly used technique of the contemporary propagandist, as “ordinary” people are displayed, happily doing “ordinary” things, which just happen to be what the advertiser wants all of the targets to do. When we, as targets, take the represented behaviour into our lives as “normal”, and proceed to seek social validation by copying it, then the advertisers’ (propagandists’) aims have been achieved. There are some particularly interesting examples of the use of this technique in the Việt Minh propaganda, and some of these are discussed at length in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

2.2.4 Liking

It is a commonplace observation that we are more disposed to agree with, or grant requests from, people whom we like. It is also true that there are some human characteristics, actions and features that are almost universally liked, within the societies in which they operate. Some features are universal, without caveats – a smile almost always has the capacity to please, as does someone showing us that we are liked.
Advertising copywriters exploit this human characteristic by use of “trigger” images – for example, sexy young women or men associated with various goods in Western advertising, images of successful footballers using certain goods in Vietnam. In the West, car salespeople are notorious for “glad-handing” customers, and Cialdini quotes the case of Joe Girard, who earned a place in the *Guinness Book of Records* for his success in selling cars, a success achieved almost entirely through his show of liking for his customers.

We all form our self-image based on what others tell us about ourselves. The process begins with our mothers and extends to the rest of our circle of acquaintances as we grow. Because, by and large, we have positive images of ourselves, anything which reinforces this positive image has some truth value with us, and can therefore be used as a method of persuasion. Advertising slogans like “Because You Deserve It!” and the like work in this way.

Another aspect of “liking” as a factor in persuasion is the way in which people seek to be identified with successful groups with which they may only be connected marginally. A striking example of this effect is the adulation which successful sporting teams achieve. I was in Hà Nội when Vietnam won a place in the finals of the Tiger Cup (soccer) in 2000, and the streets filled with young people on motor cycles, waving the national flag, cheering, a cavalcade of joy. Cialdini gives further examples of this tendency to associate with people we see as successful, and its converse, to move away from failures (failing sporting teams, and so on), and postulates “that we purposefully manipulate the visibility of our connections with winners and losers in order to make ourselves look good to anyone who could view these connections”.

29 The “Milo” advertisement on Kim Mã street in Hà Nội is a particular example, showing an anonymous Vietnamese footballer kicking the ball, with the product name in the background (the advertisement has been there for at least 10 years from 1991 (personal observation)). This example will be recalled by many visitors because of the exceptionally amateurish execution of the work.

31 Cialdini 1993, page 199.
2.2.5 Authority

Our children are taught to obey authority from an early age, and often lives depend upon it – we may even speculate that it is an innate characteristic. The classic experiments in this area were done by Stephen Milgram.\textsuperscript{32} The general set-up for these experiments was as follows. The experiment is described as an experiment in memory acquisition, and a “Victim” has the task of learning word lists, and then reciting them back to an “Operator”. If the victim gets a word wrong, he is given an electric shock by the Operator, the strength of which is dictated by a “Controller” (the experimenter). The strength of the shock usually increases as the experiment wears on, and the Victim makes more errors, until the punishment shock is quite high (400 volts being the maximum). In actual fact, the experimental subject is the Operator, and the “Victim” is an actor – no shocks are given. Milgram’s intent in using this set-up was to explore the relationship between his Operator subject and his subject’s response to authority, in the form of the Controller. The summary results of Milgram’s extensive work is that, amongst his experimental subjects, obedience to authority is surprisingly strong. In the simple experiment, subjects were willing to expose the Victim to lethal “shocks” under the command of the authority, even with Victims screaming for mercy. Milgram has used his basic set-up to explore a large number of variations, such as weak versus strong authority figures, and has put his experimental subjects into the Controller role also. The results are always the same – that the level of obedience to authority is far stronger than predicted.

It can be argued that Milgram’s experiments may not be reproducible in populations other than the one from which he draws his subjects, though his findings are backed by other observations.\textsuperscript{33}

Authority is often represented by symbols – a police uniform, colourful decorations on armed forces uniforms, business suits, titles, and so forth. Cialdini points out that, because we often ascribe authority on the basis of the symbols, they are easily faked, providing an avenue for manipulation of attitude. He gives numerous examples of the ways in which symbols can be used to alter perceptions, including an experiment which showed that bearing a title can alter the perception of height of the bearer.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32} See Milgram 1974. Cialdini discusses these experiments in some detail, see Cialdini 1993, pages 208–215.
\textsuperscript{33} See Cialdini 1993, page 215.
\textsuperscript{34} Cialdini 1993, pages 220–229.
2.2.6 Scarcity

It is difficult to avoid the manifestations of the value of scarcity in persuasive techniques – slogans such as “All Stock must be cleared by June 30th...so hurry in”, “Stocktake Sale”, “Winter Fashion Clearance”, “Available While Stocks Last”35 abound in our day-to-day lives. The value placed upon collectables by the operation of market forces pushes up the price of the rarities.

Other examples of the increase in the perceived value of unattainable or scarce resources come from the field of child psychology. Dr Spock’s book of child care discusses the child between ages of two and three:

It looks as though the child’s nature between 2 and 3 is urging him to decide things for himself, and to resist pressure from other people.36

Children of this age are well known for providing their parents with difficulties, and it is at this age that the sense of being an individual arises. It is at this age that the value of scarcity begins to be perceived, and the child between two and three reacts alarmingly when prevented from attaining what he or she wants. A characteristic that develops at such an early age has the potential to be a very powerful tool of persuasion.

2.3 Summary

Varying responses to the different techniques of persuasion depend very much upon the environment in which they operate. That is, the cultural and social environment, which is, in turn determined by issues of history, geography and economics, mediates the perceived meanings and the effect of persuasive techniques used in that environment. For example, a slogan may be deeply felt among one group of people, but may be incomprehensible to another, and laughable to yet another group. There were a number of factors which set the social environment at the time of the appearance of the propaganda campaigns of the 1940s and 1950s in Vietnam, loss of country and resentment at French colonisation, and promises of modernisation and independence were among these.

The importance of the automatic, or quasi-automatic nature of persuasive techniques should not be underestimated. They use the well-established techniques of ordinary everyday behaviour, and so are not usually accorded a second thought. They are almost at the unconscious level, which is why they are so effective. If the persuasion

35 Quotes from The Canberra Times of 21 June 2002, selected at random.
36 Spock 1957, page 353.
is effective, the persuaded subject takes on the new views as if they were the subjects’ own ideas. The Việt Minh propagandists understood this principle well. A Việt Minh booklet from 1948 puts it this way:

It is not so that using explanatory propaganda a few times is enough. We must say, say again, always repeat. Every time we meet over any matter, we must explain. Work for the people to understand, work so that they remember, work for them to zealously put it into effect, work so that they do not have to be compelled.\(^{37}\)

That is, only if the ideas espoused by the Việt Minh are internalised in their listeners can the propaganda be considered effective.

In my view, self-image and the manipulation of the ways in which we see ourselves, is the most important factor in the application of techniques of persuasion. If we return again to consider the two images in the bus stop in Hanoi discussed at the start of this Chapter (see Illustration 2–1 on page \(\text{20}\)), one portrays the viewer as a member of a community that cares about social problems and invites further participation to alleviate perceived problems by catching the bus.\(^{38}\) The other encourages selected viewers to either see themselves as or to see as desirable, a young woman with a “river” of shiny black hair flowing from her head. In both cases it is perception of self which is central to the appeal. The chapters which follow will explore further the techniques used in Việt Minh propaganda, particularly ideas concerned with the building of communities, and connecting with communities. Social validation, and construction of “norms” are particular techniques which arise again and again in the Việt Minh propaganda.


\(^{38}\) My own informal discussions with people in Hanoi at the end of 2002 indicate that this approach did indeed work, at least at that time.
Chapter 3
Arts, Letters and Resistance

Important to gaining an appreciation of the effect and production of propaganda in the 1940s and 1950s is an understanding of the cultural climate at the time. The leadership of the Việt Minh lived in an intellectual environment influenced by international thought and events, particularly from China and Russia. Some of the leaders of the Việt Minh – those who were also leaders of the Indochinese Communist Party – had received some training in Russia but, beyond a heavy use of specialist vocabulary from Marxist–Leninist theory, most of the visual and written material which I have studied does not show a large influence from Russian artistic or written sources. However, there are some similarities between the propaganda materials produced in China during the late 1930s and the Vietnamese materials of the Revolutionary and Resistance periods. Later Chinese propaganda, produced after the Communist victory in 1949, is different to both of these, in form and content.

In this Chapter, the Chinese situation is discussed, as far as it is relevant to Vietnam, and then the situation of Vietnamese artists and writers is considered. After the generally creative and liberal period from the mid 1920s to the late 1930s, fuelled by the re-emergence of the quốc ngữ writing system, and the influx of ideas from Europe, idealistic writers and artists warmed to the nationalist and independence movement, joined the Việt Minh and began putting their talents to use persuading others to do the same.

3.1 Times of Conflict for Arts and Letters – China Under Japan

In times of national distress, it is not uncommon for people, including artists and writers, to turn their talents and attention, insofar as they are able, to a quest for national salvation. In the 1930s, the well known and respected Chinese cartoonist, Feng Zikai (1898–1975), was immersed in Buddhist reflection and drawing romantic images of Chinese urban family life (his children and cats are particularly whimsical). His cartoon “War and Flower” shown in Illustration 3–1 (below), as well as being an example of

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1 Hô Chí Minh himself had attended the “Stalin School” (The Communist University of the Toilers of the East) in Moscow in 1924 (Duiker 2000, pages 92–94), and from mid–1925 “more than one hundred Vietnamese” went to Moscow and Leningrad for training (Duiker 2000, page 101). Duiker also reports a large group (144 people) of Vietnamese studying in Moscow in 1934 (Duiker 2000, page 212).
his remarkable talent for expressiveness with a few simple lines, is typical of his belief in the resilience of life ("wherever life has not died out, it staggers to its feet again"), and illustrates his respect for the sanctity of life, even in the midst of warfare.

Illustration 3-1. An example – one of Feng Zikai’s Cartoons.

Generally the works of this Japanese–trained artist were contemplative, and his life concerned with drawing, debate, writing and family matters. However, in 1937, Japan invaded China, Feng lost his home, became a refugee and, through necessity, became an artist dedicated to the Resistance against the Japanese, believing that "art could and should play a major role in saving China". He then argued that "some things were more important than life itself, 'not to become a conquered people' being one of them". Feng Zikai maintained his pacifist attitude while doing his war work, as some of his resistance cartoons show, but he lent his authority and talent to awaking his fellow countrymen to the cause of resistance against the Japanese invader. A similar change took place a decade later in many Vietnamese writers and artists under persuasion from the Việt Minh leadership.

Illustration copied from page 149 of Hung 1994. The date on this cartoon is uncertain, but Feng Zikai refers to it in his 1948 publication Manhua de miaofa, so it must have been produced prior to that. See Hung 1994, pages 150, 328 (note 141) and 378 (Bibliography). A selection of Feng’s work is available at http://www.zikai.org (2004 April 20) – this particular cartoon is not shown, but many others can be seen at http://www.zikai.org/cgi-bin/cartoon (2004 April 20).

Buddhism has no monopoly on such sentiments, of course, and the quote is actually a line from the German writer Berthold Brecht (John Willett, translator), in Mutter Couarges Lied, the theme song from the play Mutter Courage (set to music by Paul Dessau). Hear track 25 of the CD Robyn Archer Sings Brecht.

See Hung 1994, pages 135–150 for an account of Feng Zikai’s work. Quotes here are taken directly from that publication. Geremie Barné has written a biography of Feng Zikai’s life (the book is adapted and extended from Barné’s PhD thesis) – see the Bibliography for details.
A thread in the Vietnamese story can be picked up from about 1929 in China. At that time, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) headquarters was in Shanghai, its leaders were appointed from outside China, and the main thrust of Party activity was to foment unrest among the workers in the cities. It appeared that the leadership was more in touch with the requirements of International Communism than with the struggles and aspirations of the Chinese people. Hsü writes:

The CCP revolutionary strategy was largely determined by Stalin several thousand miles away, and his orders were at times a product of fantasy and at times a result of his feud with Trotsky.\(^5\)

Meanwhile, in the Chinese countryside, Mao Zedong and Chu Teh were operating somewhat independently of the CCP leadership (Mao having been thrown out of the Politburo after an abortive peasant uprising in Hunan in September 1927\(^6\)) working with the peasantry in Jiangxi, developing a Red Army trained in guerrilla warfare, and working on policies, such as land redistribution, for the mass of the Chinese people.

Phillips comments:

The Jianxi period was very important for the Chinese Communist Party, with the appearance of the Party army, the opportunity for administrative experience, the development of the mass line, the growth of a rural strategy and the appearance of new leaders, including Mao.\(^7\)

Around 1929, the Party encouraged and helped in the establishment of a Soviet in Jianxi – although usually referred to as a single “Soviet”, there were actually five soviets in Jianxi province by 1930, controlled by the Communists and governing probably about 9 million people.\(^8\)

During this time of the Jianxi Soviet, a conference was held at Gutian to discuss tactics of mass mobilisation. During the conference, there was a clash between those committed to a purely military view, and those who favoured a more political approach to winning support. Mao Zedong was an advocate of the political approach, and was concerned with developing a theoretical base for the place of art and literature in a Communist or Socialist society. At the discussions in Gutian, Mao’s advocacy won the day, and control of propaganda moved from the army to the political wing of the CCP.\(^9\)

The soviets governed in the countryside in Jianxi until the defeat of the Communist forces by the Nationalist army (at their fifth attempt) in the latter half of 1934.

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7  Phillips 1991a, page 244.
8  Phillips 1991a, page 244. Other writers prefer to see the Jianxi Soviet period as starting a little later – Hung refers to it as 1931–1934 – see Hung 1994, page 222.
9  See Landsberger 2001, page 34.
Following their defeat, the remaining forces and leadership of the Communist Party set out, in October, on what is now known as the “Long March”. The group of Communists, led by Mao, moved some 9,600 km north to the province of Shaanxi, harassed by Nationalist forces for most of the way, about one tenth of the marchers reaching their goal between September 1935 and October 1936 (Mao himself arrived in October 1935).10

The next step in the story, and where it begins to have more direct relevance to Vietnam, is at the Communist base established in Shaanxi province at Yan’an at the end of the Long March11. The Long March, together with the lack of success in attempted urban uprisings, saw the emergence of Mao Zedong as senior leader of the Communist movement in China. “The march showed the strength and value of Party discipline and ideological commitment, developed the guerrilla warfare skills of the Communists, began the consolidation of Mao’s leadership, and broke the Party’s reliance on advice and legitimation from Moscow”.12

In July 1937, the Japanese invaded China, remaining there until the end of World War II. During the Japanese occupation, China was effectively divided into three regions – the Japanese–occupied territories in the coastal areas, the areas controlled by the Nationalists in the southern inland areas, and the Communist controlled regions in the inland northern areas. The Japanese presence, to some extent, united the various feuding parties in China:

...the Japanese offensive did not cripple the nation’s will to resist. On the contrary, it created an unprecedented wave of patriotism and an uncommon spirit of national unity in the early war years. Nowhere was this more evident than in the dedicated commitment of Chinese intellectuals and artists to the resistance cause and in the second united front between the Nationalists and the Communists.13

It is these “intellectuals and artists” who become important in the Vietnamese context.

The Jianxi period had enabled Mao to develop and consolidate his theoretical framework for the Communist movement in China, giving it a somewhat different flavour from international Communism, largely in the following areas:

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11 In fact, the base at Yan’an was established at the end of 1936, the first base being at Baoan. See Phillips 1991c, page 249.
connection with, and concern for, the aspirations of the peasantry. "Mao favored equal distribution of all grades of land to small landlords, rich peasants, and poor peasants alike..."\(^\text{14}\);

- development of mobile guerrilla warfare, as opposed to positional warfare with a large standing army;

- readiness to form a united front to defeat the common enemy, Japan.

Regarding a united front, Mao shows himself as something of a nationalist, having moved some distance from the views of the old Chinese Politburo and also the international Communist movement.\(^\text{15}\) In the Communist controlled areas of China, centred on Yan’an, Mao was able to build on his ideas. The following passage, delivered in a report by Mao to the Sixth Plenum of the Sixth Central Committee in November 1938, as quoted by Hung, is worth reproducing in full, as it shows the development of his thinking in the area of the arts:

> There is no such thing as abstract Marxism, but only concrete Marxism. What we call concrete Marxism is Marxism that has taken on a national form, that is, Marxism applied to the concrete struggle in the concrete conditions prevailing in China, and not Marxism abstractly used...

Consequently, the Sinification of Marxism — that is to say, making certain that in all of its manifestations it is imbued with Chinese peculiarities, using it according to those peculiarities — becomes a problem that must be understood by the whole Party without delay... We must put an end to writing eight-legged essays on foreign models; there must be less repeating of empty and abstract refrains; we must discard our dogmatism and replace it by a new and vital Chinese style and manner, pleasing to the eye and to the ear of the Chinese common people.\(^\text{16}\)

The need to be “pleasing to the eye and to the ear of the Chinese common people” meant that artists and writers would have to be educated, encouraged, to write and draw for a different audience, a new, non-urban audience, of country-folk, and ordinary tradespeople. No eight-legged essays for them.\(^\text{17}\)

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17 “Eight-legged essay” refers to a particular style of essay, with eight well-defined and circumscribed paragraphs, needed for the Government examinations in China — McMullen dates the examination system from 589 (Sui Dynasty), and the appearance of the eight–legged essay, with all its rigidity, from 1487 (see McMullen 1991, pages 110–111). Hsi notes that "This essay demonstrated a formal and rigid style of writing, requiring great literary skills but no profound knowledge" (See Hsü 1970, page 99). Mao's reference to eight–legged essays "in the foreign style" is puzzling.
Mao's ideas on art had been given concrete form by the founding of the Lu Xun Academy of Art (Lu Xun yishu xueyuan; commonly known as “Luyi”) on 10 April 1938. Hung writes “Headed by the dramatist Sha Kefu (1905–1961), Luyi comprised four departments: literature, music, art, and drama”. The Luyi school attracted large numbers of artists, and was responsible for the production of numerous cartoons, serial stories, posters and plays, used to educate the masses, and to develop anti–Japanese sentiment among the peasantry.

In May 1942 an important Conference on Literature and Art was held at Yan’an to try to consolidate the theory of where “the arts” may fit in a Communist society. Mao Zedong gave the opening and closing addresses in what are now the well–known “Yan’an Talks” which, according to Landsberger “were to guide all artistic expression [in China] until the present day [2001]”. Mao’s ideas can be summed up in four points:

1. “For whom are our art and literature intended?” and the answer is “[the] more than 90 per cent of the total population [who] are the workers, peasants, soldiers and the petty bourgeoisie”.

2. How to serve: “Should we [artists and writers] devote ourselves to elevation or to popularisation?” The answer is summed up by Mao: “Only by speaking for the masses can he [the artist] educate them and only by becoming their pupil can he become their teacher.”

3. Inner–Party relations: “There is no such thing as art for art’s sake ... independent of politics”. Art and literature, may exert a strong influence on politics but are, nonetheless, subordinate to politics. In Mao’s words, revolutionary art and literature are the “cogs and screws” of the revolution.

4. Art and literary criticism as part of an enduring struggle, in both artistic and political arenas. Mao demands a “unity of politics and art, of...
content and form”, and proceeds with examples from the work at Yan’an. He says that the “aggressors, exploiters and oppressors” must be exposed, but that the people’s shortcomings have to be overcome by “means of criticism and self-criticism within the ranks of the people themselves” but writers and artists need to “carry on such criticism and self-criticism”.28 Mao concludes by listing the defects that remain: “idealism, doctrinairism, utopianism, empty talk, contempt of practice and aloofness from the masses”.29 He encourages writers and artists to accept the new “epoch of the masses”, and quotes the writer Lu Hsun’s couplet as a motto “With frowning brows I coldly defy the thousands pointing their accusing fingers at me; with bowed head I meekly submit as an ox for the child to ride on”.30 And so, revolutionary writers and artists should become as “oxen” for carrying the broad masses of the people.

3.2 Vietnamese Responses to the “Arts” Question

Mao’s “Yan’an Talks” were not noticed straight away in Vietnam, which in 1942 was firmly under French and Japanese rule, but there were some contemporary echoes in another “Long March”. This was in the person of Đặng Xuân Khu,31 who took the Revolutionary name Trường Chinh, a Sino-Vietnamese name which carries the meaning “Long March”. Trường Chinh was very influential in the Việt Minh leadership, being Party Secretary from 1940 to 1956, and someone who had a profound effect on the course of the arts and literature in Vietnam during the 1940s and beyond, and on the development of propaganda during the time of the Resistance Against the French. Trường Chinh was obviously very much influenced by ideas that were current in China and in particular, I would argue, influenced by Mao’s ideas on the place of the arts in a Revolutionary society.

28 Mao Tse–tung 1956, page 41.
29 Mao Tse–tung 1956, page 46.
30 Mao Tse–tung 1956, page 50. The Lu Hsun quote is noted as being from “In Mockery of Myself”, Complete Works of Lu Hsun, Chinese ed., Vol. VII.
31 Đặng Xuân Khu was born on 9th February 1907 in what is now Xuân Hồng village, Nam Định province. See Nguyễn Khoa Diệm et al 2002, in Nguyễn Khoa Diệm et al (eds.) 2002, page 7.
The Vietnamese story had not been documented carefully until Kim N. B. Ninh wrote her Doctoral dissertation in 1996, which has now been published as *A World Transformed: The Politics of Culture in Revolutionary Vietnam, 1945–1965.* Much of the following account is necessarily based on her book, as it is applicable up to the time of the end of French colonisation — that is, up to the latter half of 1954.

Some form of artistic endeavour is useful to the propaganda work of the resistance forces — the Việt Minh — but beyond this, some of the resistance leaders such as Trường Chinh, Tô Hữu and Hồ Chí Minh were themselves involved as writers. Their work may not be regarded as highly as that of the most talented writers of the time, but neither can it be dismissed as of no value. Ninh writes:

> Any anthology of Vietnamese literature since 1945 would have to include Hồ Chí Minh, Trường Chinh and Tô Hữu (another high-ranking Party theorist who is considered to be Vietnam’s pre-eminent revolutionary poet) among others. ... The literary achievements of political leaders may be inflated, but their creative efforts were of a credible quality and did influence other intellectuals in a way that pure revolutionary exhortations might not have.

In the Vietnamese context, Ninh sees, intellectuals play an important — almost pivotal — role:

> As in any system, there is an arena in which policies are fought for, opinions voiced, and issues discussed — even if the arena is much smaller than or different from intellectual freedom as it is known in the West. Far from the view that socialist intellectuals are essentially powerless (a view espoused by socialist intellectuals themselves ...), I see them as quite influential precisely because of the extraordinary demands made upon them by the state.

That is, the State may demand that intellectual discussion be circumscribed by boundaries, but intellectual activity is then able to push against these boundaries, even forcing change, and thereby the intellectuals become quite influential.

Ninh is here discussing specifically the Vietnamese situation, and comments that, when Vietnam is viewed from the West, we may be blind to some of the societal structures and forces at work:

> For all the overwhelming concentration of power in the Party and the extensive bureaucratization of all sectors of society, societal forces do find myriad ways to express discontent and resistance. The differentiation

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32 Bibliographic details of Kim Ninh's book and PhD thesis are as follows:


between public and private that grows out of the experience of democratic political systems may blind us not only to the possibilities of dissent but to its locations within the very structures of the Party and the state.\textsuperscript{35}

Ninh also points out, over the period of her study (1945–1965), and also the period of this present study (1940s–1954), there was very little scientific or technological activity in Vietnam, and hence scientific intellectuals do not figure in her story.\textsuperscript{36}

In 1943 Trương Chinh wrote the \textit{Theses on Vietnamese Culture}\textsuperscript{37} – and in April of that year the \textit{Hội văn hóa cứu quốc Việt Nam} (National Salvation Cultural Association) was formed as part of the Việt Minh.\textsuperscript{38} Trương Chinh was one of the most influential thinkers of modern Vietnam, and these publications have had a profound influence – for better or for worse – on Vietnamese culture. The \textit{Theses} was an important document, setting the environment for some profound changes in Vietnamese cultural life which began to be very visible in the late 1950s. English-language translations of the document are not generally available, and so my own translation has been included here as Appendix II. The \textit{Theses on Vietnamese Culture} presented a stark choice for Vietnamese culture: either it would become more backward under fascism, or it would break free and catch up with the rest of the world after national liberation. Three principles which should be present in a national cultural movement were listed:

a) Vietnamisation\textsuperscript{39} \textit{[đän tọc hòa]} (against all enslaving and colonial influences, leading to the development of an independent Vietnamese culture).

b) Popularisation \textit{[dài chúng hòa]} (against all policies and actions for culture which oppose the great number of the masses, or are far from the great number of the masses).

c) Scientism \textit{[khoa học hòa]} (against all things which work for a culture contrary to science, which are anti–progressive).\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{35} Ninh 2002, page 10.
\textsuperscript{36} Ninh 2002, page 9. Ninh differentiates "scientific" intellectual activity as distinct from "creative" intellectual activity. I would differ in this respect, since the construction of scientific truth is also highly creative. I prefer the term "cultural" intellectual activity.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Sưu tập truyện bô Tiến Phong} 1996, page 5.
\textsuperscript{39} Ninh initially defines this phrase as carrying the meaning of "Vietnamisation", but later settles on "nationalisation". "Nationalisation" is perhaps a better word in a discussion of the international environment. See the following discussion, and also Ninh 2002, page 29.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Văn Kiện Đảng} 1930–1945 (Lưu Hạnh Nội Bộ) – Tập 3 1977, pages 366–367. The translations are my own, but some of the Vietnamese phrases have been shown (in square brackets) to facilitate the following discussion.
The first of these principles is probably the most important and controversial point that Mao made in his Yan’an Talks and, although it seems impossible to know if Trương Chinh was aware of Mao Zedong’s “Talks” at the time he wrote the Theses, this point about literature and arts being centred on, and from the people, became one of the great debating points during the 1940s and beyond. It proved to be one of the hardest points for arts practitioners to accept. Ninh, in her discussion of these points, writes that the Vietnamese hóa, when added to a noun, “carries the sense of an act being done to achieve such a concept” – it is much more than the concept itself. So that the phrase dân tộc hóa means more than patriotism, it implies Vietnamisation, and “an active return to what is uniquely Vietnamese ... it asks for Vietnamization”.

Once the Việt Minh had come to power (at least, in the northern part of Vietnam) after the declaration of independence (on 2 September 1945) there was a burgeoning of publication activity in the capital Hanoi and in nearby cities such as Hải Phòng and further afield in Vinh (Nghệ An province). Many of these publications were newspapers or periodicals and many contained cartoons and drawings which portrayed particular political points of view, or offered commentary on contemporary events and ideas. It appears that these publications afforded people, who were later to become the producers of the Việt Minh propaganda studied here, a chance to try techniques of production and printing and to refine the question of audience. The problem of defining and addressing the audience was critical to the success of the Việt Minh, as Shawn McHale, in discussing inter alia the document Kinh nghiệm Việt Minh ở Việt Bắc, points out: “In short, there was a realization that without understanding the audience, the revolution was doomed”. Thus the 1945–1946 publications from the cities were instrumental in developing principles used in the propaganda employed in the rural areas after the resistance began.

The period between the August Revolution in August 1945 and the Việt Minh call for a general uprising against the French on 19 December 1946 was also a time of intense debate in matters cultural. The National Salvation Cultural Association was at

41 Contacts between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) were not unknown in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Duiker recounts how Võ Nguyên Giáp and Phạm Văn Đồng started on their way to study at Yan’an in 1940. See Duiker 2000, page 241.
44 I am indebted to David Marr for providing me with access to his data collected at the National Library of Vietnam in 2004 for this information.
45 See Appendix IV for a translation.
46 McHale 2004, page 137.
the forefront of the debates as it grappled with the problem of the place of art in the context of building a socialist nation. The Association met on 11 June 1945 to plan the activities that the needed to be addressed.\(^{47}\) One of the decisions of the meeting was to publish secretly a regular magazine to be called _Tiếng tuyền_ (Front lines). Apparently issue number 1 was so published, but the name was then changed to _Tiếng phong_ (“Vanguard”), as “the mouthpiece of the new cultural movement”, the first issue being published openly on 10 November 1945\(^{48}\), and taking as its motto the three points in the _Theses_ listed above: _Khoa học, Đại chúng, Dân tộc_ (“Scientific, Popular, National”).\(^{49}\) _Tiếng Phong_ was published in 24 issues until the Resistance war against the French broke out in Hanoi on 19 December 1946. The last issue is dated 1 December 1946, after which publication was suspended, but the functions and character of _Tiếng Phong_ were taken over in 1948 by the publication of the magazine _Văn Nghệ_ (“Arts and Letters”) in the northern hills of Vietnam (the Việt Bắc).\(^{50}\)

_Tiếng phong_ carried many of the “literature and arts” debates, as well as publishing actual works – stories, poetry, plays and music. Its orientation can be seen by the fact that about two thirds of its output over the year of its publication dealt with issues of criticism and political discussion, the rest being devoted to publication of actual works of literature and music. Table 3–1 shows this situation, the top four rows of the table categorise the actual works reproduced (130 in all), and the remaining nine rows show the breakdown of the critical essays, news items, papers for discussion, and so forth – 262 articles in all dealing with these topics. Table 3–1 was developed from the complete collection of _Tiếng phong_, and from the summary of the types of article that appeared in the magazine over all issues.\(^{51}\) Thus, the situation of the arts was an important matter for debate among those who were producing creative works, and some of the threads in this discussion are important to an understanding of the development of propaganda, and are the subject of further discussion.

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47 See pages 7–9 of _Sưu tập toàn bộ Tiếng Phong tập mới_ 1996, for the minutes of this meeting.
48 A complete collection of all issues of _Tiếng Phong_ was published by Nxb Hội nhà văn, Hanoi, in two volumes in 1996.
49 See the front page of each issue. For example, _Sưu tập toàn bộ Tiếng Phong tập mới_ 1996, page 13 for the front page of issue number 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stories and recollections published</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry published</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plays published</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music published</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion papers and newsletters (including such things as the publication of <em>Theses of Culture</em>)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays about current events in socialist politics (including <em>Cultural News</em>)</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays about culture</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays about literature (many about foreign literature)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays about fine arts</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays about linguistics</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays about stage performances</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays about music</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays about architecture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3–1. Types of Article in Tiền phong 1945–1946.

The National Salvation Cultural Association tried to establish the Communist Party’s cultural platform, and one of its first attempts was the production of an elaboration on Trường Chinh’s *Theses of Vietnamese Culture*, called *Một nền văn hóa mới* (“A new Culture”) written by Nguyễn Hữu Đăng and Nguyễn Đình Thi, published in June 1945. To produce a new culture, it was first necessary to destroy the old Vietnamese culture, and the new culture is seen as being an urgent requirement, as the old culture is seen as one of the impositions of the invader:

The yoke of invasion is not just restricted to the spheres of economics and politics; the ruling class has a cultural policy entirely devoted to keeping the masses in ignorance, deceiving them, holding them back, and crippling the strong will and ambition of our people. ...

52 The percentages do not add up exactly to 100% because of rounding effects.
53 Đăng and Thi 1945. This publication was probably issued after June, as the first meeting of the Association took place on 11 June 1945 (see preceding discussion).
That is why it is not only the reconstruction of national independence but we also need a cultural revolution to be undertaken; just now, we want complete independence, and we must make, in parallel with the political and military mission, an urgent cultural movement.\(^{54}\)

The petit-bourgeois intellectual, that mainstay of the 1920s and 1930s cultural movements, concerned with modern concepts of individualism and modernity, had a particular dilemma, as the ideals with drove those earlier movements seemed to have no place in the three new main concerns of culture.

If the 1930s was a period of transformation, the changes following the August political Revolution were another revolution. Indicative of the time was the piece entitled \(\textit{Nhận Đạo}\) ("Recognising the Way") by the poet Nguyễn Đình Thi. Thi describes the painful process of transformation as a "shedding of the skin", "newly-grown young skin not yet strengthened, bleeding at the slightest touch".\(^{55}\) In 1947 the painter Tô Ngọc Vân raised arguments about art and propaganda, and the question of who had the right to make definitions. Vân was emphatic in his support for the Revolution, yet was also insistent that propaganda was a temporary phenomenon, whereas art had lasting value, and therein lay the difference. The scholar Đặng Thái Mai reiterated the Marxist view "that an artist was invariably a propagandist for one ideology or another"\(^{56}\) — whether stated explicitly or not. This view was to win support, but we shall return to this later when the Communist Party took a much harsher line with intellectuals but seemingly without the intellectual underpinning behind Mai’s statement.

In 1947 Trương Chinh contributed further to the debate in a series of articles in the newspaper \(\textit{Sự Thật}\), later published as a booklet called \(\textit{Kháng chiến nhất định thắng lợi}\) ("The Resistance Will Win"), and listed the immediate tasks for Vietnam’s cultural workers:

- a – To use art and literature for propaganda and for mobilization of the forces of the resistance;
- b – To struggle against illiteracy; develop education;
- c – To build a new life;
- d – To popularize the practice of hygiene among the people;
- e – To wipe out all slavish, colonialist remnants in the cultural field;
- f – To develop a culture having a national, scientific and popular character.\(^{57}\)

\(^{54}\) Dang and Thi 1945, page 7 (my translation).
\(^{55}\) Ninh 2002, page 69.
\(^{56}\) Ninh 2002, pages 73–74.
\(^{57}\) Chinh 1947, page 133.
Once again, the three aims of the new literature are advocated, here in Trương Chinh’s point (f).

The argument, with Văn and Mai acting as spokesmen on opposite sides, continued with Văn arguing that specifying the same requirements for both art and propaganda would stunt both. He was particularly bitter about suggestions that artists should get closer to the people. He wrote: “Do people realize that in human society, it is the artists who live closest to the people?”. Văn was speaking for many intellectuals in taking the stand “that Vietnamese artists were much more involved in the life of the nation than the official characterization would have it”.

Trương Chinh produced an interesting side to the discussion in his Marxism and Vietnamese Culture, a report delivered at the Second National Cultural Conference in 1948, by suggesting that: “we can say that there are propagandists who are not or not yet artists, and that there are no artists who are in no way propagandists”. Chinh could here be said to argue that an artist may never entirely escape their background, and that art will always carry some message related to that background. Chinh’s espousal of this somewhat respectable position is cast into some doubt, as he goes on to define the process of creation in four steps constraining the individual act of creation:

1. Choosing the topic.
2. Determining the audience for one’s creation.
3. Acquiring conditions necessary for realization.
4. Testing works by the reaction of the masses.

But any illusion that we can have “art for art’s sake” is dispelled, as art must be tested and finally judged by the masses:

The masses are the most impartial and perspicacious judge of art. If works of art, once created, are devoured, admired, enjoyed, adopted, applied, and chosen by the people as their daily spiritual nourishment, they must have value. On the contrary, those works whose birth is heeded and cared for by no one will die an early death.
The Party response to the on-going debate (apart from arguments engaging specific points) was to organise two conferences — *The 1948 Second National Congress of Culture* from 16–20 July 1948, and *The 1949 Conference of Debate in Việt Bắc* from 25–28 September 1949. As noted above, Trường Chinh’s *Marxism and Vietnamese Culture* was the keynote address of the 1948 conference, and it established Hồ Chí Minh, Trường Chinh and the poet Tô Hữu as “the theorists of the Vietnamese revolutionary art and literature”. Ninh notes that the 1948 conference was conducted in an “open intellectual atmosphere”, and she quotes at length from the writer Nguyễn Tú An who described the conference as the “happiest”. It appears that some of the main results of the 1948 conference were organisational, with the formation of the Vietnamese Association for Art and Literature (replacing the National Salvation Cultural Association). As part of the organisational change, the Association was divided into sections corresponding to the military and administrative areas called Interzones. Artists and writers were urged by Trường Chinh to take part in the fight and to make their contributions as, up to the time of the Congress, “Achievements in the fields of culture and the economy remain pale compared with exploits on the battlefield. In the present war, blood, sweat and ink are not [yet] shed equally”. They joined the new Association enthusiastically, the majority happy to work in their own way for independence for their country, travelling to various Interzone headquarters to contribute in whatever way they could. Ninh particularly describes the artistic activity in Interzones 3 and 4, and says how events there “showed clearly the joy with which intellectuals of different political and artistic backgrounds did converge and exist together”.

In many ways, the 1949 conference appears to have been much more significant in its effects upon writing and other arts in Vietnam, yet it appears to have been subject to very little analysis. Rather than a conference of genuine debate (as the 1948 conference appeared to have been) the *Conference of Debate* appears to have been the occasion for the Party to bring intellectuals under control. Language changes were

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64 The First National Conference on Culture was planned for 24 November 1946 in Hanoi, but was called off because of the deteriorating situation with the French. See Tiền Phong number 24, page 7, published in Siais tao tran ho Tiền Phong tao hai, 1996, page 931.
66 Chinh 1948, page 293.
68 Ninh claims that it has “not been discussed in detail in Western works on Vietnam of this period”. See Ninh 2002, page 88.

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promoted, for example nhân dân (people, nation\textsuperscript{69}), with its class connotations, was preferred over the more ethnographically oriented dân tộc (nation, race; nationality, ethnic group). Tô Hữu provided definite answers, clearly setting out the class basis of art and literature and giving the leadership to the working class.\textsuperscript{70} There followed a quite extraordinary period of criticism and self–criticism, with writers and artists criticising each other, and their own earlier works. Ninh points out that: “Their works were, therefore, criticized variously for being still, cold, dead, outside of the struggle, far from the people, too peaceful, too beautiful, not real enough, and too real as to be merely photographic accounts of events”. She observes (somewhat wryly) that “These rather conflicting voices led to uneven results”.\textsuperscript{71} Mao Zedong’s “Talks at Yan’an” appear to have surfaced somewhat more explicitly at the 1949 conference.

From this time on, there were rectification campaigns to bring theatre, literature, painting and other arts and education into the Party line. The campaigns were effective in bringing about a new intellectual discourse along almost religious lines – Ninh draws parallels with the Roman Catholic doctrine of original sin\textsuperscript{72} – and very destructive in many ways. The painter Tô Ngộ Văn, who, in 1947, so strongly defended the right of an artist to engage in either art or propaganda as he or she saw fit, now wrote “Today due to the light of the Party which has been brought to me by the revolutionary community, shining into my soul, I see clearly that although the Revolution and Resistance have liberated me physically from the controlling reach of the enemy, my thoughts are still imprisoned by it”.\textsuperscript{73} This was indeed a significant change in outlook. In section 3.3 (below), I discuss and illustrate some specific responses from writers to the conflict and to their new situation after the 1948 Congress, as they joined the Resistance against the French.

By the time of the 1949 conference, there was a less pluralistic and increasingly authoritarian direction. There are questions here as to the causes of this change – it is possible that the Chinese Communist victory of 1949, and the subsequent opening up of the border, together with the influx of Chinese advisors may be part of the reason.\textsuperscript{74} Some echoes of Mao Zedong’s Yan’an “Talks” can be seen as early as 1943 in Trương


\textsuperscript{70} Ninh 2002, pages 89–90.

\textsuperscript{71} Ninh 2002, page 99.

\textsuperscript{72} Ninh 2002, page 116.

\textsuperscript{73} Quoted in Ninh 2002, page 116.

\textsuperscript{74} Ninh 2002, page 83.
Chinh’s *Theses of Vietnamese Culture*, particularly in the suggestions in the *Theses* concerning popularisation (*dài chưng hòa*). The need, as the leadership saw it, to get closer to the people, to become of and for the masses, even “as an ox”, had become a loud call indeed by the time of the 1949 Conference of Debate. Thus, it appears that the cry for popularisation, at least, fitted with similar ideas developing in China, if not derived from them. Looking at the artistic styles used in the Việt Minh propaganda in the following chapters, some of the ways in which the requirement for *dài chưng hòa* has been interpreted can be seen.

Unfortunately, internal Party debates are not fully accessible to the researcher: For example, the Marxist view that even a supposedly “neutral” or “pure view” taken by an artist, working as a free individual, is not actually free of the social and cultural baggage that forms the person of the artist is a respectable argument. What is not clear is the source of the Party’s “correct” viewpoint, although Mao Zedong in his “Talks” raises a number of the debating points. For example, on the “art for art’s sake” argument Mao dismisses the idea of an abstract reality: “Is there such a thing as human nature? Of course there is. But there is only human nature in the concrete, no human nature in the abstract”.75 And, in discussing “the fundamental point of departure for art and literature”, he says: “Fundamentally, we do not start from a concept but from objective practice”.76 Mao thus seems to reject the concept that art can exist in a pure or sublime state, free of the concrete nature of its creators. Insofar as the discussions within the Việt Minh are visible, there are hints of disagreements within the Party – such as at the time of the arrest of the poet Trần Đình by over-eager cadres in 1956, his attempted suicide, and his release when Party leaders learned of it.77 There appears to have been some considerable internal Party debate on these matters, but the details remain to be uncovered.

A further question that arises has to do with the nature and effectiveness of the propaganda produced. The writer Nguyễn Đình Thi, for example “could see how effective art and literature could be for the Party and the revolution, that ‘literature and art is a kind of propaganda without propagandizing, and precisely because of this that it is the most effective form of propaganda’”.78

75 Mao Tse-tung 1956, page 39.
76 Mao Tse-tung 1956, page 39.
77 See Ninh 2002, page 140.
3.3 Literature in the 1940s

While literature is not the direct subject of this study, a consideration of the way in which writers approached the situations in which they found themselves can lead the way to an understanding of the background to some of the visual propaganda that is the subject of study. The political situation that writers and artists faced was discussed above, and in this section I want to comment briefly on some literary works of the period that I regard as both representative and informative.

*Là thi sĩ – To be a Poet (Song Hong – Truong Chinh)* 1944

*Là thi sĩ* was written about a year after *Marxism and Vietnamese Culture* by the same author. It was published in the clandestine paper *Cờ Giao Phong (Flag of Liberation)*, number 4 of 18 April 1944. It is not really possible to make comments about the poetic form invoked here, since this is a translation (the specific translator not being attributed), beyond to say that there does not appear be use of obvious poetic devices, such as rhyme or rhythm. The Vietnamese text may show a different poetic skill.

The first part of the poem is a series of 4 and 5−line statements of the kind:

If to be a poet means...

where the possibilities of individualistic and personal romantic poetry are explored. The last “If” leads into the next section where the consequences of this kind of romanticism are detailed:

If to be a poet is to spread an elegant brocade
To cover the sores of a tyranny [*sic*] in decay

Then such a poet is shown to bend the knee in the hope:

Of catching a whiff of the droppings that fall from the rich

The second half of the work shows us the kind of poetry written by:

True artists, noble and pure

Such a poet will “sing liberty”, and “raise high the song” for their native land. There follows references to Vietnamese heroes, ancient and modern, including the heroes of the Nationalist Party who were beheaded in Yên Bái in June 1930.\(^{80}\) Wider considerations than those of nationalism are alluded to, as other poets are exhorted:

To be a poet must be to join in the chorus that swells
The choir of the planet in struggle

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79 Song Hong (Truong Chinh) 1944, in Nguyen Khac Vu and Huu Ngoc c.1976 page 568.
80 Luong 1992, page 111.
Poets must:

Drop the pen and snatch up the sword!
Oh poet! rise up!

and there is a very small allusion to class and Marxist–Leninism in the last few lines:

Your verse together with our workers’ hands
Shall plough the furrows of a splendid future
Whose burgeoning already has burst forth
In the great triumph of the Soviet land.

_Trang’s Wife_ (Kim Lan) 1945

_Trang’s Wife_ is a small realist story. Trang lives in a poor quarter, normally a happy community, but now driven to despair by hunger. Trang, middle-aged and balding, works by delivering rice, which earns him a wage, insufficient to enable him to buy any of it. In this simple, but well-told tale, he meets and befriends a woman at the market and takes her home to his mother as his wife. The home is made whole, cleaned and happy – Trang “had become the head of a family. He would have children under this roof”. However, it is 1944 or 1945, people are dying in the streets from hunger and the French are still extorting taxes. His new wife is astonished “What, you are still paying taxes here”, and she goes on to describe the activities of the Việt Minh, refusing to pay taxes, taking rice and distributing it to the poor. Trang has seen these things but not understood, now he is reminded of “seeing the crowd of starving people and the red flag snapping in the wind...”.

_Trang’s Wife_ is one of the early realist stories, which is written to gain support for the Việt Minh. The events described – starving people coming into the big city from the provinces, bodies lying smelling and unburied, pitifully small meals lacking any nutrition, constant pressure for taxes – from the 1944 and 1945 famine were widely known, and this tale would have spread knowledge of this pain in the North to other parts of the country. It would also have spread abroad the message of hope that the Việt Minh wished to offer. The famine is also remembered in poetry:

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81 Kim Lan 1945.
82 It is not easy to give the Western reader the feeling of this action. A woman in Vietnam leaves her own family upon marriage, and truly becomes the daughter of her husband’s mother.
83 Kim Lan 1945, page 20.
84 Kim Lan 1945, pages 22–23.
85 See also Marr 1995, especially pages 96–107 and, in particular, Tào and Furuta 1995.
Remember that third month, the year At-dâu\(^\text{86}\)

The Lạc-Hồng\(^\text{87}\) race endured its direst woe
as corpses tottered roaming roads and streets,
then dropped from hunger not to rise again.

They starved from Bắc-giang to Hà-nội,
They starved from Thái-bình to Gia-lâm.

... Four suburbs opened rows and rows of graves,
which corpses soon would fill without a break,
and clouds of flies would darken all that land...

They died and died! Two million people died!\(^\text{88}\)

*The Eyes* (Nam Cao) 1948\(^\text{89}\)

The story of *The Eyes* is relatively simple. In it the narrator goes to see Hoàng, a writer from Hanoi who is living in a village as a refugee from the fighting in Hanoi. Hoàng, knowing nothing of the countryside, is confused, irritated and unsympathetic and disdainful towards his peasant neighbours. Hoàng has ceased writing and makes few friends in the village, considering his fellow refugees dull and unrefined. He knows little of the revolution that is occurring around him. His one pleasure is in reading (and re-reading) the one classical Chinese novel he possesses. The story ends with the narrator going to sleep on a soft bed, under a mosquito net, in luxury he has not known for a long time. We are told that his usual bed is “in the printing house itself, under the lights and in the middle of the noise of the machines”,\(^\text{90}\) in sharp contrast with the lifestyle of this somewhat effete and unhappy refugee, Hoàng.

*The Eyes* is an important story. It illustrates a concern that arose in intellectual discussion, particularly in the 1948 and 1949 conferences – that is, the way in which writers viewed the masses – the peasantry, the workers, the ordinary people. Viên, commenting on revolutionary literature and discussing the Marxist–Leninist viewpoint, expresses the concern this way:

Literature had to reflect social life...An artist’s genius lay not in plumbing the depths of his own individual soul divorced from social relationships, and producing works devoid of content; but in sharpening his sensitivity and

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\(^{86}\) At-dâu is the year 1945 (lunar calendar), and the third lunar month began on 12 April 1945 (see [http://www.chinesefortunecalendar.com/CLunarCal1.htm](http://www.chinesefortunecalendar.com/CLunarCal1.htm)).

\(^{87}\) Often written as Hông-Lạc, the legendary founders of the Vietnamese race.

\(^{88}\) Bằng Ba Lân 1985, pages 101–107. This poem may have been published elsewhere, and earlier.

\(^{89}\) Nam Cao 1948, page 24.

\(^{90}\) Nam Cao, 1948, page 40.
setting his imagination to work on the endless material furnished by social life. One could not remain uninvolved in the great problems which moved humanity.91

Nam Cao’s The Eyes is a call to wake up, to sharpen sensitivity to social life, and to become involved in the problems of humanity. In the story, the narrator remarks that Hoàng “had noticed the apparent stupidity of the peasant’s words without seeing the purity and beauty of the intentions which the words hid.” He asks “With such eyes, what use would his travelling be?” 92 The problem that Nam Cao sees for Hoàng (and all like him) is a problem of perception. What eyes can we use to get beyond our first impressions and see inner beauty and meaning? How can the writer (or other artist) “go deeply among the people”,93 how to make a revolution within the writer? Nam Cao has thus raised the problem, not of using the writer’s art for the people, but of producing an art that is of the people. This problem was to become something of an obsession for those who were determined to produce a social revolution, as well as a class revolution in Vietnam and reflects the concerns raised by Mao Zedong in his Yan’an ‘Talks’. Kim Ninh comments that The Eyes “was written by a writer for his peers, or at the very least, to clarify his own position in the ideological struggle”.94 Nam Cao was unable to continue this discussion with his fellow writers, as he died in action in 1951 while on a trip to his home village in Hà Nam.95

Dead Leaves (Võ Huy Tâm) 195296

Dead Leaves is one chapter from Tâm’s first novel Vùng Mỏ (Mining Country). This chapter is an account of what it is like to be as worthless as dead autumn leaves, in a prison cell where death comes to you or to your companions arbitrarily, painfully and unexpectedly. Like other stories of the time, torture is a recurring undercurrent, particularly torture of the young and defenceless. The hero of Dead Leaves is the old man Thu, who is one among a number of people in a cell of a French prison. People are periodically taken out of the cell for execution and others, bearing dreadful wounds of torture, are thrown into the filth of the cell to be cared for by the other inmates as best they can. The climax of the chapter comes as Thu and a companion are called to be taken out of the cell to be killed. He turns to those who remain, and says:

91 Nguyễn Khắc Viện c.1976, page 142.
92 Nam Cao, 1948, page 34.
93 This phrase is quoted from Ninh 2002, page 84, and is contained in Hồ Chí Minh’s letter to the 1948 congress.
96 Tâm 1952, page 809.
We are honest people. We can die, there will be no lack of people to look after our graves. recalling for them that they are part of a wide community that has a love and care for them. Individuals may die, but the community survives and will fight on. This chapter of Tâm's work is very much the kind of realist literature admired by the leaders of the revolution.

3.4 Summary

Vietnam did not achieve independence in isolation. The leaders of the Viêt Minh were aware of cultural movements in the USSR and China, even if they were not participants, and the ideas of empowering the peasantry were common to the three revolutionary movements. Propaganda is a cultural activity, and cultural practitioners who were attracted to the Revolution and Resistance in Vietnam used the ideas of revolution in their works, and often put their abilities to use in the educational and persuasive tasks of the Viêt Minh. Writers and artists were persuaded to form the National Salvation Cultural Association under the aegis of the Viêt Minh and to develop a philosophy of art which saw art as a service to the people (as conceived by the Party). Art was seen as inevitably conveying a message, always as a medium of persuasion, even if it was so-called "pure" art, and the essential problem at a time of revolution and resistance was that the art must carry the right message. Writers took to portraying images of the struggle by ordinary people and writing poetry that inspired. Many artists and writers fled the fighting and moved to the liberated areas in the Viêt Bắc to work on propaganda and educational materials to help the Resistance, while others returned to the French controlled cities.

It would be a mistake to assume that all Viêt Minh propaganda was simply an attempt to impose ideas and ideals from an authoritarian government on an unwitting or unwilling peasantry. Artists and writers participated willingly and joyfully, at least initially, in an attempt to educate the people about the necessity for action against the French colonialists, and they debated at length, as the pages of publications such as Tiền Phong show us, about the proper use of their crafts. The following chapters discuss some of the poetic and visual material which they produced, and show how it was produced "for the masses", to defeat the three enemies – the French (giặc Pháp), hunger
and famine (giặc đói), ignorance and illiteracy (giặc đói). Later chapters will also show how the persuasive techniques that were used most effectively were closer to those in the style and manner of Feng Zikai, rather than in techniques of bombast and polemic.
Chapter 4
Persuading the People

The previous chapter examined the intellectual environment in Vietnam at the time of the Revolution and the Resistance Against the French. When the Vietnamese Government was forced to flee from Hanoi in December 1946, many artists, writers and other intellectuals fled also and joined the Resistance. Many of those with an artistic or literary bent lent their talents to education and propaganda tasks. The propaganda which was produced was made for “the ordinary people”, and much of it was targeted rather precisely. For example, material produced where there was a majority of the ethnic Nùng people would portray figures in Nùng clothing handling implements local to that area. A good example is shown in Chapter 7. This Chapter introduces the main themes of visual propaganda that are taken up in more detail in following chapters. Newspapers were also produced for “ordinary people”. One discussed in this Chapter, Việt Nam Độc Lập (“Independent Vietnam”), was particularly important, because its intended audience comprised peasant people in the northern regions.

4.1 General Themes in the Propaganda

4.1.1 Themes in the Posters

The propaganda material was described in Chapter 1. It comprises mainly posters, pamphlets, songs and newspapers from the Museum of the Revolution in Hanoi. Here we shall look at some of the themes which recur in nearly all of the propaganda material. One of the posters from Lạng Sơn Province, circulated in 1949, Illustration 4-1 below, conveys the most common themes in the propaganda. The poster illustrates, with small drawings, ten points about the Resistance. The text associated with the pictures is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Muôn Điều Kháng Chiến</th>
<th>Ten Points About the Resistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Kháng Chiến</td>
<td>1 Resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to secure the right to live.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resolutely swear not to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>enslaved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Du Kích</td>
<td>2 Guerillas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>harass the enemy, don’t let</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>him eat in peace or live in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>peace.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Poster number DSCN0347/13 in my catalogue, and 917/Gy126 in that of the Museum of the Revolution.
Illustration 4-1. Ten Points About the Resistance.

3 Dân Quân
canh gác để phòng, Việt gian, giúp việc văn tài tiếp tế, phá hoại, cứu thương.

4 Dé Phòng
phòng dịch, phòng gian giữ bí mật: không biết, không nghe, không thấy.

5 Giao Thông
ta biết rõ dịch một cách nhanh chóng thì ta thắng.

6 Tân Cư
the không đổi trời Chung với quân cuộp nước.

7 Tăng Gia Sản Xuất
dế kiên quyết kháng chiến đánh tốc lập hoàn toàn.

8 Tuyên Truyền
dế toàn dân cùng hằng hái kháng chiến đến thắng lợi.

3 Auxilliaries
Watch for and take precautions against traitors, help with transport of supplies, sabotage, and help with medical work.

4 Security
protect against the enemy, prevent spies, keep secret: don't know, didn't hear, didn't see.

5 Communications and Transport
we quickly know well that if the enemy is opposed we will win.

6 Evacuate the Towns
we vow not to share the same sky with the troops who have robbed our country.

7 Increase Production
so as to firmly resist, and secure complete independence.

8 Propaganda
so that all of the people together resist enthusiastically, achieving victory.

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9 Cán BỘ
làm việc với dân, làm việc cho dân.

9 Cadres
work with the people, work for the people.

10 Đại Đoàn Kết
dốc lập thống nhất, nhất định thành công.

10 Great Unity
independence and unification, a certain success.

These same ten points are also covered in a Việt Minh discussion paper, issued in Interzone IV and written on 25 August 1948. One common and important theme that does not get a mention in either Illustration 4-1 or in the discussion paper is that of thi dua, a topic which is discussed as a separate issue in Section 4.2.

The general intention of the “Muối Diệu” poster is to communicate roles and strategies of the Resistance and to include the whole community in a common purpose. The first three themes – resistance, guerrillas and auxiliaries – refer directly to the military campaign of the Resistance. General Võ Nguyên Giáp, looking back at the Resistance (the war for liberation) from 1959, emphasises that it involved all of the people:

In the war of liberation in Viet Nam, guerilla activities spread to all the regions temporarily occupied by the enemy. Each inhabitant was a soldier, each village a fortress, each Party cell [and] each village administrative committee a staff.

He goes on to point out that, unlike other countries, Vietnam, in the first years of the conflict, could not engage in pitched battles, but “had to rest content with guerilla war”. Hence propaganda posters supporting the du kích (“guerillas”) and the dân quân (“auxiliaries” – but see below for further comments on this) were produced and circulated. Giáp points out that, from guerilla warfare, the campaign moved “into a form of mobile war” and “finally coming to greater campaigns bringing into play many regiments, then many divisions to end at Dien Bien Phu where the French Expeditionary Corps lost 16,000 men of its crack units”.

In 1949, when this poster was made, the Vietnamese forces were still very reliant upon the guerillas and the auxiliaries. The first frame shows a soldier in the evolving army, and the text echoes Hồ Chí Minh’s call to his countrymen at the start of the Resistance on 20 December 1946 “Never shall we be enslaved”. The theme of the soldier in the Army occurs regularly in the propaganda, with many appeals to sew

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2 Muối vịnh đề kháng chiến 1948. (Available from the National Library of Vietnam, Hanoi)
4 Võ Nguyên Giáp 1959, page 49.
5 Võ Nguyên Giáp 1959, page 49.
6 Hồ Chí Minh December 1946a, page 68 and Hồ Chí Minh December 1946b, page 116.

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clothes for the soldiers, particularly for the winter campaigns, and for support for a “general counter offensive” (tổng phân công). Talk of a general counter offensive is common in the propaganda from the early 1950s. A number of Việt Minh attacks took place in the summer of 1950. Evaluating one such series along the northern border of Vietnam, William Duiker comments “In retrospect, the autumn [1950] border offensive seems to have marked a decisive shift in the course of the war. Badly mauled by the enemy, the French decided to evacuate the entire inland section of the border zone”.

This is the kind of “counter offensive” which the Việt Minh was building towards from about the end of 1950, although it suffered some reverses in the earlier phases of the war.

Between 4 March 1947 and 1 August 1947, Trương Chinh published in Sự Thực ("Truth") newspaper a series of articles about how the Resistance against the French must be fought – this series was published as a booklet called Kháng chiến nhất định thắng lợi (The Resistance Will Win) in September 1947 and has been republished in Vietnamese, English and French several times since then. In the articles, Trương Chinh analyses Vietnam’s political situation and the Việt Minh strategic environment within Vietnam. He discusses the military situation and puts it alongside wider strategic and philosophical issues discussing such matters as when it may be appropriate to attack and when better to tactically retreat. He recognises that the resistance forces were weak (in 1947) and introduces the three types required:

In order to ensure the success of the war of resistance we must have strong armed forces. In the present initial stage, our people’s armed forces comprise only two categories: the regulars (quân chính quy) and the militia (dân quân). The latter is divided into two categories: the guerilla militia (dân quân du kích) and the self-defence militia (dân quân tự vệ). But later these forces may comprise the following branches: the main-force units (quân chính quy [and later called quân đội chủ lực]), the regionals (bộ đội địa phương) and the militia (dân quân tự vệ [and later called dân quân du kích]). In our regular forces several branches will gradually take shape: infantry, artillery, engineers, etc. In future we shall have different armed services: army, navy, air force and others. We are building our forces in the 20th century and must take this into account in our calculations.

These words and functions occur regularly in the propaganda and educational material emanating from the Việt Minh as the resistance is explained to the people.

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7 Duiker 1996, page 152.
9 Trương Chinh 1947b, page 191. The Vietnamese words are from Trương Chinh 1947a, page 103. Those phrases labelled “later called...” are from the footnote in Trương Chinh 1947a, page 103.
The “Muội Diệu” poster of Illustration 4–1 gives us more of an insight into the work and perceptions of the branches of the forces used in the Resistance. *Du kích* (“guerillas”) are engaged in small-group military activities, such as sniping at enemy soldiers, making the roads unsafe for them, and disrupting their day-to-day (“not letting them sleep or eat in peace” as the text has it). *Dân quân* (“auxiliaries” or “militia”) have a different function. The poster depicts them doing *phá hoại*, or “sabotage” to buildings and installations that may be of use to the enemy after the population has been evacuated. Although this particular poster makes a clear distinction between the *du kích* and *dân quân*, and *dân quân* often carried no firearms but were involved in support activities, some statements by leaders tend to mix their functions. For example, Hồ Chí Minh, in his address to the National Congress of Militiamen (*Dân quân*) in April 1948, makes no distinction between them, referring to *dân quân du kích*, as he appeals for better co-ordination with the National Defence Army (*Vệ quốc quân*), for more work on self-supply and self-sufficiency (*tiếng tự túc*), and less adventurism in seeking attacks on large enemy targets.¹⁰

Some of the other themes shown in Illustration 4–1 are directly related to the business of governing in the liberated areas. The need for security checks is shown in frame 4, and the text encourages people to “maintain secrecy”, another theme which occurs in other posters. Frame 5 illustrates another important theme, transport. The regular army (and the militias) relied upon the population in general for supplies and for evacuation of the wounded, and a heavy theme in the propaganda is to do with these needs, people engaged in this work being portrayed as heroic, and sometimes also called *dân quân*, a point taken up again below.

The French enemy used “Vietnamese to fight Vietnamese” as much as possible, and one of the reasons in urging people to evacuate the towns, as in frame 6, is to deprive the enemy of this human resource as well as to remove any infrastructure that could be useful to them. Frame 7 urges to *tăng gia sản xuất*, to “increase production”, a very common imperative in the propaganda that also appeals to the experience of millions of people who witnessed the great famine of 1945.¹¹ Some posters in the collection show concerns about food security. An example of such a “food” poster is shown in

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¹¹ References are also made to the need for increased production in propaganda directed to those in the central and southern regions, where there was no famine, but there is less urgency in them.
Illustration 4–2

Illustration 4–2\(^\text{12}\) which was produced in 1948 in Phú Thọ province. Here people are being urged to conceal their rice, to plan escape routes for cattle and other livestock to keep them from the French enemy, who were partially blamed by the Việt Minh for the famine. Trường Chinh in a report to the first National Conference of the Vietnam Workers’ Party (the Communist Party under a new name)\(^\text{13}\) in 1951 wrote:

At the end of 1944 and early 1945, two million of our peasants died of starvation not only due to savage exploitation by the feudal landlord class, but also because the Japanese fascists and the French imperialists brutally robbed them of their resources. This has aroused deep hatred in the hearts of every peasant in our country.\(^\text{14}\)

Trường Chinh has most likely exaggerated the figures here,\(^\text{15}\) for maximum propaganda effect, but he has clearly identified the three enemies among the people – the feudal landlord class, the Japanese fascists and the French imperialists – and laid the blame for the famine upon them.

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\(^\text{12}\) Number DSCN0337/4 in my catalogue, and 2006/Gy670 in that of the Museum of the Revolution.

\(^\text{13}\) The Indochinese Communist Party took the name “Vietnam Workers’ Party” (Đảng lao động Việt Nam) at the second National Congress of the Party in February 1951. See Chinh 1951, pages 433–450.

\(^\text{14}\) Chinh 1953, page 471.

\(^\text{15}\) But see Tảo and Furuta 1995 and comments in Appendix VI for discussion on this point.

Propaganda and the People
Frames 8 and 9 of Illustration 4-1 (page 56) are aimed directly at Việt Minh workers, the cán bộ, or cadres, to encourage them to work within their communities and to stay close to their people, which in the final analysis, proved to be a key to eventual success. Most of the propaganda posters are not aimed so much at the cán bộ but rather at the ordinary people. The cán bộ are usually addressed in pamphlets and small booklets, some of which are discussed in Chapter 5. Above all, the propaganda urges people, as in the final frame, to work together in Đại đoàn kết, a great unity of the community, working together to achieve the final victory. The fact that the theme of “unity” occurs so frequently in the propaganda materials is an indication that there were some fracture lines within the Vietnamese community, a topic for later study.

A common theme in many of the posters is the work to be done by the ordinary people, often given the dân quân appellation. One of the most important jobs was to transport materials and supplies over the difficult mountain terrain of the Việt Bắc (northern part of Vietnam), which alluded to in frame 5 of Illustration 4-1. Even today, a journey from Hà Nội to the provincial town of Cao Bằng, one of the centres of the Resistance involves an 8–9 hour bus ride over roads that are in a very bad state of repair.16 The further journey to Pác Bọ, where Hồ Chí Minh entered Vietnam on 28 January 1941, involves another bus, servicing local markets in rural communities, and the journey is finished with a motorbike ride (xe ôm) for the last 8km to the cave area.17 During the time of the Resistance, travel would have been much more difficult, and French outposts in the region would have been isolated and vulnerable. Duiker, in his biography of Hồ Chí Minh, recounts the story of Lieutenant Rudolph Shaw who had to parachute into the region on 11 November 1944 when his aircraft developed engine trouble:

Members of a local Vietminh unit ... decided to deliver him to Ho Chi Minh. For the next several days the Vietminh troops led the American pilot over mountains and jungle trails toward Pac Bo, walking at night and resting during the day in caves to avoid the [French] enemy. In the end, it took almost a month to cover a distance of only forty miles [64 kilometres].18

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16 Information gathered first-hand during fieldwork in 2002–2003 and 2003–2004. This road was, at the latest sighting, under very active re-construction. When this work is completed, the journey will be shorter and less arduous, but the hilly terrain, of mainly limestone karst mountains, means that some mighty engineering works will be needed if overland communication is ever to be easy.

17 Of course, a well-heeled tourist can complete all of these journeys in shorter time and greater comfort. The path from Cao Bằng to Pác Bọ is fundamentally easier, because one is travelling up a valley and does not have to cross mountain ridges.

At various times, most transport in the northern mountainous regions would have to be by foot or bicycle, and transporting goods in any quantity would require a considerable number of people. Trucks were available during the latter part of the Resistance, and one of the posters analysed in Chapter 6 uses a story about a truck to make a point. The vast majority of the dân quân did not carry guns, but were transport workers, carrying goods to the soldiers, ferrying wounded back to safety, and acting as couriers. This work would have been central to the continued viability of the Resistance.

4.1.2 Themes as Slogans

Slogans were an important part of the educational campaign from the beginning, and documents from the Communist Party and the Việt Minh record how, at the end of nearly every meeting, new slogans were discussed and developed, to be used for the future. Pamphlets containing calls to the people from leaders such as Hồ Chí Minh also usually finish with a set of slogans which sum up the ideas in the publication. Slogans were studied carefully, as a change in slogan could herald a new direction in the official line from the Việt Minh leadership. I have collected some slogans from various documents and posters and they are listed, in date order, in Appendix V.

Slogans are commonly used by governments, religious institutions, political parties and commercial enterprises to sum up often quite complex ideas and choices that are available to the listeners or readers – slogans such as “It’s Time” (Australia, in 1972), or “Give me Liberty or Give me Death” (Tom Paine, American Revolution) captured the imagination of the listeners. In a society which is largely illiterate, they become an even more important way to promulgate a message. Well used, they can encapsulate a way of thinking, an ideology or a new direction to be taken. They can be easily memorised and good ones can be chanted and promote a sense of solidarity among the chanting group. The Việt Minh booklet Mười văn đề kháng chiến gives advice to the cadres about how they should use 14 slogans, which are listed in the front of the booklet:

d) You should write the 14 national slogans and stick them up in schools, in village meeting halls, outside markets, and those places where there are many people, for all the people to see. Once a week, or 10 days, you should meet with the people, salute the flag, and announce a summary of the news of the Resistance. Then all of the people call out those 14 slogans.19

Over time, slogans can become more formulaic and they gradually lose their impact.

Slogans can be used to chart the course of a movement, and slight changes in wording can signal subtle changes in the Party line. The very earliest ones in my collection speak of general aspirations, such things as:

Đánh đuổi Nhật - Phá!  
Déch lấp tự đồ!

Expel the French and Japs!  
Independence, freedom!

Later, the theme turns to a celebration of the newly won independence, with slogans such as:

Dân tộc trên hết. Tố quốc trên hết!  
Nation above all. Fatherland above all!

which was promulgated in 1945. The start of the Resistance Against the French in late 1946 produced a real flurry of slogans with themes such as:

Kháng chiến nhất định thắng lợi!  
Mỗi làng là một pháo dãi!  
Mỗi phố là một mặt trận!  
Mỗi viên đạn một quân thù!  
Toàn dân đoàn kết kháng chiến lâu dài!  
The resistance will certainly win!  
Every village a fortress!  
Every street is a front!  
Every bullet for an enemy!  
All of the people unite for a long resistance!

1948 began to see a return to the themes of the campaign against illiteracy, hunger and, of course, the thi dua campaign, which is discussed in the next section:

Không một người dân mù chữ!  
Tăng gia sản xuất để đủ ăn, đủ mặc, đủ vũ khí đánh giặc!  
Thi dua để đủ ăn, đủ mặc!  
Not one illiterate person!  
Increase production, so there is sufficient food, clothing, sufficient weapons to strike the aggressor!  
Emulate in order to have sufficient food, clothing!

Throughout, the most important themes are the need for unity of all the people, and a love of the country – Đại đoàn kết (“Great unity”) as the poster in Illustration 4–1 proclaims. The Mười văn đề kháng chiến booklet tells us, under the heading Unity is Victory:

There is a proverb that says: “a harmonious couple can even scoop the eastern ocean dry” meaning that with unanimity any work, no matter how large, or how difficult, can even be finished.

References to the French are rare, and a 1946 slogan makes a clear distinction between the French people and the colonists:

Liên hiệp dân Pháp, đánh thực dân Pháp!  
Ally with the French people, fight the colonists!

The following chapters are given over largely to an investigation of the pictorial and poetic material in the propaganda, but slogans do arise again in further discussion.

References:

20 This was a favoured slogan of Hồ Chí Minh.  
21 Mười văn đề kháng chiến 1948, page 33.
4.2 The *Thi Dua* Campaign

In mid-1948, the *thi dua* campaign was launched, and from then on, *thi dua* appears as a constant theme in the propaganda. The Vietnamese word *thi dua* is, in some ways, problematic for speakers of English. Most dictionaries translate the word to mean “emulation”, which has the concept behind it of studying and copying role models, somewhat in the tradition of some of the Chinese posters – see for example, those related to the “Study Lei Feng’s Example” series. But this by no means tells us how the concept is received by Vietnamese native speakers. Indeed, during field-work in 2002–2003 and again in 2003–2004, the “emulation” translation was universally disputed by my bilingual colleagues who had Vietnamese as their mother–tongue.

Vietnamese language dictionaries typically define the word in this way:


**cooperatively compete** v. Together with each other, to carry out, to the limit of our ability and power, a productive task, with the aim of pushing each other along to achieve the best results in a battle, production, a project, study. *Cooperatively compete with other units. The competitive production movement. Soldiers competing.*

The (anonymous) translators for the 1973 collection of Hồ Chí Minh’s writing from the Foreign Languages Publishing House in Hanoi have used “patriotic emulation” as a translation for *thi dua.*

Possibly, the concept is best described for English speakers through an example from one of the posters shown in Illustration 4–3 on page 65.

The text reads:

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22 The *thi dua* campaign was launched in an appeal from Hồ Chí Minh on 11 June 1948. See Hồ Chí Minh June 1948a, page 84 and Hồ Chí Minh June 1948b, page 161.
23 See, for example, the Vietnamese English dictionary compiled by Đặng Chân Liệu et al 2001, page 693, where *thi dua* is translated as “emulate (in work...)” – a verb. The dictionary compiled by Bùi Phùng 2000, page 1869, defines *thi dua* as “competition, emulation”, with verbs “compete, emulate” as other translations.
24 See Landsberger 2001, page 11 for an example of Lei Feng and “Developing the spirit for bitter struggle”.
27 Number DSCN08871176 in my catalogue, and 1404/Gy359 in that of the Revolutionary Museum.
Illustration 4–3. Thi dua in the Schoolroom.

- Trong hai tháng tôi sẽ làm xong hết bàn ghế nhà trường, anh có giám28 thi với tôi sẽ xây xong nhà trường cùng trong thời hạn đó không?
- Thi, số gì mà cha thì!...

- In two months I will have finished all the tables and chairs for the school, I challenge you to compete with me. Could you also construct them to the same schedule?
- You’re on!...

From this example, it is obvious that “emulation”, in the English-language sense, is not the only meaning. That is, there is not necessarily one person who is superior, in some sense, and whose achievements should be copied or emulated by the one with lesser skill or experience (although this is undoubtedly part of the meaning). Rather, there are two equals, involved in a friendly competition, and using their rivalry to get a particular job done to a high level of satisfaction. Translating thi dua as something like “co-operative competition” or “friendly rivalry” also preserves the feeling of competition which is present in the Vietnamese word. The word thi by itself means “to vie (with each other), to compete” and can also be used to mean “examination”.29

28 The word in the poster is giám, but the more usual spelling is đảm. In the northern parts of Vietnam, both would have the same sound.

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The concept of *thi dua* occupies a large place in the educational and propaganda work of the Resistance, and the references to it occur in much of the propaganda and educational material from the time of its introduction in 1948. The concept is still used in present-day Vietnam and schools, for example, still display the slogan:

*Thi Dua Dạy Tốt - Học Tốt*  
Emulate: teach well - study well

### 4.3 Newspapers for the Ordinary People

An argument can be made that the most influential newspaper, at least in the areas of Vietnam controlled by the Việt Minh during the 1945–1954 period, was *Việt Nam Đọc Láp*, even though it ceased publication in November 1945. According to the historian Prof. Văn Tảo (now retired), Hồ Chí Minh used this publication as a teaching example for journalists and a model of how to write for people in all classes.

The undated review of Việt Minh activity entitled *Experiences of the Việt Minh in Northern Vietnam*, mentioned in Chapter 1 Section 1.3, discusses five important types of propaganda materials used in northern Vietnam – the newspaper *Việt Nam Đọc Láp*, books, songs, exhibitions and the Red Wind propaganda team. The review was written for internal Việt Minh use, and covers the early part of the 1940s, much of it being concerned with the newspaper, which it said: "taught us a great lesson, that is, written material for the masses must suit their level, must be universal, easily understood, concise".

Hồ Chí Minh and his colleagues returned to Vietnam from China in February 1941 and set up their headquarters in a cave at Pác Bọ in Cao Bằng province. Duiker describes how Hồ then set about writing *Việt Nam Đọc Láp*, although there must have been some time for preparation and experiment, since the first issue (numbered 101) was dated 1 August 1941. The newspaper was produced by very simple methods, using carbon paper, a flat rock, and possibly paper made on the spot. The master copy was hand-written, at least up to the issue numbered 209 of 20 March 1945, and printed by a lithographic process using stones. Lemon juice was needed during printing, to

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30 Personal observation at Lê Quy Đôn high school in Hanoi, January 2003.
31 Dr Nguyễn Trọng Hậu of the Museum of the Revolution thinks that it is only by a “deep textual analysis of *Việt Nam Đọc Láp*” that we can understand the influence of Hồ Chí Minh and the Việt Minh on the ordinary people – personal interview 30 August 2002.
32 Personal interview, 7 September 2002.
34 My translation – see Appendix IV.
wash the ink of the previous print run from the smooth rock that was used in the lithographic process, and issue numbered 199 of 15 December 1944 makes an appeal for everyone to donate lemons to the newspaper in the words Chanh! Chanh! Chanh! Nhà báo cần chanh ("Lemons! Lemons! Lemons! The publisher needs lemons.").

The quality of the lemons did not need to be high.

The first 30 issues (numbered 101 to 129, there being two issues both numbered 118) were distributed only in Cao Bằng province, the next 57 issues (numbered 130 to 186) were distributed in Bắc Kạn province as well, issues numbered 187 to 235 were the organ of the Việt Minh for three provinces – Cao Bằng, Bắc Kạn and Lang Sơn. Hồ Chí Minh wrote the newspaper from August 1941 to August 1942, when he returned to China. After that, production was taken over by Phạm Văn Đồng until April 1945. It is claimed that for the first year, 300 copies of each issue were produced, but the Party publication Experience of the Việt Minh in Northern Vietnam claims 100 to 600 copies of each. The readership was much higher than these figures indicate, since the paper was distributed by propaganda cadres (cán bộ) who encouraged the contents to be read aloud for listening groups. Issue number 115, from 10 January 1942, asks for help for the newspaper by increasing the number of people who read it, buy it and give money. It urges people to organise groups to have the paper read aloud and to have its contents explained. Cadres were encouraged to do the same. At a slightly later period, the 1948 booklet Muộn vain để kháng chiến advises cadres:

b) Read newspapers: Each time the people have a newspaper, or afternoon or evening, when your fellow villagers are free, invite them to stop, read the news about the resistance, read the articles about calls to arms, then explain in a clear-cut way for your fellow villagers to hear. You should not just summarily read and not explain. Who can understand then understands, who can not understand then stops. If it is like that, then reading the newspaper is of no use.

37 Shawn McHale suspects that the Việt Minh made their own paper (see McHale 2004, page 130, and note 99 on page 214). This would be feasible, and I have seen the process of making giấy dỗ (paper made from the bark of the dỗ tree) in operation at the Bảo Tàng Dân Tộc Học (Ethnology Museum) in Hanoi. A roller and lithographic stone which are purported to be those used in production of Việt Nam Dộc Lập are on display at the Museum of the Revolution in Hanoi.
38 See Báo Việt Nam Dộc Lập 1941-1945 (Hùng, (ed.) 2000), page 411.
39 See Báo Việt Nam Dộc Lập 1941-1945 (Hùng, (ed.) 2000). Note that similar data on page 5 of this collected edition are incorrect.
41 See Appendix IV.
42 See Báo Việt Nam Dộc Lập 1941-1945 (Hùng, (ed.) 2000), page 54.
43 Muộn vain để kháng chiến 1948, page 29.
The reading was to be active, as a prelude to discussion and debate, and was to engage the villagers with the ideals of the Resistance.

*Việt Nam Độc Lập* came out about 3 times per month. The aim was to produce a copy on the first, the eleventh and the twenty-first of each month, but this was not always realised. At times of interest, copies came out more frequently. For example, the issue numbered 208 appeared on 13 March 1945 after the Japanese coup against the French, and the next issue followed only 7 days later. At the time of the final stages of World War II in Europe in May 1945, the paper appeared every five days.

The paper was not given away free; a subscription for one month (3 issues) cost 1 hào (one tenth of a đồng), or 1.20 đồng for a 1-year subscription. Monetary and other material contributions were solicited and faithfully recorded in each issue. I suspect that the reason the newspaper was not given away free was that, in general, people tend to value more highly those things for which they pay. Not all payment was monetary. In the issue numbered 132 for 21 July 1942, for example, Miss L.A. and Miss T.Y. are thanked for their contribution of three crepe-rubber soles (for shoes), and Mrs Ph. is thanked for a bottle of fish sauce (nuoc mắm). The value for *Việt Nam Độc Lập* lies not only in the items donated, but in the sense of, and feeling for, community engendered by such gifts and acknowledgements. The style of writing in *Việt Nam Độc Lập* is simple, rather like spoken Vietnamese, the readership is addressed as “brothers and sisters” (*anh chị em*), contributions (of money and goods) are acknowledged. There is poetry in almost every issue, and the newspaper takes a gentle view of itself, as this poem from issue number 132 shows. The “machine” had broken:

Máy hỏng, nên chi Báo nhỏ tổ.  
Chưa xong, Báo sẽ rỗng như xưa.  
Nhỏ tổ chi cùng là tổ Báo.  
Anh chị em ta hãy tạm chờ.  

Machine broken, so Paper is a small one.  
Repair finished. Paper will be large as before.  
Big or small it is still a Newspaper.  
Our brothers and sisters must wait a little.

One of the important messages to the people who came under the influence of *Việt Nam Độc Lập* was to keep the existence of the paper and *Việt Minh* organisational details secret. The issue that first proclaimed the publication as “The Organ of the Việt Minh” (issue numbered 187 of 30 January 1944) warned readers to *Bí mật!* (“keep the

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44 See Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập 1941-1945 (Hùng, ed.) 2000, pages 122–123.  
45 See Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập 1941-1945 (Hùng, ed.) 2000, page 123.  
46 My own translation.

Propaganda and the People
secrets”) three times on its masthead and Bì mật is a theme running through many issues that was advocated as being especially necessary in opposing khủng bố, terrorism from the French and Japanese armies. Another regular theme is the history of the Vietnamese people. Issue numbered 154 of 1 March 1943 urged women (sisters – chị em) to remember the Trung sisters (Hai Bà Trưng – Trưng Trắc and Trưng Nhị) and their fight against the Chinese in the year 43CE, while issue numbered 160 of 1 May 1943 urged everyone to remember the fine battle tactics of the hero Prince Trần Hưng Đạo, who defeated invaders from the the Chinese Yuan (Nguyễn in Vietnamese) dynasty on the Bạch Đằng river in Spring of the year 1288.

Almost every issue carried a small column titled Tin Thế Giới (“World News”) of news, mainly on the progress of World War II in Europe. For the largely rural readership, this could have been the only source of such information to keep them in touch with faraway events and analyse the impact that these events would have on the people of Vietnam. For example, issue numbered 207 of 4 March 1945 informed the readership that:

Recently the three leaders of Russia, England and America met in conference in the Crimea in Russia in order to discuss many important matters about the task of fighting the fascists, and preserving world peace. The three countries have decided to create an international assembly, in San Francisco, to preserve world peace, and to invite all peace-loving countries to become members.

and added, hopefully, that “the question of our Vietnam will be considered at the San Francisco assembly”. The following issue was produced soon after, on 13 March 1945, and announced the Japanese coup against the French in the following words:

A Big Change In Indochina
Japanese fascists remove the French

Over the several days 8, 9, 10, 11 March 1945, that is 24 25, 26 27 of the first month of our calendar, a very important change occurred all over Indochina. In many places the Japanese fascist army seized the French

47 See Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập 1941-1945 (Hùng, (ed.) 2000), page 371.
49 Trần Quốc Tuấn was known as “the Hưng Đạo Prince” – see Whitmore 1985, page 1.
50 See Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập 1941-1945 (Hùng, (ed.) 2000), page 234. For the story of Trần Quốc Tuấn alias Hưng Đạo Đại Vương, see Hà Văn Thụ and Trần Hồng Đức 2000, pages 59–63 and 74–77.
51 See Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập 1941-1945 (Hùng, (ed.) 2000), page 444 (my translation). The conference “in the Crimea” is the Yalta conference at the end of World War II in Europe, and the San Francisco meeting referred to is the establishment of the United Nations.
52 That is, the first lunar month.
military and political apparatus and, according to the understanding which our reporter received, the Japanese fascist army holds control over all of Indochina.\(^{53}\)

In the same issue, the position of the Việt Minh towards the former French masters is conciliatory and sympathetic:

Our Attitude Towards the French

In the course of this change, French people will suffer from Japanese terror, especially those French people who intend to resist Japan. With regard to those French who want to oppose the Japanese, and who suffer Japanese terror, we must express friendship, and if they want to join hands with us in fighting the Japanese, then we are pleased to take part. As for individuals, if they request help from us in any matter that we are able, then we should be willing to help.\(^{54}\)

Most of the French people affected were not in the somewhat isolated rural areas of Cao Bằng, Bắc Kạn and Lạng Sơn, where there were French garrisons. The Japanese forces apparently killed possibly more than two hundred French soldiers in the garrison at Lạng Sơn between 9 and 12 March 1945.\(^{55}\)

Most of the world news told by Việt Nam Độc Lập concerns the fighting between Russia and Germany, and it is probable that the writers received most of their information through short-wave radio. Most of the events are described accurately and in a timely way, for example, the Vietnamese readers learned on 15 June 1944 about Allied landings in France and the opening of the “second front” that took place between 6–12 June,\(^{56}\) and on 5 May 1945 they read of the 29 April capitulation of Germany.\(^{57}\) Issue numbered 225 of 10 August 1945\(^ {58}\) is more concerned with the local movement of guerrilla units around Cao Bằng, Bắc Kạn, Thái Nguyên and Ba Đình than with the use of an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, and the Russian declaration of war against Japan on 9 August rates more importance than the use of a bom không lố mới (“new huge bomb”) by the US against Japan.

### 4.4 Summary

The themes of the propaganda are those of nation building, whether it be resisting aggressors who would appropriate the land for their own, building a sense of community, increasing the productive capacity of the land, or building the knowledge

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56 See Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập 1941-1945 (Hưng, ed.) 2000, issue numbered 192, page 392.
and the resilience of the people. Above all, it is the unity of the people, the inclusion of all of the ethnic groups, the unity of the three parts of the country which is important in the propaganda. The pictures and the slogans reinforce this, and help to build the sense of inclusiveness. The little newspaper Việt Nam Độc Lập – Independent Vietnam – simply produced, and distributed by word of mouth in many places, opens up the rest of the world to the people in the north of Vietnam. Like the people in the big cities, the rural folk too have a newspaper. It puts the idea of Việt Nam into perspective for them, gives them a sense of nation, a nation waiting for its time and for its independence and, if they join the Việt Minh, it makes them feel part of a world wide struggle.

Posters and pamphlets form an important part of the propaganda, and they too reinforce the sense of community and unity, they are part of a shared experience, and are aimed to share wider experiences with the people. They are investigated more fully in the following chapters.
Chapter 5
Singing the Resistance

The previous chapter discussed some of the themes that occur in the Việt Minh propaganda. In this chapter some particular characteristics of the propaganda are considered – in particular I am concerned with verse, rhyme and rhythm in this chapter. Following chapters are concerned more with the pictorial characteristics of the propaganda, although that aspect is sometimes of relevance here also.

Looking at the various styles of written propaganda used during the Resistance one is struck by the number of times that some form of verse is used. It occurs in posters and pamphlets and few newspapers do not have a section devoted to verse (often called **vườn thơ** (“garden of poetry”) or something similar). Songs, being inherently rhythmic, use verse naturally, but this Chapter will cover verse which occurs outside the context of songs. Some examples of verse in the propaganda are discussed and the function of versification is considered.

5.1 Vietnamese Verse Forms

A thorough English–language account of Vietnamese verse forms is that of Huỳnh Sanh Thông in his *An Anthology of Vietnamese Verse*. Vietnamese verse forms were derived from Chinese forms by a process of domestication and popularisation. The forms were mellowed and adapted for popular use, and the content too, underwent a change moving from the concerns of a conservative Confucian philosophy to those of the ordinary person. Thông says, of Vietnamese poetry, contrasting with its parent “It lifted all taboos and welcomed any word, however vulgar, that circumstance might justify”.

Several changes took place in the Chinese “regulated poem” (*liŭ–shi̋h*) as it was adapted to Vietnamese preferences and folk–ways. As Vietnamese poets produced their poetry there developed a preference for seven syllables to a line, rather than five and there was a tendency towards an even number of syllables (six or eight) rather than either of these odd–syllable forms. A favoured development, also used in the popular

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1 I am using the word “verse”, because it is a relatively value–free term, compared to some other terms that could be used – such as “poetry” or “doggerel”.
2 See Huỳnh Sanh Thông 1996b, especially pages 7–16.
4 Poems of 5–character lines, and six couplets, were one of the requirements in the Chinese examination system – see Hsü 1970, page 100.
verse known as *ca dao*, is the six–eight (*lục-bát*) form. In this form the first line is of six syllables (a syllable is a Chinese character, or one Vietnamese word) and the second is of eight syllables. Here is an example from *The Tale of Kiều*, a famous epic poem written in the second decade of the 19th Century by Vietnam’s most famous poet Nguyễn Du:

Cúa thien vua cứ cuối xuân, (6 syllables) bồng [sic] hoa rợp đất vể ngân ngân trời. (8 syllables) Gió quang mây tạnh thành-thí, (6 syllables) có người dân-việt lên chơi cửa giã. (8 syllables)

Now spring was ending - flowers cast their shades on earth, the Silver River crossed the sky. No wind, no cloud, a time of leisured ease - a pilgrim came to worship at the shrine.7

The rhyming words (syllables) are underlined. The scheme is that the end of a 6–syllable line rhymes with the sixth syllable of the following 8–syllable line (*xuân* and *ngàn*) and the end of that 8–syllable line introduces a new rhyme, which matches the end of the following 6–syllable line (*trời* and *thôï*), which is then used as the sixth syllable in the next 8–syllable line (*thôï* and *choï*). There are additional rules, for example a rhyme will only usually fall on an “even” tone – *không dâu* (flat tone) or *dâu huyén* (falling tone).8

### 5.2 Examples From the Propaganda Collection

Of the posters that I have collected thirteen of the sets (27%) have text in the six–eight format. Some of the sets comprise a number (up to 18 in some cases) of individual posters and, when we consider these individual works, 31 of a total of 100 (31%) have text in the six–eight format. The posters were not consciously selected on this basis9 so I think we can conclude that somewhere near 30% of the Việt Minh posters from my sources used text in the six–eight verse format.

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6 These are lines 2061–2064 in the translation by Huỳnh Sanh Thống, with my annotations and underlining. See Nguyễn Du 1983, page 106.


9 I am quite aware that the attractiveness of the posters may well have influenced my selection of both posters to be photographed (I could not photograph all – see Chapter 1 for some comments on this point), and posters to be presented here, but I tried not to be so affected.

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Propaganda and the People
Illustration 5–1. Calling Them Home.

The poster shown in Illustration 5–110 is one of those collected from the Museum of the Revolution and has text in this poetic form – it is thought to date from 1947. The text that accompanies the girl (when rewritten in six–eight format) is:

Hỏi ai yêu nước thương nội trở về tổ quốc giết loại thực dân

Oh, those who love their country and their race return to the fatherland and kill the colonial creatures

The word loại rhymes with nội (race). The word loại is normally used as a classifier (often used in the same way as the articles “a” and “the” in English) but is usually reserved for animal life. Hence I have not translated literally – which would be “kill the colonials” – but introduced the word “creatures” to try to preserve the feeling given by the word loại. The word itself has probably been introduced into the text to give something of a negative feeling about the colonials and also to form a rhyme with nội. It may also be used in this way to suggest an international struggle against all colonialists everywhere as the word is also used (most often in a biological context) in the phrase loại người – “humankind”. The word is applied only to the colonists, with the implication that it the colonists who are to be killed, not the French people in general.

Vivian Lowe has also analysed this particular poster11 as part of her study of images of women in the period 1965–1975 and believes that it is “probably aimed at recruiting combatants from the French colonial troops to the People’s [Vietnamese] Army”.12 I think that the appeal may also be to Vietnamese who served in other French colonies, although there is no evidence to suggest how the poster was used, and if there was ever any chance it appeared anywhere other than Vietnam. Although this Chapter is

10 Number DSCN0910/181 in my catalogue, and 1324/Gy337 in that of the Museum of the Revolution.
primarily concerned with analysis of the text of the propaganda material it is worth recording Lowe’s comments on her analysis of the visual impact of this poster. She points out, rightly, that the image has different impacts depending upon the particular viewer. “To female viewers, this image suggested ... responsibility ... to persuade their men to give up false loyalties, ...” and “The woman symbolises the fidelity and loyalty of a virtuous wife, ...” 13 For men, “The woman on the rampart marked what was worth desiring and fighting for: the country/family, a concept of nation that was close to the Vietnamese equation of the land with their ancestors”.14

Illustration 5–2. Numbers 2 and 5 from a set of 5.

Lowe continues on to discuss the concepts of nationhood and class – the woman representing both the new nation and the peasant class her clothing being that of a farm worker and not the traditional áo dài typically used to portray Vietnamese women. It will be shown in the following chapters that analyse the visual material, that very few posters of this period produced by the Việt Minh use this device. I think that this is because the producers of the Việt Minh propaganda are much more concerned with building and portraying community (or, as Neil Jamieson puts it, *communitas*15). This point is discussed further in the following chapters.

14 Lowe 1996, page 42.
There are other examples of the use of poetic forms from the posters. The two pictures shown in Illustration 5–2\textsuperscript{16} are from a set of five black-and-white prints done on very thin paper and now in a poor state of repair. There is no date given on the pictures themselves but the Museum of the Revolution has them catalogued as 1948. The text reads:

2. Mưa đi gọi nắng xuân về,
Nắng về cho đa say mê chiến trường,
Có anh du kích địa phương,
Nấp kin bên đường bán tia giấc Tây.

3. Cô nàng quậy giao đồng quê,
Gánh ra tiền tuyển áo chế miếng cuối,
Di đầu với thể Nơng đi,
Có đi giết giấc đời tôi đi cùng.

(The translation is not in a particularly poetic form). The first of these verses quoted (number 2 above) follows the six–eight pattern, with về rhyming with mê, and trưởng setting up a new rhyme for the next pair with phương. But this next rhyme does not occur on the sixth word but on the fourth word (duong). Balaban, in his study of ca dao points out that there are many variations in the basic pattern, particularly in those cases where this form is used in song.\textsuperscript{17} The second verse (number 3) is an example of an exchange between a young man and a young woman, a not uncommon image in the posters.

Another interesting example (Illustration 5–3\textsuperscript{18} on page 77) appears, superficially, to have been done in the Đông Hồ style of woodblock print. However, in the method used in Đông Hồ village in Bắc Ninh province, the colours are impressed by means of woodblocks, one block for each colour, and the woodblock for black dye is the one used last. In this example the black appears to have been put on the paper first, and the colour added by brush or some similar means. Nevertheless the picture style used is similar to that used in the Đông Hồ prints, a style familiar to the viewers, with a more modern idiom and conveying a modern message.

The words here are:

\begin{itemize}
  \item 2. The rain goes, calling back the spring sunshine,
  \item 3. Swaying girl, carrying homeland rice
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{16} Number DSCN0331/2 in my catalogue and the set is numbered 8913/Gy6405 in the catalogue of the Museum of the Revolution.
\textsuperscript{17} See Balaban 1980, page 19.
\textsuperscript{18} Number DSCN0346/12 in my catalogue and 935/Gy139 in that of the Museum of the Revolution.
Anh đi vận tài bình lương
Em về tiếp tế dân đường quân ta
I go to transport soldier's goods
You return to supply and guide our army
again, a verse in the familiar and popular six–eight form, as both the young man (Anh)
and the young woman (Em) work in their own way to support the army.

The six–eight form of verse also occurs in pamphlets, leaflets and tracts, perhaps the
most famous being in Lịch sử nước ta (History of Our Country) written by Hồ Chí Minh
in 1941. This particular publication was first duplicated from hand–written stencils and

Illustration 5–4. Pages 6 and 7 of Hồ Chí Minh’s History of Our Country.

Propaganda and the People
was sold for 1 hào (one hào is one tenth of a piastre, or one tenth of a Đồng). The original contains pictures and, in an almost academic style, footnotes. Illustration 5–4 on page 77 shows the first page of text in the original version of this little pamphlet together with a drawing of Bà Bụi Thị Xuân, a female general of the Tây Sơn dynasty. The six-eight format is used here because it facilitates both memory and recitation.

The first lines read:

Dân ta phải biết sự ta,
Cho tương góc tích nước nhà Việt Nam.
Kể năm hơn bốn ngàn năm,
Tô tiến육 rõ, anh em thuận hòa.

Our people must know our history
To know the origins of the land of Vietnam
Recounted annually over four thousand years,
Brilliant ancestors, brothers and sisters as one.


19 Hồ’s poem is still on sale in Vietnam and, at least until a few years ago, was used in schools (the current price is VND2000 – about $0.20 AUD at the end of 2002).
22 Some people, not long out of school, are still able to recite parts of the text – one of my informants remembered having to learn sections at school, and was able to recite some of what she remembered. This informant was 22 years old when I interviewed her in December 2002.

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The second page (see Illustration 5–23), shows one of Hô Chí Minh’s explanations in a footnote in order to explain his adaptation of language to fit the verse form that he has chosen. The text at the bottom of page two reads:

Kể gần sáu trăm năm giới,
Ta không đoàn kết bị người tinh thốn (footnote 1),
Anh hùng thay ông Lý Bôn,
Tài kiếm văn võ, sức hồn muốn người, (footnote 1)Tinh thốn là nuốt sống.

Tell how almost six hundred years,
Disunited, our people were engulfed (footnote 1),
Our hero was Lý Bôn,24
Skilled with pen and sword, a man unmatched, (footnote 1) Tinh thốn is “swallowed alive”

The reason for the footnote appears to be that the word for “engulfed” is usually thốn tinh but Hô Chí Minh has reversed the word order so as to find a rhyme with Lý Bôn.

5.3 Other Verse Forms

In the pamphlets that I have collected nearly half (48%) of the pages contain some form of verse. This figure overstates the frequency of occurrence a little, since two of the longer publications are entirely in verse, and hence skew the results. In contrast to the use of verse in posters the occurrence of verse in the leaflets and pamphlets is quite low, only about 11% of the publications using verse. The verse is either in the six–eight format discussed above or in a 5–syllable line format (pentameter) which, according to Thong, is more like the classical Chinese lü–shih form25 (but, I have not analysed the rhyming pattern to verify this, nor checked for defects, such as the “wasp’s waist” or the “crane’s knee”).26 An example of a pamphlet in the six–eight form is the Lịch sử nước ta of Hô Chí Minh described above.

An interesting example of the pentameter form is the small booklet titled Viêt Minh Ngữ tự kinh27 – the Vietminh Book of Pentameters (see Appendix I for the complete text and translation). The title is an adaptation from Tam Tự Kinh, a book which originated from the Song (Tống in Vietnamese) Dynasty in China and was used as a primer to teach Chinese characters.28 The Tam Tự Kinh is in 3–character lines (tam is sino–Vietnamese for 3) and is made up of 380 of these – a total of 1140 Chinese

23 Number DSCN0421/28 in my catalogue.
24 Also known as Lý Bi, or Lý Nam Đế, he was born in 503. He ousted the Chinese–imposed governor in 544, and proclaimed himself King, and founder of the first Lý dynasty. See Thu and Đúc, page 20.
27 (DSCN0410–DSCN0416)/27 in my catalogue, and 17489/Gy14510 in that of the Bảo Tàng Cách Mạng in Hanoi.
characters. Versions published in contemporary Vietnam also have three languages – Hán (Chinese), Nôm (old Vietnamese demotic characters, similar to Chinese) and modern quốc ngữ Vietnamese script. French versions of the Tam Tụ Kinh were also published, at least in 1882 and in 1910. The Việt Minh Ngữ Tụ Kinh, on the other hand, is made up of 5-syllable lines (ngữ is sino–Vietnamese for 5) and consists of 10 stanzas, each one of 12 lines – 600 syllables in all. The author’s choice of the word Kinh in the title is deliberate as it is the word often used for religious works or for translations of Chinese classics and hence the work’s title makes a direct reference to religious and other beliefs and philosophies. This particular work has as its subject matter the organisation of the Việt Minh and it covers such matters as the aims of the organisation, the collection of dues, meeting frequency, recruitment of new members, the need for secrecy, and so forth. The opening lines tell the reader that the book must be learned by heart and that we should explain it to the reader’s friends who want to know and understand about the Việt Minh and what they stand for. The final page gives a useful summary of the whole work (my own translation):

-10-

Ta phải theo mệnh lệnh
Của thương cấp Việt Minh
Phải ra sức đấu tranh
Lấy nước nhà ta lại
Tây Nhật quyết东方财富
Ta quyết thắng hoàn toàn
Hồ: Toàn quốc kết đoàn
Hồ: Đánh Tây đánh Nhật
Hồ: Việt Nam độc lập
Cờ hồng phát diệt bay
Trên nước Việt Nam này
Sáng ngôi sao năm canh

-10-

We must follow the commands
Of the top echelon of the Vietminh
We must exert ourselves in struggle
To regain our home and land
French and Japs decidedly beaten
We, determined to gain complete victory
Cry out: The whole nation united!
Cry out: Fight the French, fight the Japs!
Cry out: Independent Vietnam!
The red flag flies
Over this land of Vietnam
The five-pointed star brightly shining.

The reference to both Japanese and French armies dates this publication from some time between the formation of the Việt Minh (at the Eighth Plenum of the Indochinese Communist Party at Pác Bó on 10 May 1941) and the Japanese coup of 9 March 1945. The Vietnamese Museum of the Revolution has 8 April 1944 as the date of

30 Several free books currently available from Buddhist temples and the like, inside and outside Vietnam, are self-described as Kinh.
publication in its catalogue however publication of this booklet, or something very similar, was announced to the people of Cao Bằng in Việt Nam Độc Lập newspaper, issue number 124 of 1 May 1942. It is possible that several versions were issued.

The choice of a 5–line verse here provides a link with the traditions of the reader, a link with the 3–line verse, reinforced by the similarity in the titles. Yet it is new, as are the ideas being presented. The writer is bringing the readers into a new world offering new ideas, yet linking still with the well–known, the familiar. The rhyming scheme is such that the first line of a stanza rhymes with the last line of the previous stanza (although it seems that this rule can be “bent” somewhat) and the lines rhyme in pairs thereafter. An example is shown in Illustration 5–6, which is a copy of pages 8 and 9 of the booklet.

Illustration 5–6. Pages 8 and 9 of the Vietminh Book of Pentameters.

The text here is (again, with my translation):

33 See Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập 1941-1945 (Hùng, (ed.) 2000), page 93.
34 Number DSCN0415/27 in my catalogue. The booklet is catalogued as number 17489/Gy14510 at eh Museum of the Revolution.

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In these stanzas, the rules of the association (the Việt Minh) and its structure are set out. It is to have a cellular structure (a common and logical choice for a clandestine organisation), monthly dues are to be paid, meetings are to be held fortnightly, there are minimum and maximum cell sizes and there is a requirement for an executive committee where there are two or three cells together. The "vision statement" is that "we must help and love our brother and sister comrades" and welcome more people into the national salvation organisations. The need for love and respect occurs in other stanzas too but hatred for the French people per se does not. Instead, stanza five urges attacks on both the French and Japanese armies.

The first two stanzas outline a brief history of colonisation and list some of the evils attendant upon colonisation, significantly accusing the colonisers of "making of us fools", and allowing opium and strong spirits (the French colonial Government extracted a good proportion of its income from its monopolies on alcohol, opium and
Stanza three urges the people to follow the nation’s heroes and to fight, putting forward the slogan which was to become the key to the successful resistance “The People Together United” (Toàn dân cùng đoàn kết), while the following stanza urges the use of guerilla tactics. Stanzas five and six describe the new life after the colonisers have been defeated, a life where the people elect the Government, where workers have an eight-hour day, farmers own their own land and cattle, intellectuals wake up, and everyone has full rights. Stanza seven discusses the work of the Việt Minh in the daily lives of the people it is trying to influence and the following stanzas, as shown above, discuss the organisation, structure and ideals of the Việt Minh. What is significant here is the way in which the viewpoint of the ordinary farmer and worker is constantly taken throughout the booklet. It is the conscription of workers, the taxation, the theft of land and the forced Government monopoly on common village products which are the legacy of colonialism. The guerilla activity which can defeat them is the disruption of the communications lines – the telegraph and roads – which must perforce pass through the rural areas and yet not serve them. After independence has been achieved trade will be free, the various ethnic groups that comprise Vietnam will work together in harmony, taxes will be abolished and women will have equal rights to men. There is no political theory about Marxist–Leninism, nor discussion of economic theory, just an appeal to ordinary people in terms which are readily understood by them.

5.4 Army Songs

Apart from the posters and pamphlets used for propaganda purposes discussed in this Chapter there was a wealth of poems and songs circulating during the time of the Resistance Against the French and before – for example, in issue number 135 of 21 August 1942 of the newspaper Việt Nam Độc Lập the publication of a booklet of 30 songs was announced.36 Most of these songs are lost or not yet available for study, but efforts are currently being made in Vietnam to collect and publish some of them and collections of songs are appearing with titles such as 100 Ca khúc Tiến Chiến (100 Pre-war Songs)37 and 100 Ca khúc Chào thế kỷ (100 Songs to welcome the Century),38 both of which contain songs from the period. The Museum of the Revolution also has a few song-books from the Army which have not yet been reprinted. There are also

36 See Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập 1941-1945 (Hùng, (ed.) 2000), page 132.
37 See Định Đức Lập, Dương Quốc Hung and Đoàn Minh Tuấn (eds.). 2002.
38 See Lê Quốc Thắng and Yến Thảo (eds.) 2001.
collections of poetry with titles such as _Thơ Cách Mạng Việt Nam_ (Poems of the Vietnamese Revolution)\(^{39}\) and _Vẻ يعد nước chống đế quốc Pháp xâm lược_ (Patriotic Verse Opposing the Invasion of the French Imperialists).\(^{40}\) There are, of course, many uncollected verses in the popular _ca dao_ form which may never be reproduced in print once those who hold them in memory pass on. Most of this material is in the form of verse only but some of the items have been published complete with music so that they can be sung and a few of these songs are discussed here.

The music of some of the songs from the collection of the Museum of the Revolution is shown in Appendix III, and some of the melodies show characteristics which are of particular interest. Consider, for example, the song _Hờ kéo pháo_ ("Haul the Cannons"), words and music by Tù Phác and shown in Appendix III, section III.4.\(^{41}\) The rhythm of this piece, and the words, show it to be very much a "yo–ho heave–ho" piece similar to a sea–shanty or work song in English–language terms. The lyrics are also shown in Appendix III, and indicate that the composer originated from the central region of Vietnam.\(^{42}\) The harmony within the melody is of interest since it does not appear to be of a form commonly used in the western harmonic tradition. The key signature is F, which means that it could be in the key of F major or D minor – with D minor being the main contender since the piece terminates on a D. However, if this was the case we would expect to see either or both of B–natural and C–sharp occurring in the course of the melody but these notes, and their associated harmonic progressions, do not occur in this piece. There are other parts which appear strange to the ear accustomed to Western music, for example, the persistent use of the fourth interval, from D to G, as between bars 1 and 2, 2 and 3, and 3 and 4, and so on – these intervals are not at all unknown in Western music but they are less common in that context.

Some clues to the melodic pattern can be found in consideration of Vietnamese military music, and particularly the scales employed by the woodwind instruments (_kênh mộc_) as these use a scale pattern similar to that shown in our example.\(^{43}\) Nguyễn Thuyết Phong discusses the woodwind scale in a 1986 article in _Vietnam Forum_, and the scale

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40 See Vườ Ngọc Khánh and Hồ Như Sơn (eds.) 1970.
41 The song shown in Appendix III was transcribed from the Revolutionary Museum’s 1950 copy, however, this particular song is very well known in Vietnam today (one of my informants, a 31-year old woman, remembers learning it from her father when she was a child).
42 Consider the phrase _Đở ta Đở ta là đờ ta..._, which only makes some sort of sense if the “đ” character carries a similar sound to the English–language “y”, as in the southern and central Vietnamese practice, and not an English–language “z” sound, as is the practice in northern Vietnam.
43 See Nguyễn Thuyết Phong 1986, pages 75–76 for a discussion.
given there appears to be the one used in Hồ kéo phào. It is also identical to one of the scales used in the music of the Javanese gamalan system, that is, the older slendro scale (the pelog system is thought to be newer) and is shown in Illustration 5–7\(^44\) on page 85. Many of the scales used by ethnic minority groups in Vietnam are also quite similar to this one, showing larger intervals than are commonly used in Western music. In the Vietnamese case the placing of the larger interval(s) differs from ethnic group to ethnic group.\(^45\)

The significance of this is that this type of scale is more commonly found across Southeast Asia, particularly in folk melodies, than in other parts of the world. Helen Myers, in *The New Oxford Companion to Music*, writes that:

> Nevertheless, South-East Asian peoples are surprisingly unified by their musical preferences: first, for gapped scales (with intervals greater than a whole tone); ... ; thirdly, for melodic (rather than harmonic) organization of musical forms.\(^46\)

The scale shown in Illustration 5–7 shows gaps of 1½ tones\(^47\) between notes E and G, and again between B and D – this appears to be one of the characteristics of this scale and of the melody used in Hồ kéo phào which makes them both sound “non-western”. It appears likely that the melody used in Hồ kéo phào is based on a folk melody.

Not all of the musical examples are like this, and Hương Theo Hồng Quân Liên Xô (“Follow the Direction of the Soviet Red Army” – see Appendix III, section III.1) has harmonic forms which are more in the style of western music, with fewer specifically Southeast Asian characteristics.

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\(^{44}\) Lindsay 1992, pages 38–39, and Nguyễn Thuyết Phong 1986, page 76. I have transposed one tone up from the slendro scale shown by Lindsay.

\(^{45}\) For a full discussion of the scales for the different ethnic groups, and the musical instruments which are used, see Tô Ngọc Tanh’s 1997 book, *Musical Instruments of Vietnam’s Ethnic Minorities (A partial introduction)*, published by Nxb Thế Giới in Hanoi.

\(^{46}\) Myers 1983, page 1723.

\(^{47}\) In fact, gamelan (and other) tuning systems are much more complicated than this brief account allows and the “gaps” in the scales are not exact multiples of semitones as implied in the example shown in Illustration 5–7. In gamelan orchestras in particular microtones are employed for a number of instruments, but particularly in the brass gongs, where they give an enhanced tintinnabulation effect.
5.5 The Function of Versification in the Revolutionary Context

Verse has been used at many times of turmoil in Vietnam. Thong explains that: “Almost every village [in Vietnam] was likely to harbour some scholar able at least to drill the rudiments of Chinese into the sons of farmers ambitious to see them pass the civil service examinations and enter officialdom”48 – the civil service examinations requiring some ability to write poetically.49 Some form of poesy has been widespread in Vietnam from long before the French entered Vietnam and people had “taken for granted the central role in the world of poetry as a didactic instrument”50. George Dutton has been studying poetry as a means of looking at the history of the Tây Sơn movement at the end of the 18th Century, and he comments about the function of poetry in traditional Vietnam:

Poetry has long been a central element of the Vietnamese cultural landscape, a fundamentally important means of expressing and transmitting cultural ideas. In particular, poetry was a way for the literate elite to communicate with one another in a respected medium. More generally, poetry in Việt Nam has served both as a means of private, personal expression and as a public literary device.51

Poetry is also important during the time a community that is primarily oral and illiterate goes through the transition to literacy. I have shown elsewhere that the Malayan novels of Shahnon Ahmad show poetic forms reflecting the earlier oral culture in rural Malaya and it should not be surprising to find the same tendency in Vietnam.52 David Marr, in his Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920–1945, describes some other examples of verse quoted to him from the 1940s period and comments that it was necessary for the Việt Minh to “understand and appreciate popular oral traditions”53 so as to be able to mobilise the regional masses. He further comments that “Vietnamese culture was rich in musical forms to link with poetry meters and thus further improve the chances of popular transmission”.54 Poetic forms, with their rhyme and rhythm, are

49 See Hsü 1970, page 99 for a description of the requirements for the Chinese civil service examination. The Vietnamese examinations system was based on that of China.
54 Marr 1981, page 188.
one of the important devices that can be used to make the words memorable\textsuperscript{55} and the authors of the material studied here have used these techniques effectively in a society working to achieve a higher level of literacy among its members.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{55} See Lord, 1960, Chapter 3 for a full discussion of formulas and patterns that are used by “singers of songs”.

\textsuperscript{56} Literacy rates in Vietnam are hard to estimate accurately, but Marr quotes a literacy rate of “no more than five percent” in the mid 1920s, and quotes a claim by Vu Huy Phuc of 93.4 percent by 1958 – Marr’s opinion is that this estimate has been inflated (personal communication, October 2004). See Marr 1981, pages 258–260 for the 1920s estimate, and page 187 for the 1958 estimate.
Chapter 6
Picturing the Resistance – The People

Pictorial material is very important in the propaganda of the Resistance against the French. This Chapter begins a discussion of the way in which the pictorial information connects with, and portrays people. Most of the people whose images are shown are engaged in ordinary day-to-day activities, but many of the pictures are obviously done by the artists discussed in previous chapters. Leaders, and other heroic references are rare and the involvement with the “ordinary people” is emphasised which is, in my view, the particular strength and characteristic of the Việt Minh propaganda.

6.1 Use of Pictures in the Propaganda

Drawings are used in much of the propaganda, particularly in the posters. They are used occasionally in newspapers, particularly in the earlier editions of Bão Việt Nam Doctrine, and there is also very spare use of drawings in the pamphlets. Among the pamphlets, apart from Hồ Chí Minh’s Lịch Sử Nước Ta (History of Our Country) discussed in Chapter 5, the only pictures which do appear are pictures of the new red flag, with its 5-pointed yellow star. A typical example of an illustrated pamphlet is shown in Illustration 6–1. The Museum has no date on this item, but the text implies that it was produced in the summer of 1945, as with similar leaflets introducing the new

Illustration 6–1. Pamphlet from about 1945.

1 Number DSCN0457/50 in my own catalogue, and 17643/Gy14664 in that of the Museum of the Revolution.
The text explains that the Government (either the French Colonial Administration or the "puppet" Government of Trần Trọng Kim) has collapsed and that the flag pictured is the new National flag. It concludes:

越南民主共和国的新国旗。公民们已经准备好了，让它在任何时候飘扬。

Our country-men are prepared, at any opportunity, let it fly.

This is the flag of independence.

This is the flag of liberation.

Illustration 6–2. A Slogan-only Poster.

Pictures occupy a much more important place in the poster series than in the pamphlets or newspapers but five of the 100 posters in my collection do consist entirely of slogans and these are the earliest five in the collection. An example of a slogan-only poster from 1944 is shown in Illustration 6–2. In this example Vietnamese soldiers fighting – sometimes as conscripts – for the French and Japanese invaders are being

2 The French Administration collapsed on 9 March 1945, and the (ineffective) Government of Trần Trọng Kim in August 1945 (see Marr 1995, pages 438–439). The first uprisings of the August Revolution began on 14 August in Quảng Ngãi (see Dinh and Dung 2000, pages 260–262). The first line of the text quoted implies that the uprising had not yet begun at the time this was written, putting it prior to 14 August 1945.

3 This date is from the Museum of the Revolution, but the fact that there is no mention of the French as an enemy indicates that it may have been produced after the Japanese coup against the French on 9 March 1945 (see Marr 1995, pages 13ff.).

4 Number DSCN0455/48 in my catalogue, and 17629/Gy14650 in that of the Museum of the Revolution.
urged to turn their weapons on the real enemy, the Japanese. The target audience are the soldiers known as the *nguy binh*, which can be translated as "soldiers of the puppet government", or even as "quisling troops". The text reads:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vietnamese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hốì Anh Em</td>
<td>Hey brothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bình linh !</td>
<td>Soldiers!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dừng trận lệnh giặc</td>
<td>Don't obey the enemy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bán giết đồng bào</td>
<td>and shoot dead your countrymen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quay Sùng Lai</td>
<td>Turn your guns around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hiệp [hợp] với nhân dân bán</td>
<td>join with the people and shoot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vào đầu giặc Nhật !</td>
<td>into the heads of the Japanese enemy!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Việt - Minh</td>
<td>Vietminh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The poster uses a string of slogans and as discussed in Chapter 4 slogans were an important part of the Viêt Minh propaganda. The range of typefaces used in this particular poster indicates that it is probable that it was produced (clandestinely) in a large publishing house, possibly that of an urban newspaper. There is a relatively sophisticated use of typeface in that the main message, printed in red and in a larger font size, can be read from a distance as a message in its own right: "soldiers – turn your guns around – Viêt Minh". The poster is relatively large, about A4 size, so that it could be read by its intended audience without them having to come uncomfortably close for a careful examination of the message. Posters come in many sizes and detail, depending upon their target audience. Discussed later in this Chapter and the next are posters designed for an audience that is able to spend some time in reading the detailed messages. An example of a small pamphlet designed to be passed surreptitiously from hand to hand in a religious context was shown in Chapter 1.

The pictorial material used in the posters shows quite a wide variety of forms and messages. Most of the printing appears to have been done using fairly simple means – wax–stencil technology, wood–block techniques and some have been hand–drawn using the purple ink that was, and is to this day, used to introduce Vietnamese schoolchildren to the mysteries of writing with a pen. At least one set has been printed by students at the Hanoi School of Art probably covertly using presses from that School.

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5 A selection of slogans used in the Resistance Against the French is shown in Appendix V  
6 It is 29.6x21.8 cm.
6.2 Leaders and Heroes

The leadership of the Việt Minh, particularly that of Hồ Chí Minh, was undoubtedly decisive in the War of Resistance against the French as well as in the later struggle to rid Vietnam of US forces. In his 2003 study of the rhetoric of Hồ Chí Minh, DeCaro sums up many people’s impressions of Hồ:

More than any other cultural force, Ho’s rhetorical discourse brought greater unification to Vietnamese society because, in the struggle against France, this modern revolutionary leader had created a common bond with the peasants which enabled him to wage war successfully.7

This “common bond” is, according to DeCaro, Hồ Chí Minh cultivating himself as a jun zi (sage man) in the Confucian tradition and it was through his actions in this role, as well as through his discourse, that he was able to influence the Vietnamese people so much as to make them change their view of themselves and to motivate them to fight against the French. DeCaro gives this type of discourse the name “reconstitutive rhetoric” – that is, it is “reconstitutive”, because it enables people to see themselves anew, to reconstitute themselves in the person who is making the rhetoric.9 I am not so sure that the jun zi argument is sustainable, since Confucianism has undergone a lot of development and been subject to many influences since the idea of jun zi was enunciated by Confucius (551–479 BCE).10 In any case Vietnam, and particularly the peasantry, has been heavily influenced by many other philosophies, including Buddhism of varying types, and it is not clear that such Confucian concepts would have any more effect on the ordinary people of Vietnam than on those elsewhere. Writing about the development of print culture in the period 1920–1945, Shawn McHale gives a picture of the place of Confucianism in Vietnam at this time:

Confucian texts competed with numerous others, like Buddhist works and practical texts, for the public attention. While Confucianism was the ideological foundation of the Nguyễn dynasty, particularly from the 1820s onward, it did not dominate public life in the nineteenth century as much as has been assumed. ... Confucian learning spread unevenly among the population.11

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7 See DeCaro 2003, page 2. DeCaro is not an historian, but rather a communication specialist. I have little time for some of his generalisations, such as “Ho ... and his rag–tag band of guerrillas” (page 5), nor his comment “It is not my intent to portray Ho Chi Minh as saintly; he was, in fact, just the opposite.” (note 17, page 7), however his observations on rhetoric have some value.

8 DeCaro actually uses a variant of the Wade–Giles Anglicisation of Chinese, chun tzu (it is normally written as chün tzu), rather than the Pinyin form jun zi currently favoured in China. See The Cambridge Encyclopedia of China (Brian Hook and Denis Twitchett, eds.), Appendix C, pages 462–464. The Vietnamese word is quan tì.

9 See DeCaro 2003, pages 95–97.

10 See The Cambridge Encyclopedia of China (Brian Hook and Denis Twitchett, eds.), pages 301–304.

11 See McHale 2004, page 37. Chapter 3 has a well–argued exposition on this same topic, questioning the extent to which Confucianism still penetrated Vietnamese society by the 1940s.
It seems that the Confucian philosophy that is at the heart of DeCaro's argument may not have been so uniformly alive in the audience of Hồ Chí Minh's rhetoric as assumed by DeCaro. The almost ascetic dedication to his purpose, and his country, shown by Hồ Chí Minh is admired by people from a great many other cultures too, that do not necessarily have any Confucian influence. Furthermore the perception that the people had of Nguyễn Ái Quốc (Hồ Chí Minh) changed considerably over time, and it is not really helpful to assume one particular rhetoric that is his alone, and stands for him over his life. Apart from the texts examined by DeCaro, which are all English-language translations, it is possible to study the discourse of the pictures in the material studied here, and to examine the propaganda material for references to leaders and leadership qualities.

Turning to the propaganda materials that are the subject of this study, leaders occur infrequently in the posters, only 10 of the 100 pictures in my collection show leaders in any form. Of these seven are only "generalised" leaders, unnamed and usually involved in decorating a successful citizen or soldier. This situation contrasts with the use of images of Hồ Chí Minh in other media, such as newspapers, where his image appears frequently and, as discussed in Section 6.3.3, on the Việt Minh currency. Three of the leaders shown on my collection of posters are of Hồ Chí Minh, and two of these are cursory caricatures only. The sole example in my poster collection where we could say there is adulation or reverence for Bác Hồ is shown in Illustration 6–3 on page 93.

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12 See DeCaro 2003, note 1 on page 127 and note 65 on page 129. All of DeCaro's material seems to have come from archives in the US, however, he does seem to have made some efforts to ensure authenticity – see his note 1 on page 110.

13 I use this term for Hồ Chí Minh because it is so commonly used in Vietnam today. Another common way people talk about him is to refer to "my President", as if he were still alive (observation while on field-work in Hà Nội, January 2003).

14 Number DSCN0929/186 in my catalogue, and 1646/Gy478 in that of the Museum of the Revolution.
This particular poster was produced in Tuyên Quang town on the occasion of Hồ Chí Minh’s 60th birthday. Tuyên Quang is within about 50 kilometres of Tân Trào, where the Việt Minh set up headquarters in May 1945 and again, from early 1947, the Government of Vietnam was set up there when French forces retook the capital. The main caption in this picture is:

Illustration 6–3. Uncle Hồ’s Birthday.

Citizens of Tuyên Quang actively carry out emulation
Move strongly across to the general counter offensive
So as to wish President Hồ a long life !!!

The two themes in the text, that of thi dua “ emulation” (or co-operative competition”, as I would prefer – see Chapter 4, section 4.2) and of preparation for the general counter offensive (tổng phần công) are recurrent ones in the propaganda materials. The thi dua campaign was announced on 11 June 1948, with a view to fighting the three enemies of famine and poverty, ignorance, and foreign invaders.

15 In Vietnam, the sixtieth birthday is considered special, since the combined 10-year can cycle and the 12-year chỉ cycle return to what they were at the year of birth. Hồ Chí Minh’s birth is celebrated as him having been born on 19th May 1890 (see Duiker 2000, page 17), a Canh Dần (metal + tiger) year, and 1950 was also a Canh Dần year. The information that this poster was a celebration of Bác Hồ’s birthday comes from the Museum of the Revolution.
16 See Duiker 2000, page 298.
In this particular picture, the picture of Hồ Chí Minh is being carried around by two of "his children" and the artist has the other small figures wishing Bắc Hồ a long life, expressing their love for him and promising to engage in co-operative competition to achieve their targets. The figures are engaged in activities that the propaganda has put forward as being desirable priorities – transporting bullets and rice to the front, learning to read and write, harvesting (increasing production), repairing roads and so forth. In this picture Bắc Hồ is shown as a venerated and kindly figure. He wears no symbols of authority, such as badges or military uniform and carries no guns or armaments of any kind. He is, for the artist, an avuncular figure, leading people who are truly "his children". Writing about events of 1958, Duiker writes:

By now, Ho Chi Minh’s role was increasingly limited to that of senior diplomat and foreign policy adviser, as well as to fulfilling his growing image as the spiritual father of all the Vietnamese people and the soul of the Vietnamese revolution Ho played his part as the kindly Uncle Ho to perfection. He continued to shun the more ornate trappings of his presidential role.\(^{18}\)

![Illustration 6-4. The People Cuddling Uncle Hồ’s Picture.](image)

After the victory at Điện Biên Phủ, Hồ Chí Minh began to achieve a higher status, but it was a gradual process. See Illustration 6–4,\(^{19}\) a photograph from the Hồ Chí Minh Museum at Đà Nẵng, in which the western highlanders celebrate by carrying around a photograph of Bắc Hồ (the caption describes the villagers as "cuddling" the photograph of Hồ) in much the same way that the "children" are carrying the picture of Hồ in the poster. The photograph of the celebration was taken some time in 1954 after the victory at Điện Biên Phủ.

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19 Number DSCN33671199 in my catalogue.
A typical example of heroes and leaders is shown in the tale of Tùân and Cô (shown in Illustration 6–5 below) – two (fictional) mechanics who save their truck from attack by a French aeroplane and are rewarded by an anonymous leader for their work. The poster story of Tùân and Cô was published in April 1954, and so is quite late in the story of the Resistance. The story is slight – Tùân is a truck driver transporting rice to the front lines and Cô is his assistant (one meaning of cô has to do with mechanical things, as cô học – “mechanics”). An aeroplane begins to chase the truck (an American-made aeroplane) and Cô climbs out on to the mudguard to “spot” the enemy aircraft so that Tùân can take evasive action – the truck reaching the high speed of 70 kilometres per hour at one point. All goes well until Cô is thrown off on a corner and

Illustration 6–5. The Story of Tùân and Cô.

Tùân is left to dodge the aeroplane by himself. He weaves and fails to take a corner crashing into the side of the road. Tùân goes back to check on Cô, who has a broken leg. Nevertheless Tùân camouflages the truck and does some repairs under fire from the aeroplane, thus saving the truck and its valuable cargo. Once the aeroplanes have gone

20 Number DSCN0927/184 in my catalogue, and 1416/Gy371 in that of the Museum of the Revolution.
(the original 4-engined one having been joined by two other fighters) Túân fetches help from the command post to retrieve Cô and they are both decorated with Fighting Soldier Order, Third Class. It was glorious for the Vietnamese motorised Division!

In this little story, the heroes are shown as ordinary people just doing their job as best they can – this is, of course, commonplace in some cultures but it does contrast with, for example, the Chinese practice of affording something close to adulation for worker heroes. See for example the (undated) poster shown in Illustration 6–6, which is reproduced from Stefan Landsberger’s book on Chinese propaganda posters.21 This poster urges us to “Study Lei Feng’s fine example – Develop the spirit for bitter struggle”. The Lei Feng character is drawn from the life of an actual soldier in the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and his story has been promulgated in pictures and propaganda tales whenever it was felt that the people need to be stirred to some new action or sacrifice:

Illustration 6–6. Lei Feng

Illustration 6–7. The Growth of all things depends on the Sun

In early 1963, Lin Biao intensified the degree of indoctrination in the army by starting a mass campaign within the PLA to emphasize the basic values of service to the party. The center of this campaign was the life of a young PLA soldier named Lei Feng, who had recently given his life for his country. ... His life was presented as honest and sincere, but without great drama except for his own family’s suffering at the hands of Japanese invaders, Guomindang rightists, and rapacious landlords. ... And he died,

selflessly but unheroically, when a truck backed over him as he was trying to help a comrade in trouble.
Jonathan Spence, The Search For Modern China.\textsuperscript{22}

In the Chinese example a life that was “honest and sincere, but without great drama” was transformed by the propagandists into a model for all to copy, and given a new heroic dimension.

In the Việt Minh propaganda, the situation with regard to leaders is similar to that of heroes. The leader shown in the Tùăn and Cơ story (last frame of Illustration 6–5) is but a generic leader – the opportunity is not taken to show Hồ Chí Minh, Võ Nguyên Giáp or any of the other leaders of the time. To illustrate how different a portrayal of a leader can be from the Việt Minh way, we can consider some later Chinese propaganda from the Cultural Revolution (which is outside the period of our study) – see Illustration 6–7 on page 96 also reproduced from Stefan Landsberger’s work.\textsuperscript{23} Here Mao Zedung is shown offering advice to peasants apparently teaching them their basic trade. In posters of this period from China the depiction of leaders had become almost cult–like.

Landsberger comments, on this particular illustration:

\begin{quote}
The more the personality cult around Mao intensified, the more god–like and divorced from the masses he became in the portrayals. This is taken to extreme heights in “The growth of all things depends on the sun” (page 41), in which Mao, surrounded by peasants standing in a cotton field, literally functions as the sun.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

In later Vietnamese propaganda, the image of Hồ Chí Minh was used in a prominent way but never to quite the level of Mao in China. The point here is that the propaganda from the Việt Minh period in the northern areas used less cult–like depiction of either heroes or leaders than is readily apparent in Chinese material.\textsuperscript{25} The people shown in the posters that are the subject of this study are rarely held up as objects of veneration and even the models (model families, model workmen) have an “ordinariness” about them. This concept is explored further below.

\textsuperscript{23} See Landsberger 2001, page 41.
\textsuperscript{24} Landsberger 2001, page 44.
\textsuperscript{25} It is possible that a detailed study of propaganda from other areas of Vietnam would reveal a somewhat different attitude to leaders.
6.3 Who are these people, and what are their circumstances?

6.3.1 The People

The technique of persuasion called “social validation” by Cialdini, and its variant called “constructing the norms” by me, was discussed in some detail in Chapter 2 section 2.2.3. An interesting example of an early application of this particular technique in the Việt Minh propaganda occurs in the poster from Bắc Giang province of a Thị Dua family, shown in Illustration 6–8 below. The title is:

*MỘT GIA ĐỊNH THỊ DƯA ÁI QUỐC* (A Patriotic Emulation Family) and is dated (by the Museum) as 1948. The poster shows the (presumably fictional) family of “Old Ba” (cu Ba) before the Government and President Hồ issued the order to begin the thị dua campaign and the same family after the order was issued.27 The first 8 frames (the frames are numbered from the top left, going down first, then across, so the first 8 frames are those in the two columns on the left) show the family before the order was issued, and the last 12 show the family after the order was issued and Old Ba has formulated a 6–month plan to implement the instructions.

*Illustration 6–8. A thị dua family.*
In both the “before” and “after” series, the family is involved in the four activities that all of their compatriots share:

- kill the French enemy (Giết Pháp);
- kill the enemy of hunger (Giệt Đói);
- kill the enemy of ignorance (illiteracy) (Giệt Đói);
- Bring the new life into practice (Thực hiện đời sống mới).

but the “after” images show an intensification of effort and a greater dedication and focus on the tasks in hand. For example, before the 6–month plan was implemented, Bác Ty (Uncle Snake) and Thằng Xuân (Young Spring) raised 20 ducks and 10 chickens, but after implementing the plan they increased this by 40 birds.

What is required of “putting the new life into practice” is shown in frames numbered 6 and 15 (see Illustration 6–9). The caption for the “before” frame (number 6) is:

6 Thực hiện đời sống mới: gia đình cu Ba chưa thực hiện triệt để đối sống mới, giờ tết vẫn ăn uống linh đình.

and the caption for the “after” frame (number 15) is:

6 Practising the new life: Old Ba’s family are not yet fully practising the new life, still celebrating death anniversaries and festivals sumptuously.

The word for “kill” that is used in all but the first frame is giệt, which appears to be an older form, or possibly a corruption of diệt “to exterminate” (gi and d both have the pronunciation of the English z in the northern part of Vietnam). The more commonly used term in contemporary practice is giet, as used in the first frame.

The Vietnamese names of the people in this household can be literally transcribed this way. “Snake” is probably so called, because he was born in the year of the snake.
Those who have joined in family celebrations, particularly in the northern rural areas of Vietnam, will well recognise the scene in frame numbered 6 – crowds of relatives, sumptuous meals with special dishes, challenges to drink copious quantities of rice–wine and general merriment. This contrasts starkly with the more austere activities, such as lighting of incense and prayer around the family altar (with the wife submissive before the altar) as celebrations under the thi dua new life. The new life as depicted could only take place in a moderately well–off home or in a small temple. The altar is relatively large, carved Chinese texts hang or stand on either side, and people are able to obviously devote their time to this contemplative side of their lives. The challenge for the propagandist here, to show the desirability of this aspect of the new life, is quite large, particularly as the artist has chosen to contrast a scene of such conviviality in frame 6 with the somewhat sombre reflection in frame 15.

Shaun Malarney, in his study of the group of villages called Thìnht Liệt located just south of Hanoi, points out that the Vietnamese Government, after it came to power in 1945, attempted to implement a “new culture”. This attempt was not able to be pursued until after 1954 although, according to Malarney, Hồ Chí Minh laid the groundwork in his 1947 publication “Correcting the Way We Work”. Malarney goes on to point out how:

officials considered pre–revolutionary practices [in funerary rituals, and rituals associated with death anniversaries] to be both ‘wasteful’ (lãng phí) and to provide contexts for ostentatious (khoe danh, phó trưng) display and

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30 There is no word gởi that I can find in any dictionary, and this probably should be gói, which is a celebration for a death anniversary.
31 The specific celebrations referred to in the text appear to be the regular mid–month (that is, middle of the lunar month), and death anniversary celebrations. The sense, though, is of any family celebration.
32 There has been a resurgence in these practices over the past few decades – see the following discussion, and references to Shaun Malarney’s anthropological work in Malarney 2003 and Malarney 2002.
33 In present–day Vietnam, the three villages of Giáp Nghi, Giáp Tư and Giáp Nhật, as well as the fourth village (now represented by a railway station) of Giáp Bát constitute parts of suburban Hanoi.
34 See Malarney’s discussion in Malarney 2002, pages 52–57.
This particular poster can then be seen as an early attempt to persuade the people to change their somewhat profligate habits in ritual celebrations and to engage the people, as a method of persuasion.37

In the matter of defeating the enemy of ignorance frames 13 and 14 in the “after the thi dua campaign” series compare with frame 5 in the “before” series (see Illustration 6–10). The translations here are:

Illustration 6–10. Thi dua family (Detail – Frames 5, 13 and 14)

5 Để giết giặc đòi: cụ Ba chưa biết đánh văn. Bác Tuyết đã biết đọc quốc ngữ, cái Tuyết đã biết đánh văn... 5 So as to kill the ignorance enemy: Old Ba can not yet spell.38 Uncle Snake can read modern characters, Little Snow already knows how to spell...

37 Malarney 2003, pages 229–230 describes the methods used to curtail excesses in death celebration festivals in the late 1950s, and points out (pages 238–242) that in the 1990s there has been a resurgence of more lavish spending on rituals, such as death anniversaries and village rituals.
38 The sense here is probably “to write”.

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13 Để diệt giặc dốt: trong chương trình 6 tháng, cụ Ba biết đọc chữ quốc ngữ, bác Tý biết làm tình dỗ.

14 Tháng Xuân cái Tuyết biết làm tình công, biết địa dư Việt Nam.

The family is shown in these frames, and the honorifics used for the family members tell us something about their position in the family. Cụ Ba (Old Ba) is the oldest member and head of the family – he is the one who makes up the thi dua rules, and oversees the compliance of the other members. Bác Tý (Uncle Snake) is an older and respected male member of the family but is not as old as Cụ Ba. Tháng Xuân (Young Spring – a male) and Cái Tuyết (Little Snow – a female) are the youngest members of the family, are probably not yet married, and will occupy the lowest positions in the family as shown on this poster. The poster takes us into the life and the internal relationships of a typical family in the northern area of Vietnam.

In these images there are several amusing errors which, I suspect, have been deliberately made as jokes, so as to draw the people in, to make them feel part of it. They are there to reinforce the sense of normalcy, to work towards social validation, to promote harmony between the propagandist and the viewer. The jokes are, in Frame 5, Uncle Snake is reading his “ABC” (that is, his “i t” (pronounced “ee ter”)), but it is upside down, as with Old Ba, who does not yet know how to read. Another joke is that Little Snow has learned, after the thi dua campaign, how to add up and is shown doing so in frame 14, but she has made a mistake in her addition. These jokes would only be apparent to readers who had already succeeded in defeating the ignorance enemy but they would reinforce the sense of solidarity, the social validation, for those in the know.

6.3.2 The Military

Another poster in the collection which also deals with “before” and “after” appeared as an insert into the National Defence Army newsletter number 10, issued some time in 1950⁴⁹ and shown here in Illustration 6–11.⁴⁰ This image appears to have been made

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⁴⁹ The actual date is uncertain. The Museum of the Revolution has only the year associated with the poster.

⁴⁰ Number DSCN0933/189 in my catalogue and 1956/Gy646 in that of the Museum of the Revolution.
Illustration 6–11. Reorganisation and Retraining in the Army.

after some general retraining and re-organisation\textsuperscript{41} of the regular Army and the implementation of a new “push forward” and the poster shows the situation both before and after the retraining and reorganisation. The messages of the poster are directed, not at the general community, as was the poster shown in Illustration 6–8 on page 98, but to the soldiers of the army. The images here show several interesting things about attitudes in the army, and attempts to change them.

In Frame 1 of this poster (detail shown in Illustration 6–12 below), the training and reorganisation is shown as attempting to change the soldiers’ view of the masses. The text on the poster is quite unclear in places due both to the original quality of the poster, followed by storage which was sometimes less than satisfactory. However, frame 1 reads:

\begin{tabular}{ll}
Trước rèn chinh & Before the training and reorganisation \\
Từ chỗ khinh thường dân chúng & From where [the troops] are \\
(dặc biệt Lao Hà) & contemptuous of the masses \\
& (especially in Lao Hà)
\end{tabular}

\textsuperscript{41} It is possible that rèn chinh could be translated as “rectification”, or “training and rectification”. See Illustration 6–12 on page 104.
After the first training and reorganisation

Accepting the concept of a peoples’ war

(especially in Lao Hà)

Of course, there is no indication as to whether the training and reorganisation (or rectification), and this poster, were successful in changing soldiers’ attitudes but it does indicate the Army had a problem with the ordinary soldiers’ perceptions and acceptance of the people who were not part of a professional army.

Illustration 6–12. Reorganisation and Retraining (Detail – Frame 1)

Frame 6 seems to indicate that there were problems associated with corruption before the retraining (see detail in Illustration 6–13 on page 105 and the translation of the text). In this particular frame there a few features of visual interest. In the left-hand (“before”) drawing, the *Tòa án binh* (“Military Court”) sign is back-to-front, indicating we are inside the court-room watching proceedings. In the dock are two (maybe three) characters wearing what appear to be French berets, and I take it that these represent artists or writers. In the right-hand (“after”) drawing these two artists walk free, drawing books under their arms, cigarettes in their mouths, while mice and spiders play on the dock. The military court is shown as “LK 10”, which may mean *Liên khu 10* – Interzone (military and administrative district) 10.
The text for the poster reads:

**Trước**
Tòa án binh xử liên tiếp những vụ cán bộ hù hó (đặc biệt khu bò [illegible - possibly và] 115)

**Sau**
Vành mộng ngựa móc mèo mạng nhện chẳng đầy đủ

(The “before” (left-hand side) and “after” (right-hand side) headings only occur in Frame 1, but seem to apply to each frame and so I have included them in the text. Some of the text is illegible). Before the retraining and reorganisation, it appears that there is a lot of corruption occurring – indeed, from the drawings, it appears that even the artists are involved.

The appearance of the people with berets is a further point of interest in this poster and I assume that they signify the artists or writers who worked with the Army. These little figures can give us some idea as to how the artists viewed their life and work in the Army. After the Second National Congress of Culture was held in June 1948 (see Chapter 3, section 3.2) many artists and writers left the cities voluntarily to join the Resistance forces and many were attached to Army units. In Frame 2 of the poster an
artist at work can be seen, drawing up a poster (he seems to be writing about guerilla war) and in Frame 6 the artists that were in the dock under the old system are shown, walking free, after the retraining and reorganisation.

Illustration 6–14. Reorganisation and Retraining (Detail – Frame 5)

Frame 5 of the poster (shown in Illustration 6–14) discusses the artists and writers directly – typewriters are used as symbols for the writers, as are berets for the artists. In the “before” part of the frame the artists and writers are shown working haphazardly, walking around smoking, lounging about (and note a signature device of the artist who drew this series of cartoons, that being the artist or writer with his head held to one side – see frames 5, 7 and 11). In the “after” portion of this frame, the artists and writers are lined up, being drilled by an intellectual “officer” (still wearing his beret) and discipline is tight, just like the regular army. We can only speculate about how artists and writers who were attached to the army would have reacted to this stricter organization but the person making this particular cartoon poster was one of those directly affected by the training and reorganisation. The text is not easy to decipher but it appears to be as follows (“CV” is most likely công văn – official correspondence):

Trước
Kỹ luật lồng léo, làm việc úi sụi rọi rạc.
(Đặc biệt các cơ quan khu, đoàn, đội b[l?]ô)

Sau
Né nếp chính quy, kỹ luật thật quân sự

Before
Slack discipline, work rough, desultry and uncoordinated. (Especially in the army[?] area offices)

After
Regular order and discipline, real army discipline.

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The message is that if the army needs discipline then the intellectuals too must conform. Later frames show the value to the Army that accrues from a general increase in discipline and frame 7 shows how the army was formerly like a sick patient but has been transformed into a productive unit, frame 10 showing how the disciplined army can even fight off the "big-noses" (the French) with primitive weapons.

6.3.3 Legitimation

For a new Government it is important to secure legitimacy in the eyes of the governed. In the case of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (the Việt Minh dominated Government of Hồ Chí Minh), the events of August and September 1945 gained it strong support and legitimacy in the eyes of most Vietnamese. However, signs of legitimacy are also needed, and commonly these would comprise at least a flag, a uniform for servants of the State (in particular, police and army), coins and paper money, and postage stamps. Currency was one of the early symbols of a new state that was urgently needed by the new Vietnamese government.

On 31 January 1946, soon after coming to power, President Hồ Chí Minh proclaimed a decree regarding the issue of Vietnamese currency and on 30 November 1946 the "first Vietnamese notes after nearly one hundred years" appeared. Prior to

Illustration 6–15. One of the first Vietnamese currency notes.

42 The quotation is from Hải and Khoa 1994, page 140, however some "promissory notes" with an image of Hồ Chí Minh were circulating in the southern and central regions of Vietnam before the official currency was released.
that time French notes which were common to all three of the Indochinese colonies were used, either those from the Bank of Indochina (La banque de l’Indochine), or printed by “The Issuing Institute of the States of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam” (L’institut d’Emission des Etats du Cambodge, du Laos et du Vietnam). The new Vietnamese notes were called bạ́c tạ́i chinh (“financial notes”) and printed in various denominations – an example of a 5–dông note is shown in Illustration 6–15 on page 107. The obverse side of all denominations has a picture of Hồ Chí Minh (for that reason, the people called them Bạ́c Cự́ Hồ́, or “Old Ho’s Notes”) and the words Việt Nam Đàn Chữ́ Cộng Hỏ́a “Democratic Republic of Vietnam”. Some of the notes also have printed on them the phrase Giấy Bạ́c Việt Nam “Vietnamese paper money”, as if to emphasise to the people that these notes really do represent bạ́c – that is, money, or silver – and the value of the note was also written in Chinese and, on some of the notes, in Lao and Cambodian scripts.

The reverse sides of the notes show workers, soldiers and peasants – a woman farmer and child in the example shown – and sometimes a slogan about carefully guarding the harvest, or something similar. Hái and Khoa state that the pictures “represented the three main objectives of the Revolution, which are the fights against illiteracy, hunger and foreign invasion”. The reverse side also has the following text:

Theo sắc lệnh của chính phủ Việt Nam kể nào làm giả hoặc có hành động phá hoại tờ giấy bạ́c của chính phủ sẽ bị trừng trị theo quan pháp.

By the decree of the Government of Vietnam, anyone who counterfeits or deliberately destroys official paper money will be punished according to military law.

This reference to “military law” is to the tòa án quân sự, a military court from which there was no appeal, appears on all of the samples from this period that I have seen, and apparently that there was no other body of law available to govern the use of financial notes.

The story was different once full-scale resistance to the French broke out. The central Government was no longer able to communicate reliably and regularly with the regions and individual solutions to the problem of paper money were developed in each

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43 Tất Chí Đồng Hải and Đặng Văn Khoa 1994, pages 83 and 140. I am indebted to David Marr for pointing this publication out to me, and for lending me his copy.
44 Illustration from Hải and Khoa 1994, page 140.
45 Hồ Chí Minh does not look particularly old in most of the pictures on the notes (he would have been 56 or so at the time).
46 Hải and Khoa 1994, page 141.
48 Appeals against the death penalty were allowed.
region. The notes produced were variously called *tin phieu* (credit coupon), *phiêu tiếp tế* (supply coupon), *phiêu đổi chạc* (exchange coupon) and, in the southern regions, the Southern Resistance Committee continued to print *giấy bạc Việt Nam* (Vietnamese paper money). Some of these paper representations of money were restricted for circulation only within the provinces where they were issued, and most were signed by the head of the provincial or area Administration Resistance Committee, although a “Central Government Representative” signature appears on some notes.49

Illustration 6–1650 is an example of a credit coupon (*tin phieu*) for 1000 Việt Nam Đồng (a considerable amount of money at the time, but the note is not for use in the market, rather it is in the nature of a bond) from the central regions with a picture of Hồ Chí Minh and signatures from representatives of the Central Government and the local Administrative Committee on the obverse side. The reverse has the pictures of the soldier, worker and farmer, and the slogan *tích cực chuẩn bị tổng phản công* (“actively prepare for the general counter offensive”).

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After successful campaigns against the French invaders in 1950 the northern area of Vietnam, which borders China, came under control of the Vietnamese Government, and a decree establishing the State Bank of Vietnam was issued on 5 June 1951. New bank notes were then issued, and exchanged for the various credit coupons, and the like, that had been circulating among the population. The new notes were much more professionally produced, had authenticating seals in place of signatures and the note values were written only in Vietnamese and Chinese.51

The propaganda used to educate the people had to address the money question because the old French money, from prior to 1946, was still circulating and the quality of those notes, in terms of the standard of printing and design, was much better than that of the notes printed on behalf of the Việt Minh Government. It was a problem to get traders to accept the new notes and some propaganda posters were produced to try to

Illustration 6–17. The new money was not always acceptable.

alter people’s perceptions. Illustration 6–17 above is one of a series of three posters produced in 1949 to try to make the Vietnamese Government money more acceptable. The text is in the **lục bát** form of *ca dao*:

- **Dòng tiền là vật lưu hành,**
- **Đôi trao buôn bán rách, lành kể chỉ.**
- **Chị ơi so siết làm gì?**
- **Nay năm túi chỉ, mai đi túi người.**

Money is the material circulated, In trade exchanges torn or clean all the same. Sister sister, why so picky? Now it’s in your pocket, tomorrow to other people. 53

The woman trader in the picture is refusing to accept the Vietnamese government money and her customer is suggesting that she should do so. She knows that inflation has driven the value down and she will have trouble unloading the notes on to someone else. The text is saying, in effect, that paper money only has the value that people put upon it, that it has no value *per se*, whether it be dirty, torn or clean and newly minted, it is all the same. If it is circulated and accepted it acquires its value in that way. Here, the money stands in for the new Government and a plea is being made for acceptance of both. The posters in this set were printed on very poor quality paper, possibly hand-made.

### 6.4 Summary

The pictures shown in this chapter are those that appeal to the commoner, the farmer, the ordinary people of the Vietnam during the Resistance War Against the French. The ViệtMinh propaganda was designed to appeal to these people and to involve them in the great matter of the day – fighting for, and holding on to, independence. The following chapter takes the argument further and discusses the symbolism used in the pictures, considering some of the artistic styles employed by the artists.

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52 Catalogue number DSCN0341/5 in my catalogue, and 8994/Gy6455 in that of the Museum of the Revolution.

53 The Vietnamese text is not fully legible, and the language is not modern Vietnamese, and so I have found it difficult to translate. I am very grateful to my native-speaking colleague Nguyễn Thị Thu Thủy for assistance.
Chapter 7
Picturing the Resistance – Symbols and Styles

The previous Chapter began an analysis of the pictorial elements of some of the propaganda from the Việt Minh. That analysis was couched in terms of its relevance to people and groups of people. This Chapter continues the pictorial analysis but is concerned more with an analysis of some of the symbolism that we can see in the pictures. We will see that there are some symbols that have a particular meaning for Vietnamese people and the Việt Minh artists made deliberate and careful use of these to reinforce particular messages.

7.1 Symbolism in the Pictures

Illustration 7–1 on page 113 shows a poster from Lạng Sơn which was produced in 1949 and shows a Nùng woman sewing an áo Trần Thủ, a soldier’s quilted vest, while a child sleeps peacefully. The text refers to the child as em (younger sibling) and so the woman appears to be chí, meaning “older sister”. However, I am told by Nùng people from Cao Bằng that parents refer to the young baby as em, and some who have seen this drawing claim that it depicts a mother and child rather than a child and older sibling – even though the woman refers to herself as chí. The text on the poster is as follows:

Em ơi, em ngủ say rơi,
Ngon dến chí thấp, chí ngồi chí may
Cho xong áo Trần Thủ này,
Gửi đến chiến sĩ kip ngày mùa đông,
Để cho chiến sĩ âm lòng,
Vừng tay cảm sung, ra công diệt thù.

Baby baby deeply sleeping
By the lamp I lit, I sit I sew,
This padded vest I am finishing
To Winter’s soldiers, timely it will go
For the soldier’s heart it’s warming
Steadily holding the gun, on a mission to kill the enemy.

The text is in the popular ca dao form, and this adds a great deal to the appeal of the poster to what we may call ordinary people – see Chapter 5, section 5.1 (my translation may not quite capture the poetic intent).

There are several interesting features of this poster. First, it builds and reinforces a strong link between the ordinary people, a women and a child in this case, and the soldiers that the people are supporting, fighting in the often bitterly cold conditions of the northern Vietnamese winter. Second, the features shown here – the clothes and headgear of the mother, the style of lamp, and the cot in which the baby lies – are

1 Number DSCN0328/1 in my catalogue, and 1950/Gy640 in the catalogue of the Museum of the Revolution.
2 Information from discussions with informants at Quang Uyen, about 12 Km from Cao Bằng, on 1 January 2004. Informants in Hanoi also report that many people refer to their babies as em bé.
special to the area of the Nùng people around the provinces of Lạng Sơn, and Cao Bằng. There is, thus, a direct connection between this poster and the community of people living in the Viêt Bác, it is designed to appeal directly to them, and to reinforce a strong connection between the designers and publishers of the poster and the ordinary people among whom it circulated. The poster itself has been carefully constructed by the artist, with the oil lamp in the centre of the picture and the shadows indicating that her lamp, the one that she has lit, is the only source of light in the room. The child in its cot, which has been tilted towards the viewer to make another point of interest for the viewer’s attention.

Illustration 7–1. Sewing for the Soldiers.

The áo trần thụ is a powerful symbol of the winter fighter and occurs time and again in the posters which depict the winter campaigns in the north, where the temperatures, particularly in the mountainous regions, can be quite low. ³ It is also a powerful symbol of the connection between the people who are left at home and the fighters at the front, since the garment is usually made by hand in the way shown in the illustration.

³ For example, snow was reported falling in the northern mountainous regions in the winter of 2003/2004. Personal observation whilst on field--work.
Some of the pictures used in the posters, particularly the early ones, make use of symbols with a particular resonance for Vietnamese people. For example, Illustration 7–2 on page 115 is from a set of three posters from Yên Bái province produced in 1949. This one is from the “Educate the People” campaign (*phong trào binh dân học vụ*). The others in the series are “Work to Produce” (*lao động sản xuất*) and “Defend the Village” (*bảo vệ xóm làng*). The text is in *ca dao* (*lục-bát*) form:

Xuân sang hoa là tuôi cụt
Có chàng dót chữ phải chịu con mủ
Còn anh dã biết đọc chưa?
Nếu chưa xin chỗ sang nhà, em kiêng.

Spring arrives, fresh flowers and leaves smile
There is a young illiterate man who must slip under the gate of illiteracy
And you, can you not yet read?
If no then please don’t come to my house,
I don’t want you.

The verse seems to be written from the point of view of a woman, who is making it plain that an illiterate young man is not what she wants. The verse is using her words to raise the respect for literacy and enhance the status of those who have the ability to read and write.

In the picture an old toad (*con coc*) is teaching literacy to the young ones. The “*i*” is as symbolic as is “ABC” in the English language, that is, it stands for the first steps in learning to read and write a language which has a phonetically based script. This particular symbol is very common in the propaganda wherever literacy is discussed, and we saw its occurrence in the previous Chapter, where the members of the family of “*cy Ba*” were learning to read.

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4 Number DSCN0357/21 in my catalogue, but not yet numbered at the Museum of the Revolution (as at 26 September 2002).
Illustration 7–2. A Poster from the 1949 “Educate the People” Campaign.

The image in this poster continues an ancient tradition of “toads”. The toad is a very old symbol in Vietnam and small toad figures appear on the Đông Sơn brass drums, which may be as old as 5000 years. Phạm Huy Thông, in his undated essay (probably written just before his death in 19886), writes:

We also know why at a certain point in the process of their development, Đông Sơn drums were furnished with three-dimensional figures of toads. A widely known popular saying in Viêt Nam calls the toad “the uncle of the heavenly god”5 and maintains that rain will inevitably fall when the toad raises his head and croaks. We thus identify the animal figures spaced on the edge of the tympanum as toads.7

The toad also occurs as a teacher in the design of a well-known wood-block print from Đông Hồ village, and the print shown in Illustration 7–2 is a direct reference to the same tradition as is referenced in the modern Đông Hồ print9 shown in Illustration 7–3 on page 116. The Đông Hồ print is a modern one from the village, the original pattern being made at a time when Nôm (and Chinese) characters were in extensive use, and

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6 Thông mentions a 1987 publication in his essay, putting the writing of the essay at sometime between then and June 1988. See Phạm Huy Thông et al (eds.) 1990, page 271.
7 The actual phrase is Con cọc là cầu ông trời. Nêu ai đánh cọc thì trời đánh cho. meaning “The toad is the uncle (mother’s younger brother) of the heavenly god. If anyone hits the toad heaven will strike back (i.e., you’ll be hit by lightning).”
9 The print shown was purchased in about 1999, and was newly–made at the time.

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were written with brush and ink. The print has two meanings, and these probably also occur in the propaganda print. The first point is that we should not think of old toads as ignorant beasts, and the second meaning is that through study anyone can become wise, and this was particularly true of the strict study methods used in the past.\(^\text{10}\) Thus this illustration is seen to employ two symbols of significance to the Vietnamese people – the old symbol of the toad, and the very modern one of the new writing system.

Illustration 7–3. One of the Prints from Đong Hồ Village.

It could also be speculated that the toad as teacher relates to the homophonic word \(cocolate\), with the meaning “not at all”, as in the phrase \(cocolate biết\) “to know nothing”, the implication being that, through study, even a toad, or someone who knows nothing at all can become wise. There has been little written about the etymology of the Vietnamese language and I have not been able to explore this possibility further, so it must remain as an hypothesis for further testing.

\(^{10}\) This opinion about the meaning of the Đong Hồ print was given to me by staff at the Museum of Ethnology in Hanoi in October 2004.
7.2 What styles have been used, and who are the artists?

Previous chapters have shown a number of examples of the styles used in the Việt Minh pictorial propaganda. Some of the styles that have not yet been discussed are shown here, although artists’ names are never known for sure – occasionally we can see a pseudonym. First, a comment about what is not here in the Vietnamese material, and that is posters in the Chinese style. Some of the propaganda posters from China were discussed in Chapters 3 and 6, and they generally show a greater degree of “professionalism”, which probably reflects the greater resources available to the Chinese Communist Party in the liberated areas of China, compared to the situation of the Việt Minh in the northern areas of Vietnam, and also reflect the fact that the revolutionary movement in China was older and more mature, leading to some standardisation of propaganda materials. The paper stock available in the Việt bắc was very poor in terms of quantity, cadres having to travel large distances to get any, and in quality, some


11 Landsberger describes how, at a later period, “Various books and journals that supplied information on how to represent human beings, agricultural machinery, etcetera, were published” leading to very standard pictures of happy, productive peasants, and so on. See Landsberger 1995, page 56.

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being hand-made.\textsuperscript{12} Two examples of propaganda pictures that seem to have been made by people with specific artistic training and experience are shown in Illustration 7–4\textsuperscript{13} and Illustration 7–6\textsuperscript{14} on page 120.

Illustration 7–4 is a poster from the Information Section at Lăng Sơn, and was produced in 1947. The mark in the top left-hand corner appears to be a typical stamp for an artist, somewhat in the style seen on Chinese paintings. It reads:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Tám
  \item Đâu
  \item 1947
\end{itemize}

If this is an artist's name it is most likely a pseudonym and, whether a \textit{nom de plume} or not, probably refers to the eighth month (Tám) of the year Ąt Đâu (a chicken year) – that is, August 1945, the month of the Revolution that brought the Việt Minh to power. The associated slogan tells us to “resolutely hold firmly to the northern region of Vietnam”.

The picture in the poster seems to me to have been influenced by the painting “American Gothic”,\textsuperscript{15} created by Grant Wood in 1930 (see Illustration 7–5 below). Wood’s work is described as follows by the Art Institute of Chicago:

Grant Wood adopted the precise realism of 15th-century northern European artists, but his native Iowa provided the artist with his subject matter. American Gothic depicts a farmer and his spinster daughter posing before their house, whose gabled window and tracery, in the American Gothic style, inspired the painting’s title. In fact, the models were the painter’s sister and their dentist. Wood was accused of creating in this work a satire on the intolerance and rigidity that the insular nature of rural life can produce; he denied the accusation. American Gothic is an image that epitomizes the Puritan ethic and virtues that he believed dignified the Midwestern character.\textsuperscript{16}

I would argue that the artist most likely saw a reproduction of the Wood painting and he (or she) was probably involved in the art scene in a Vietnamese city before beginning to work with the Việt Minh propaganda – besides being suspected of being a satire, the painting was (and is currently) widely parodied. In using the the visual composition of \textit{American Gothic} the creator of the poster has transposed the man and woman from

\textsuperscript{12} See the comment on this in Chapter 4, section 4.3, and also McHale 2004, page 130.
\textsuperscript{13} Number DSCN0893/178 in my catalogue, and 925/Gy134 in that of the Revolutionary Museum.
\textsuperscript{14} Number DSCN0902/180 in my catalogue, from a set of 14 numbered 1084/Gy226 in the Revolutionary Museum’s catalogue.
\textsuperscript{15} The picture is copyright the Art Institute of Chicago, see: \url{http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/modern/73pc_wood.html} (accessed 2004 July 12).
\textsuperscript{16} See the web site of the Art Institute of Chicago \textit{op cit.}
right to left (it is possible that he (or she) only ever saw a misprinted copy) and the Vietnamese farmer holds a rifle rather than a pitchfork and his wife a sickle, signifying what may be required to hold on to Vietnamese traditions and homeland against the expected winter onslaught from the enemy. Instead of the house in the background, the Vietnamese artist has represented one of the limestone karst landforms common in southern China and northern Vietnam, together with a small house typical of that area.

![Illustration 7-5. American Gothic by Grant Wood](image)

The mountain has the triangular form similar to the house in *American Gothic*, with the apex at the top and the base forming a foundation for the picture, giving the picture a sense of stability and homeliness. The artist who produced the poster has used similar clothing for the man and woman as that used in the *American Gothic* model.

We can only speculate as to why a painting of rural America might have been thought to have an appeal as a model for a poster intended to inspire rural Vietnamese people to resistance against an enemy invader. Perhaps it was to allude to some universal struggle, or perhaps, as seems to be the case with some of the articles in the newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập*, it was chosen to give the viewers a feeling of “being in touch with the world, and “modern”, and not isolated in their struggle to maintain independence. This would be consistent with some other features of the movement for independence, for example Hồ Chí Minh’s allusion to the American Declaration of Independence in his speech to the people in Ba Đình square on 2 September 1945.17 On the other hand, *American Gothic* has been widely circulated, has even been the subject of parody at various times, and it is possible that the artist was simply sharing an “in” joke with fellow artists.

17 See Duiker 2000, page 323.

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Illustration 7-6 (below) is number 7 from a set of 14 prints done by the students at the Art School Students’ Co-operative in Hanoi, probably about 1950\(^\text{18}\) and probably produced clandestinely. The labels beneath each poster are printed separately and the pictures are mounted on boards – unfortunately, the glue used for the mounting has decayed in some of the prints, discolouring them, and making the text on the labels almost unreadable (but not in the example shown here). The prints are all done in two colours – black for the foreground detail, and a different background colour for each one. The series of prints has the title Xã đoàn kết vượt khó khăn (“A village united overcomes difficulties”), with a motto that rhymes (in the ca dao sense) Phá âm mưu hai mùa mạng của giặc (“Destroy the enemy’s plots to harm the harvest”). There is a four-line ca dao verse under each picture, telling the story of the picture. The whole series forms a narrative, and this particular one is taken from the middle of the story, which started with a prosperous village, hard working inhabitants able to bring in a rice harvest at least twice each year. The French forces have destroyed the dykes and

\[\text{Illustration 7-6. Village meeting (Number 7 in a series of 14).}\]

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\(^{18}\) The Museum of the Revolution has this date for the series.
irrigation system which provided water for the rice and it is now summer, with no water. Here the villagers are meeting in the eastern village hall to discuss what to do, and are being addressed by Cũ Lam (Old Lam), the retired emulation soldier.

The text is:

7. Hôm nay xã họp đình Đồng,
Nhân dân thảo luận đường dòng can khó,
Đạo mường dân nuôi suối ra,
Cũ Lam chiến sỹ thi dẫu trình bày.

7. Today the village meets in the Eastern hall,
The people discuss the dried up fields
And ditch digging to guide the water streams
Old Lam the emulation soldier expounds to the people.

The style of work shown in Illustration 7–6 is different to the styles of all of the other posters seen so far in this work. The scene has been portrayed in a realistic manner (within the limits of the technique and technology available), and the composition is professional, with the central figure of Cũ Lam holding the gaze of the villagers. The perspective lines move to a “vanishing point”, indicating an awareness of drawing techniques from Europe, and the picture tells the viewer that this is a modern work, that Vietnam is a modern nation, yet it is in touch with the worries of the people who live in the villages of Vietnam. The villagers are the ordinary people of Vietnam, the postures shown are those of ordinary working people, although some are in “heroic” mode, similar to the Chinese pictures shown in Chapter 6. There is the faint shadow of a sunlit statue in the background, for the “hall” – the village Đình – is also used to worship and honour the village ancestors and spirits. Although the series was probably produced by middle class students working in Hanoi, the appeal of the posters is to those very people, who would like to see themselves reflected there, who see their concerns and worries addressed, and their circumstances given a voice.

Another unusual style is seen in a set of 9 posters from 1949, celebrating a victory in the province of Bác Giang (north-east of Hanoi). The complete set is shown (in “thumbnail” form) in Illustration 7–7. It is possible to recognise an artistic direction

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19 The term “village” is problematic for northern Vietnam. The (fictitious) unit here is the xã (maybe we can translate this as “commune”), which is probably made up of a number of làng (or thôn, as on the official documents – perhaps this is best translated as “village”). Each làng has a đình, and apparently, in this story, one particular làng of this xã has provided the đình for the meeting. See Malarney 2002, pages 12–15 for an example of a typical set of làng comprising a xã in an area of northern Vietnam close to Hanoi.

20 The “heroic” style seems to indicate a later date than the 1950 that the Museum of the Revolution gives this series.

21 Numbers (DSCN0361–DSCN369)/24 in my catalogue, and the set is numbered 2029/Gy691 in the catalogue of the Museum of the Revolution

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The naïve art produced, largely in Europe, has been called “curiously simplistic creations” and they are “untroubled and spontaneous”, and the style has a “unique quality [which] consists ... of a decorative artlessness and narrative simplicity...”. The naïve tendency particularly flourished in France between the first and second world wars, Anatole Jakovsky claiming that “tens of thousands of these paintings appeared”. The style that we see in these Vietnamese posters is somewhat reminiscent of that used in the “naïve” paintings, but done in a poster form. The figures are simple, but there is evidence of careful draughtsmanship in the execution of these


22 See Bihalaji-Merin 1971, page 9. Henri Rousseau (le Douanier – customs officer) is probably the most recognisable painter in this tradition.
works. Looking closely, we can see pencilled guide-lines for the text and for some of
the pictures, although the final inking has been done with a broad brush. The drawings
of the figures show an awareness of how the human body operates and how things like
movement and attitude are shown – consider the drawing labelled Trần: Sản-ranh for
example, where the figures are shown hurrying and carrying goods and children. These
are things which are not done in amateur drawings. The themes are those of the work to
be done by the dân quân (the militias and auxiliaries) and guerillas, and the success of
the ordinary people in beating back the invader.

The text of these drawings reads (in the order shown in Illustration 7–7):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Danish text</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cắt đường giao-thông dịch</td>
<td>Cut the enemy's transportation routes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bác Giang! Cam thủ</td>
<td>Bác Giang! Hate the enemy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trần: Sản-ranh</td>
<td>Battle: Sản-ranh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiêu thơ triệt đế</td>
<td>Destroy completely [scorched earth policy]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dân quân: Bác Giang</td>
<td>Militias: Bác Giang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuẩn bị - cuộc tấn công của giặc</td>
<td>Prepare - for the invader's attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dành vào thành phố</td>
<td>Strike into the cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nông dân Bác Giang</td>
<td>Bác Giang farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cam thủ. Dân quân: Bác Giang</td>
<td>Hate the enemy. Militias: Bác Giang</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This example is one of the very few cases where "hate" is being suggested to the viewer
– generalised hatred for the enemy is not a common feature of the propaganda and it is
usually enemy soldiers engaged in actual activity against the Vietnamese who are
targeted. As far as style is concerned, we see once again the way the pictorial material,
often produced by professionally trained artists, is used to reach out to the common
person, to build a sense of community, to portray a society, a community of people
working together for a common aim and, in this case, to crush the common enemy.

7.3 Summary

Pictures carry message through both their content and their style. The pictures that
the Việt Minh artists produced often alluded to traditional village practices in their style,
yet carried a modern message about literacy, or the struggle for independence and
nationhood. Other pictures used modern references in their style – modern use of
perspective, references to well-known international art works – yet their content was
familiar to the Vietnamese villager and carried the modern message of nationalism and

24 I am uncertain of the meaning of sản-ranh. Literally, it means “trench/ditch floor”, but it may be the
name of a place.
independence. The pictorial propaganda thus joined these two ideas together quite effectively – the traditions of Vietnamese rural life and aspirations towards becoming a modern nation.

The propaganda used a variety of pictorial material, which was directed right at the target audience. Skilled artisans, who knew the people who were to be the audience, made the pictures and they used concepts which were familiar and techniques which were available to the audiences. These were not “city folks” using high technology, although their skills were at times subtle and considerable. The propaganda was inclusive, it was socially valid, as Cialdini would put it. In its images, its jokes, its techniques, it connected with the ordinary people and made use of old comfortable and familiar folk traditions. The propaganda vehicles appeared to be of and from the people and hence the message they carried also appeared to be from the people. Even as the artists played with images which they had learned about as students, they recreated them in terms familiar to the people who would view them.
8.1 The Nature of Propaganda

The subject of this study is *propaganda*. As discussed in Chapter 1 this word has changed its meaning over the years and it now appears to have quite negative connotations and conveys to listeners and readers meanings which are quite the opposite of *information* or *truth*. However, when we look at Vietnam in the period immediately after the Declaration of Independence on 2 September 1945, and at the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in the time immediately after this, we see that each province had its Information and Propaganda Service (*Ty Tuyên Truyền Thông Tin*), proudly supplying services to the local population. When I study the work of these services, it becomes apparent that there is a new word which would nowadays be used to describe their work – that word is *marketing*.¹ The meaning which once underlay the word *propaganda* has slipped to this new word. If we look at the concepts studied under this new heading we see the same concerns apparent – market segmentation, supply, demand, persuasion, and so forth. Thus, it becomes apparent that any study of Việt Minh propaganda is best described to today’s readers as an examination of *Marketing the Revolution*.

Marketing is much studied in modern business schools and management courses these days. Among the main concerns of these courses and studies are the following concepts, corresponding to some concerns of the Việt Minh propaganda:

- Market segmentation, or niche marketing. The division of the potential market into segments, so that techniques of persuasion can be developed to appeal specifically to particular segments. The segments may be based on occupation, age, time related to particular events (before, during, after), geography, and so forth. Việt Minh documents attempt to divide the market into segments, each for special treatment – there is the *nguy binh* (Vietnamese soldiers fighting for the French), there is propaganda specifically for Catholics, there are areas that have recently been

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¹ I am indebted to the work of Dr Đỗ Minh Cao for revealing this insight to me. His paper, *(see Cao 2002)* entitled *Marketing Activities of the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology*, although written for the Museum of Ethnology in Hanoi in 2002, describes quite thoroughly some of the processes that were of concern to the Việt Minh during the 1940s and 1950s.
liberated from the French, and very special work is required in the occupied areas and in particular regions in the south of the country.\(^2\)

- **Product differentiation.** The ability to differentiate the product being marketed from other, possibly competing, products. In the case of the Việt Minh’s attempts to win the loyalty of the population, the returning French colonial forces and, before them, also the Japanese occupation forces were the prime competing “products”, but there were also groups such as the Vietnamese National Party, and religious groups (some armed) such as the Catholic Church, the Cao Đài and the Hòa Hảo, and some of these are discussed further in the following section. From 1949 there was also a government set up by the French in the south under Emperor (emeritus) Bảo Đại and prime minister Nguyễn Phan Lộng.\(^3\)

- **Product familiarity.** Introducing the concept of the Việt Nam Dộc Lập Đồng Minh (“League for an Independent Vietnam”, known as the Việt Minh for short) and, by implication, the concept of Việt Nam as an independent nation alongside other independent nations such as France and Japan.

The Việt Minh propaganda, and its planning, show an intuitive appreciation of the marketing principles behind the persuasive techniques which they used. The use of different styles in the propaganda can be seen as an example of niche marketing, so that different styles of propaganda materials are directed to different audiences. The use of different styles may also show a lack of detailed central control from the Việt Minh leadership. Much of the propaganda material was produced by the local provincial information services and is thus directed to the local people. It is most probable that there was no more than some general central control by the Việt Minh leadership.

For the majority rural people of Vietnam the Việt Minh did not need to persuade them of the harshness and injustice of French colonialism – the French accomplished that task quite thoroughly themselves (and the Americans were to follow them down

\(^2\) See, for example, the following publications:


All of which are available from the National Library of Vietnam in Hanoi.

\(^3\) See Duiker 1996, page 144.
that path some decades later). The Viêt Minh task was to keep the unity of the people, to achieve production levels and distribution mechanisms that prevented the people from starving, to persuade them to support the army, and to increase the general level of understanding and literacy throughout the population so that the people could take part in the rebuilding of the nation and Vietnam take its place as a modern independent nation in the world.

The propaganda was launched to build an inclusive community, a sense of *communitas*. And the propaganda was designed to place the Viêt Minh at the head of this community, not unlike the senior and respected head of a Vietnamese family, and to build the community along lines approved by the Viêt Minh leadership – variously Marxist–Leninist, or nationalist. Neil Jamieson discusses the development of *communitas* in Vietnam after the Revolution of August 1945:

> The revolution was an extended transition from one cultural state to another for many groups and individuals in Vietnam.

> As the writings of Victor Turner (1969, 1974) have led us to expect of such liminal (threshold) phenomena, the revolutionary movement minimized previous distinctions based on wealth, age, gender, kinship, occupation, or social status. Individual egos were immersed in a mystical bond between individuals who shared dreams, hardships, danger and uncertainty.

The Viêt Minh propaganda was to build on this common feeling and to direct it to the causes of national and eventual social revolution.

### 8.2 Other Voices

The historical narrative is never really linear, and Patricia Pelley reminds us that the construction of the narrative by Vietnamese historians for Vietnam after the national victory in 1954 was a very slow process (it took about 30 years), full of re-evaluation and much debate, as “representations of the national past had to correspond with the political and intellectual exigencies of post-revolutionary and postcolonial times, and these were constantly in flux”. She also points out the non-linearity of the narrative:

> Although northern historians often depicted the “Anti-French Resistance War” (1946–1954) as an example of Vietnamese fighting to free their country from the French, the war was far more complex. Indeed, far from acting en masse in a uniform bloc, “the Vietnamese” were internally divided and they struggled violently among themselves to determine the shape and meaning of postcolonialism.

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4 This term is one used by the anthropologist Victor Turner, and is quoted in Jamieson 1993, page 214.
5 Jamieson 1993, page 214.
Neil Jamieson gives some more dimension to the complexity of the competing factions and ideologies:

... in the bishoprics of Phat Diem and Bui Chu, the militiamen of militant Catholic groups kept both the French and the Vietminh at bay. The white and yellow flag of the Vatican flew over the villages...

Far to the south the Cao Dai too ruled over a small world of their own, one focussed on the Holy See in Tay Ninh ... The Cao Dai also had their own militia (well trained by the Japanese), their own schools and courts, and their own social welfare programs...

Farther down in the Mekong delta, ... the Hoa Hao had carved out another semiautonomous zone, the boundaries of which were maintained by fiercely wielded machetes and rifles.

For a time a die-hard band of VNQDD [Vietnamese Nationalist Party] partisans held out against the French and the Vietminh in a remote mountain stronghold near the Chinese border, proclaiming themselves to be a national government.

These comments show that there were fracture lines in the Vietnamese community of peoples which are not always apparent in the propaganda studied in previous Chapters, although some specific instances have been seen. There is plenty of evidence that fractures within the community were of concern, as one of the central themes through the propaganda is “Unity, great Unity”. Many other publications from the time show concern about the issue of unity and some of these which have been discussed are the Việt Minh Book of Pentameters (see Appendix I, particularly stanza 10), and Hồ Chí Minh’s Lịch Sử Nước Ta. Recent publications from the Vietnamese Institute of History also allude to some cracks in the unity of all the people, particularly among the minority ethnic groups in the mountainous regions of the north–west. They ascribe the uncertain allegiances of these people to French policies of “divide to control” and “use the Vietnamese to fight the Vietnamese”. These issues require further evaluation and study of the collected material.

Most of the visual material shown in the preceding Chapters is from the northern regions of Vietnam and thus this entire study tends to show a bias towards those areas. It appears that little else survives, particularly from the southern and central regions, however this is another area for further research. Thus, there is more to be told about Việt Minh use of propaganda, and attempts to achieve unity among disputing factions

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8 Jamieson 1993, page 214.  
within the Vietnamese people. Indeed, the whole concept of a “Vietnamese people” needs analysis and Patricia Pelley sees the uncertainty about this concept as being one of the reasons for delays in producing a “canonical” history of Vietnam:

In the 1950s ... many Vietnamese reflexively believed that “Vietnam” was a particularistic term referring to the land of the ethnic Việt. The process of imagining Vietnam in more inclusive and pluralistic terms was filled with debate and contestation that culminated, at least formally, in 1979 with an official inventory of the fifty-four ethnic groups in Vietnam.¹³

On the other hand, and against this purported “reflexive belief”, much of the Việt Minh propaganda of the late 1940s and early 1950s was actually directed squarely at ethnic groups, such as the Nùng and Tay people, seeing them most definitely as part of the new Vietnam. The minority ethnic groups occur again and again, in pictures and as part of the Vietnamese community, and this casts some doubt upon Pelley’s assertion that “Vietnam” referred to the land of the ethnic Việt or Kinh people.¹⁴

8.3 Social Power

The political scientist Christian Reus-Smit, in his American Power and World Order, makes some general observations about international power, that is about considerations of power between states.¹⁵ Many of his remarks are also quite apposite to intra-national power, that is, to the search for power within a state, particularly during times when this power is contested such as at a time of revolution. His comment about state power is equally applicable to power sought by actors within a state:

When we describe a state as powerful, we are saying more than it has plenty of guns or money; we are saying that it can successfully realize its goals.¹⁶

and he points out that power is a relationship, not something that is owned:

Power is not only ubiquitous; it is also inherently relational. Power is not something that atomistic actors own as a quantifiable commodity; it is something they gain only within social relationships. Power ‘can develop only through exchange among actors involved in a given relation’.¹⁷

¹⁴ Although Pelley uses the term "ethnic Việt", I think that Việt more properly refers to a language group, and the term kinh is more commonly used to refer to the ethnic group. However, the dictionary produced by the Viện Ngôn ngữ Học gives Việt as an alternative for Kinh. See Từ Điển Tiếng Việt, published by Nxb Đà Nẵng 2000, page 1173.
¹⁵ See Reus-Smit, 2004, Chapter 3 (pages 40 to 68).
That is, power is given to a leader or leading group by their followers, and they must receive something in return. The power is in the relationship between those who lead and those who are willing to be lead. The difference between the power over the ordinary people of Vietnam wielded by the French forces, with “plenty of guns and money” and that encompassed by Hồ Chí Minh and the Việt Minh is quite clear. The relationship that the French tried to build with the Vietnamese people depended mainly upon the force of arms, fronted by an ineffectual Bảo Đại government, and the power relationship with most of the people was poor – the people, by and large, did not respond with their allegiance to French concepts of how Vietnam should be governed. The Việt Minh, on the other hand, worked carefully with the people, the minority ethnic groups included, to build relationships between the people and the leaders. Looking again at the methods of persuasion outlined in Chapter 2 above, we can see that some of the well-known methods are not shown in the propaganda materials produced by the Việt Minh. In particular, reliance upon coercive authority does not appear and, where authority figures are used, such as on the currency and in the depiction of heroes, any pictures tend to be of an avuncular Hồ Chí Minh, or something similar. The use of reciprocation as a persuasive tool is also not apparent in the propaganda materials studied, although there are extensive references to this in some of the written material for cadres that has not been covered here. Instead, using the terminology introduced in Chapter 2, the methods employed by the Việt Minh included use of social validation, commitment and consistency, and liking.

The Việt Minh were sensitive to the people’s aspirations about land, food security, and independence, and answered those aspirations. The people responded with their loyalty and sacrifice of time, property and life. Like the girl in the photocopy shop mentioned in Chapter 1, they saw themselves as heroes.
The following bibliographies are indexed by family name of first author or first editor (if known, otherwise the title is used), but the names are written as the owner of the name prefers – for example, William J. Duiker is indexed under “D”, but the name is written in Duiker’s preferred form “William J. Duiker”, as in his publications. Vietnamese names present a problem in that Vietnamese people put the family name first but prefer to be known by their last or given name – so that Võ Nguyên Giáp is known informally as “Giáp” and is formally addressed as “General Giáp”. Within Vietnam, lists of names – for example, lists of addresses or telephone numbers – are often indexed on the given name. Thus, for both Vietnamese and European names, indexing is done on the last part of the name (the family name for European names, and the given name for Vietnamese). This is the indexing scheme that I have adopted here. For Vietnamese names, as with other authors, I have written the names in the way in which the authors themselves prefer, so that, for example, Võ Nguyên Giáp is written that way but indexed under “G”.

Books


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Propaganda and the People


Tạ Chí Đông Hải and Đặng Văn Khoa (Đỗ Hữu Nghĩa (English), Trần Thái Định (French) and Hân Phong (Chinese), trans.). 100 Năm Tiến Giảy Việt Nam. TP Hồ Chí Minh: Nxb Trẻ, 1994.


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**Web Sites**


http://dictionary.oed.com (Accessed: 2004 May 3). This is the main web site for the Oxford English Dictionary. It is only accessible by registered users, but many libraries are registered users.


Miscellaneous Material

Compact Discs


Appendix I

Việt Minh Book of Pentameters

This small booklet from 1944 describes the reasons behind the formation of the Việt Minh, and the way in which the Association is organised, what it takes to be a member, formation of cells, need for secrecy, and so forth. The name of the booklet is Việt Minh Ngữ Tự Kinh, which title is possibly related to the name of the booklet Tam Tự Kinh ("Three-character Book") which is used to teach Chinese characters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Việt Minh</th>
<th>Vietminh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ngữ tự kinh</td>
<td>Book of Pentameters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VM Tuyên truyền Bộ X.B.</td>
<td>VM Propaganda Department, Publisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quyền số 6</td>
<td>Book No. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giá 5 xu</td>
<td>Price 5 sou</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*S*

Sách mở lòng cứu quốc
Ta phải học thuộc lòng
Và báo các bạn bầu
Ai này đều hiểu biết

*-

Nước ta bị Tây xưng,
Đã bấy lâu nay,
Chúng dẹp nén gián câm,
Bắt ta làm nô lệ.
Chúng đặt trăm thứ thuế,
Bốc lột ta đến xương.
Chúng vọt bắc vàng,
Con bắt phư, bắt lính.
Đối với người cách mạng,
Chúng bán giết thảm tay.
Đàn ta chịu cay cay,
Sống trong vòng nguy tối.

*-

Our country robbed by the French,
Seventy or eighty years past,
They oppress and imprison us,
Catch and enslave us.
They raise all kinds of tax,
Exploit us to the bone.
They pillage our wealth,
Conscript workers, soldiers.
With the revolutionaries,
They shoot dead, without mercy.
Our people endure bitterly,
Surrounded by ignorance.

Propaganda and the People
Nhất nhân khi Pháp bại
Đem quân cướp Việt Nam.
Trong bụng thì tham lam,
Người miệng thì nhân nghĩa.
Chúng bán gia giếng trẻ;
Chúng ham hiếp đàn bà;
Chúng cướp ruộng, cướp nhà
Cuộp sắt than của cải.
Làm cho ta ngù đái,
Không để ta sống còn.
Dùng thuốc phiện ruquiv còn,
Làm dân ta tiêu diệt.

Muốn duôi cho sách hết,
Bọn đề quốc hùng cường,
Thì ta phải theo gương
Các anh hùng dân tộc.
Vi non sông tổ quốc
Ra tranh đầu hy sinh.
Đuôi lâ cờ Việt Minh,
Toàn dân cùng đoàn kết,
Cừng đồng tâm hợp lực,
Đánh đuổi bọn hung tàn,
Để lấy lại giang san.
Mưu tự do, đức lập.

Du kích đánh bí mật,
Chúng có mặt như mờ,
Cắt giấy thêp quan thù,
Chúng có tai như điec,
Các đường xa [xa?] phá tiết,
Chúng có chân như quê.
Lượng thức giáu sắc chỉ,
Chúng chết đói, chết khát.
Ta dùng lôi đánh up [up?];
Lấy sống thù bán thù.
Dù tâu bay, tảu bò,
Cừng không làm gì được.
-5-
Đánh tan quân Tây, Nhật,
Nước độc lập suông vui,
Thế mới phải là người,
Thoát khỏi vòng trau ngục.
Dân khác bầu chính phủ.
Dân có quyền tự do,
Được hội họp tha hồ,
Được bán buôn đi lại,
Trên đất nước, nhà mình,
Tho, Mường, Man, Nùng, Kinh
Cùng yêu nhau; thân ái.
*

-6-
Thợ thuyền trong nhà máy,
Mỗi ngày làm tám giờ,
Dân què có ruộng, bò,
Bỏ hết các thứ thuế,
Bình linh được tự tế,
Và được thêm lương tiền,
Phụ nữ được bình quyền,
Cùng dân ông bình đẳng.
Người già được nuoi dưỡng.
Con trẻ được chăm nom,
Người trí thức, người buôn,
Đều có quyền rồng rai.
*

-7-
Ta hết lòng hằng hải,
Đi tổ chức tuyển truyền,
Tim thêm nhiều hội viên
Vào các hội cứu quốc.
Việc ta nên làm trước,
Là tìm cách làm quen,
Rời do xét nhiều lần,
Sau mới nên nói rõ.
Tây, Nhật cần đánh dó,
Để lấy lại nước nhà.
Hồ cuốn theo hội ta,
Mỗi dua, vào tổ chức.
*
If you want a stable association
It is founded cell by cell
Three to nine members
Must elect a cell leader
If there are two, three cells
Must choose an executive committee
Discipline must be clear-cut
Each month, two sessions
Monthly dues must be paid
All the work of the association must be done
The minority follows the majority
The urgent business is unity.
*

Our association is very secret,
We must maintain secrecy diligently,
Our members must sacrifice,
And be faithfully resolute.
If together we are united,
Our power is extraordinary.
We must help and love
Our brother and sister comrades
We must always bear in mind,
Whenever others criticise,
We must joyfully welcome them,
Only then are we Revolutionaries.
*

We must follow the commands
Of the top echelon of the Vietminh
We must exert ourselves in struggle
To regain our home and land
French and Japs decidedly beaten
We, determined to gain complete victory
Cry out: The whole nation united!
Cry out: Fight the French, fight the Japs!
Cry out: Independent Vietnam!
The red flag flies
Over this land of Vietnam
The five-pointed star brightly shining.
*

-8-
Muon cho hội vùng chắc
Từng tiểu tổ lập nền
Ba đến chín hội viên
Phải bầu người trưởng tổ
Có hai ba tiểu tổ
Phải cứ ban chấp hành
Kiên quyết phải phân minh
Mỗi tháng hai kỳ họp
Nguyệt phi tháng phải nộp
Việc hội phải làm đều
Số ít theo số nhiều
Công việc cần thống nhất
*
-9-
Hội ta rất bí mật,
Phải hết sức giữ gìn,
Hội viên phải hy sinh,
Và trung thành kiên quyết.
Ta cùng nhau đoàn kết,
Thì sức mạnh mới thay đổi.
Phải giúp đỡ yếu thương,
Anh chị em đồng chí
Phải luôn luôn suy nghĩ,
Hề kê khắc phê bình,
Phải vui vẻ hoàn nghề nghiệp,
Mỗi là người cách mệnh.
*
-10-
Ta phải theo mệnh lệnh
Của thượng cấp Việt Minh
Phải ra sức đấu tranh
Lấy nước nhà ta lại
Tây Nhật quyết thật bại
Ta quyết thắng hoàn toàn
Họ: Toàn quốc kết đoan
Họ: Dánh Tây đánh Nhật
Họ: Việt Nam độc lập
Cờ hồng phát phổi bay
Trên nước Việt Nam này
Sáng ngày sao nam cánh
*

Propaganda and the People
Appendix II
Theses on Vietnamese Culture

Trương Chinh wrote Đề cương về văn hóa Việt-nam (“Theses on Vietnamese Culture”) in 1943, and it has been published several times since, including in the first issue of Tiền phong magazine, 10 November 1945.¹ The following translation is my own.

Theses Concerning Vietnamese Culture²

Approach to this Subject

1. Content of the subject: Culture includes all philosophy, learning and the arts.

2. Relationships between culture, economics and politics: The economic foundations of a society, and the economic system built upon those foundations determine the whole of the culture of that society. (The infrastructure determines the superstructure).

3. The approach of the Indochinese Communist Party to the matter of culture:
   a) The cultural front is among one of the three (economics, politics, culture) in which the Communists must be active.
   b) Not only must we work in revolutionary politics, but more so in revolutionary culture.
   c) There are leaders of the cultural movement. The Party can only influence public opinion, until the propaganda work of the Party brings results.

The History and Character of Vietnamese Culture

1. Periods in the history of Vietnamese culture.
   a) In the period prior to Emperor Quang Trung:³ Vietnamese culture had the characteristics of half feudal, half slave, and dependent upon China.
   b) From the time of Quang Trung to the time of the invasion by the French Empire, there was a feudal culture with a tendency towards petty bourgeoisie.
   c) From the time the French came to invade until now: culture is half feudal, half capitalist, and has a completely colonial character (pay attention to distinguishing several stages in this time).

¹ See the collected edition Sưu tập toàn bộ Tiền Phong (1945-1946) (Tổng kết), page 32 (page 18 of the first issue of the magazine).
³ Emperor Quang Trung (Nguyễn Huệ, also known as Hô Thôn) was the key figure in the Tây Sơn insurrection. He ruled from 1788 to 1792. See Thư và Đức 2000, pages 171–173.
2. The Essence of Vietnamese culture at present: Contemporary Vietnamese culture has the form of a colonial culture, and the content is the currency of capital.

The war and the trend of culture these days: the influence of fascist culture leads to a feudal characteristic, enslaves Vietnamese culture inside a stronger, but at the same time sustaining influence from a new democratic culture – that is the tendency is for a new Vietnamese culture, which is trying to overcome each obstacle in order to develop (illegal literature and art).

**The Danger for Vietnamese Culture Under the Yoke of French–Japanese Fascism**

1. Fascist tricks fetter culture and fatally injure Vietnamese culture.
   a) French cultural policy:
      — Repress democratic, revolutionary, anti-fascist writers and artists.
      — Issue documents to establish organisations and cultural associations in order to stuff people’s heads with untruths.
      — Very heavily censor cultural materials.
      — Entice and intimidate writers and artists.
      — Close communication with religion in order to propagate medieval culture, ignoramus culture, and so on.
      — Submissive propaganda, and a blind narrow-minded patriotism (chauvinism).
      — Producing the outward appearance of nurturing an intellectual, physical and moral education for the people.
   b) Cultural policy of the Japanese:
      — Propaganda for the Greater East Asia ideology.
      — Promote a view of Japan as the saviour of the yellow-skinned races, and Japanese culture as shedding rays of light, of civilisation, progress for all the races in Greater East Asia, etc etc...
      — Seek every means to display and introduce Japanese culture (exhibitions, public speeches, establish tourist services, cultural institute, student exchanges, invite artists and writers from Indochina to visit Japan, start propaganda magazines, organise opera and movies ...).
      — Suppress anti-Japanese writers and lure writers with ability.

2. The prospects for Vietnamese culture; two hypotheses:

   **Propaganda and the People**
— A fascist culture (medieval culture and enslavement) will win, then the popular culture of Vietnam will be poor, an inferior casualty.

— A Vietnamese national culture will, through a victorious democratic revolution of liberation, open the fetters and Vietnam will catch up with the new democratic cultures in the world.

Of these two hypotheses, which one will become fact? Based on the conditions of economics, politics and society these days, a Vietnamese national revolution will be resolved first to make the second hypotheses become fact.

**The Matter of a Vietnamese Cultural Revolution**

1. The view of the Communists about the problem of a Vietnamese cultural revolution:
   a) Before we can complete a reconstruction of society we must complete a cultural revolution.
   b) The cultural revolution must be completed through the leadership of the Indochinese Communist Party.
   c) The cultural revolution can be completed when the political revolution is successful (the cultural revolution must go after the political revolution. The factors in cultural reform which are brought forward now are to clear the way for a thorough revolution later).

2. The culture, and even the Indochinese cultural revolution that must be completed will be based on a socialist culture.

3. The cultural revolution and the revolution of national liberation:
   a) The conditions for development of a cultural revolution in Vietnam will not occur unless the revolution is guided by a revolution of national liberation.
   b) A national liberation revolution in Vietnam can only in the luckiest circumstances carry Vietnamese culture to a democratic level and have the character of a complete national independence, therefore a new culture.
   c) We must march on to complete a socialist revolution in Indochina, create and erect a new socialist culture all throughout Indochina.

4. Three principles exercising a national cultural movement in this stage:
   a) Nationalisation (against all enslaving and colonial influences, leading to the development of an independent Vietnamese culture).

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4 The translation of *cách mạng văn hóa* as “cultural revolution” is correct, but from this distance, the term “cultural revolution” can become confused with the quite different upheavals in China from 1966 to 1976.
b) Popularisation (against all policies and actions for culture which oppose the great number of the masses, or are far from the great number of the masses).

c) Scientism (against all things which work for a culture contrary to science, which are anti-progressive).

We want the above principles to succeed, we must violently oppose cultural tendencies which are conservative, eclectic, eccentric, pessimistic, mystical, idealist, etc. But at the same time we must also oppose cultural tendencies that go too far towards the Trotskyites.

5. The properties of a new Vietnamese culture:

A new Vietnamese culture through the leadership of the Indochina Communist Party policy must not yet be a socialist culture or a soviet culture (as the culture of the Soviet Union, for example).

The new culture for Vietnam is a type of culture with the property that it is national in form, and newly democratic in content. For that very reason then, they are the most revolutionary and most progressive in Indochina at this time.

Pressing Duties of Indochinese Marxist Writers and Artists and Especially Vietnamese Marxist Writers and Artists.

I. Immediate actions:

— fight against a culture which is fascist, feudal, regressive, enslaving, a culture which keeps the masses in ignorance and flatters the people.

— develop a new democratic Indochinese culture.

II. Work which must be done:

a) Campaign about doctrine, ideology (defeat mistaken views of European and Asian philosophy that have a more or less damaging influence on us: philosophies of Confucius, Mencius, Descartes, Bergson, Kant, Nietzsche, etc); work towards theories of dialectical materialism and historical materialism to win.

b) The struggle about literature and the arts (opposing classicism, romanticism, naturalism, symbolism, etc) is done so that a socialist realist tendency will win.

c) The struggle about spoken and written language:

1. Unification and increasing the richness of the spoken language;

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5 The Vietnamese is nhà văn hóa and the dictionaries describe this as "house of culture". This is obviously not what is intended, but I can't think of a single English word to take the place of "writers and artists".
2. Define the tricks of our literature.

3. Reform the national writing system, etc.

III Ways of Proceeding

a) Make full use of all public possibilities for publicity in order to:
   1. Propagandise and publish.
   2. Organise writers.
   3. Endeavour to win the actual interests for writers, journalists, artists, etc.
   4. Oppose the disaster of illiteracy, etc.

b) Tightly co-ordinate secret methods with public unification of every progressive cultural activity, under the right and leadership of the proletarian Marxist Party.
Appendix III
Songs From the Revolution

The songs of the Revolution and Resistance that are shown in this Appendix come largely from the holdings of the Revolutionary Museum in Hanoi and from those published in *Tiên Phong*. The collection at the Revolutionary Museum consists of a few booklets of songs only, but many more songs are believed to exist, and there are modern collections being published in Hanoi at the time of writing (see the Bibliography for details of some of these). Two of the booklets from the Revolutionary Museum have music while the others contain only lyrics which are often in *ca dao* form.

The quality of the materials which from which I have been working is fairly poor, since they are only photocopies of poorly printed originals. Because of this I have had to transcribe the music for reproduction here (rather than reproducing it in photographic or other similar form) and deciphering both the music and the lyrics has proven to be something of a challenge in some cases. For one reason and another, the transcription method I have used can not handle the diacritics necessary when printing Vietnamese language and so I have included the titles, correctly transcribed, as captions and headings in the music examples. The lyrics show the same problems with both the inability to print Vietnamese diacritics and legibility of the source material. Hence, where necessary to the discussion of the musical material, I have also transcribed the lyrics.

Bibliographical information about the two booklets from the Revolutionary Museum is as follows:


The catalogue numbers from the Museum of the Revolution are shown.

Both the music and lyrics (if relevant to the argument) are discussed in Chapter 6 section 6.4. Where it is necessary to discuss the lyrics they are shown in this Appendix in the full Vietnamese form – that is, with all diacritics in place.

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1 The music program I have used is called *lilypond*, version 2.0.3, running on a Unix system. More information can be found at [http://lilypond.org](http://lilypond.org) (accessed 2004 June 23).
Hương Thảo Hồng Quân Liên Xô

From Chiến Thắng Đông Xuân – pages 6–7.

Illustration III-1. Hướng Thảo Hồng Quân Liên Xô.
III.2 Cùng Thi Dua (Together all Emulate)

From Chiến Thắng Đông Xuân – page 10.

Cung Thi Dua

Ngoc (Van cong P.C.T. lien khu 5)

Illustration III-2. Cùng Thi Dua

Propaganda and the People
III.3 Đón Xuân (Welcome the Spring)

From Chiến Tháng Đông Xuân – page 14.

Don Xuan

Illustration III–3. Đón Xuân.
Hò kéo pháo (Haul the Big Gun)

From Chién Thbarang Đông Xuân – page 24. The lyrics in the copy I have are difficult to decipher (being a poor photocopy of a poorly printed original). The first verse is as follows:

Hò Kéo Pháo
Đo ta Đo ta là đờ ta Đơ ta a la đờ hờ đờ
Đêm kia suông lành đờ ta đó đờ đường tối den
đờ ta là đờ ta gian khó mà vân vui ta kéo pháo vào trần dia
Đơ ta a la đờ hờ đơ
Ra co công kéo pháo di cha kip ngày
Kéo pháo vào kéo vào tôi trần dia ta đơ ta
ở hờ đơ đơ
Kéo pháo lăn nay ta quyết tâm đơ ta ơ hờ đơ
Kính phuc mơi khó khăn để pháo cùng ta điet thù A

Haul the Big Gun
Yo-o ho-ho, Yo-o ho-ho
Carry over the cold frost yo-o carry along the road in the dark night
Yo-o ho-ho difficult but we are still happy hauling the gun to the battlefield
Yo-o ho-ho, Yo-o ho-ho
Strain to drag the gun in good time
Haul the gun along, drag it to the battlefield, Yo-o ho
Haul the gun, this time we are determined, yo-o ho-ho
Overcome every difficulty, so together with our gun we can kill the enemy A
Ho Keo Phao

 TU PHAC

Appendix IV
Translation of a Việt Minh Document

This translation has been made from a collection of Communist Party and Việt Minh documents published in 1977.\(^1\) The document in question has no date and is titled *Kinh nghiệm Việt Minh ở Việt Bắc*.

Experience of the Việt Minh in Northern Vietnam\(^2\)

IV Experience with Propaganda

On the propaganda side, in Northern Vietnam there was the newspaper *Independent Vietnam*, books, songs, exhibitions and the *Red Wind* propaganda team.

The newspaper VNDL\(^3\) was a small newspaper, written very simply, concise and easy to understand, very ordinary yet its influence was very great. It was, to some degree, the spirit of the organisations of national salvation in Northern Vietnam: wherever it went it spread revolutionary influence there, it was a credit to stable organisation there. It provided help for small groups to meet for discussion; it taught cadres great experience in their work, it provoked matters of revolutionary competition, it provoked a spirit of unity in associations; it criticised general defects of the regions, it raised high revolutionary examples for everyone to copy, it pressed for urgent work such as communications, self-defence... It was a clandestine newspaper sold for money, first in our country, yet also a clandestine newspaper most welcomed by the broad masses. The paper was published in 3 instalments each month and from one hundred copies each issue, increasing to 6 or 7 hundred, and it could increase more but had to be restricted because buying of ink and paper was very difficult. Members of the masses liked the newspaper very much, and contributed in great numbers – both with monetary contributions, and including thousands of lines.

The newspaper VNDL taught us a great lesson, that is written material for the masses must suit their level, must be universal, easily understood, concise. This special lesson had high value, because in our association, there are still comrades who continue to write articles for length, for a high level, to the extent that cadres

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1 See *Văn Kiến Đảng 1930-1945 (Lưu Hành Nội Bộ) - Tập 3*. The document translated here occurs on pages 461–487. This particular excerpt is from pages 471–473.
2 Although there is no date on the document, internal indications are that it was written after June 1943 and before March 1945.
3 The abbreviation “VNDL” for Việt Nam Độc Lập (*Independent Vietnam*) is used throughout the text.
can see, while not fully understanding, to nothing of the masses. Propaganda materials differ from published books in northern Vietnam, and also from newspapers such as VNDL which is based on following the needs and the level of the masses for writing.

Apart from the newspaper VNDL and books, the influence of songs is also worthy of special attention. Nothing is more quickly popular with the masses, nor excites them than singing. If a new song appears, then everyone learns it by heart, women, children, all learn it by heart. Very few young people who can read do not have copy-books of songs, and singing in local areas springs up like mushrooms. There are no conferences, no meetings, that close without eloquent and sad songs.

The Viet Minh organisation in northern Vietnam has organised a small exhibition of pictures including of the cruel Japanese enemy, and flags and banners of revolutionary organisations presented to us by other countries. Apart from these materials there is not very much else distinctive, but thanks to the method of organisation and skilful display, the exhibitions have become a demonstration of the people opposing the Japanese. If the exhibition teams arrive somewhere and open a meeting, it becomes quite lively.

The Red Wind propaganda team was only just organised in June 1943, and it has become famous. This is thanks to the skilful selection of propaganda programs, including speeches which are clear, intelligible, easy to understand, about urgent matters such as: why we must unite, asking where the revolution will be successful, when to rise up, how to oppose terror, preparation of armaments for the uprising, scorched earth, and one other item is the songs that are composed by the propaganda teams and are much loved, and in any cases where they are liked, the teams agree to “publish” immediately. But in the end it is due to the wide and generous organisation of the propaganda teams that they have that position and activity, and develop their influence.

Perhaps we can promote a way of propagating the names of past heroes and a way of publicising revolutionary terms. This way is to take the names of national heroes or revolutionary terms and make names for association members, for
villages, for cantons, for districts, provinces, such as Bội Châu province, Trần Phú district, Quang Trung area, Hoàng Hoa Thám canton, Khẩu Pháp mountain district, Âu Triệu Highway, Trong Con Highway, etc.

Use any methods for propaganda, but the content of the propaganda should be limited to any of these several slogans, the whole people united, prepare arms for the uprising, fight the French, fight the Japanese, independent Vietnam. And always hold to your own experience of the masses, use methods which are easy to understand, so that you win them over, and trust the masses.

4 I am assuming that D.c stands for Đường cấp "highway".
Appendix V
Slogans

The following selection of slogans has been gleaned mainly from party documents, a few from displays at museums and others from propaganda materials. They are here ordered by the most probable date of production or use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khâu hiệu</th>
<th>Slogan</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dánh dưới Nhật - Pháp!</td>
<td>Expel the French and Japs!</td>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dộc lập tự do!</td>
<td>Independence, freedom!</td>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thống nhất dân tộc!</td>
<td>Unite the people!</td>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cùng quân Giải Phóng, giết giặc cứu nước!</td>
<td>Together with the Liberation Army, kill the enemy, achieve national salvation!</td>
<td>1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hãy quay sung bán quân phát xít Tây Nhật!</td>
<td>Turn your rifles and fire on the French and Japanese fascists!</td>
<td>1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hướng ứng quân giải phóng cứu lấy nước Việt Nam!</td>
<td>Respond warmly to the liberation army, save and defend Vietnam!</td>
<td>1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hội đồng bào, đoàn kết lại!</td>
<td>Hey fellow countrymen, unite!</td>
<td>1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Đồng bào Nam Bộ muôn năm!</td>
<td>Long live our countryfolk of the South!</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nước Việt Nam độc lập muôn năm!</td>
<td>Long live independent Vietnam!</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Đồng dương độc lập muôn năm!</td>
<td>Long live independent Indochina!</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chống Pháp xâm lược!</td>
<td>Oppose French invasion!</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dân tộc trên hết. Tổ quốc trên hết!</td>
<td>People above all. Fatherland above all!</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giữ vững chính quyền!</td>
<td>Hold fast to government authority!</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toán dân đoàn kết!</td>
<td>All the people unite!</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Việt Nam dân chủ cộng hòa muôn năm!</td>
<td>Long live the Democratic Republic of Vietnam!</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Đánh đổ chính quyền bị nh实施, cùng cố cộng hòa dân chủ!</td>
<td>Overthrow the puppet regime, consolidate the democratic republic!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duei giac, tiêu phi, trừ gian!</td>
<td>Drive out the foreign aggressor, wipe out the bandits, eliminate traitors!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bảo toàn lãnh thổ, giữ vững chủ quyền!</td>
<td>Guard all of the territory, hold fast to sovereignty!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bảo vệ ngoại kiề!</td>
<td>Defend the overseas people!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cận kiếm liên chính! Kháng chiến thắng lợi!</td>
<td>The resistance will win!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chống mủ chử, chống xâm lăng!</td>
<td>Oppose illiteracy, oppose the invaders!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cướp sung giặc bán giặc!</td>
<td>Steal the invader's guns, shoot him!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giữ bí mật quân sự là cứu nước!</td>
<td>Keeping army secrets is saving the country!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 See Văn Kiện Đảng 1930-1945 (Lao Hành Nơi Bỏ) - Tập 3. (Anon, (ed.)) 1977, and Văn Kiện Đảng Về Kháng Chiến Chống Thúc Đảng Pháp. (Cương Nguyên, Quốc Bảo, Kim Dung and Diệp Bích, (eds.)) 1986. Translations are my own, but as most were done before I had acquired much facility with the language, and before I had access to a good dictionary, I am not confident of their accuracy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khẩu hiệu</th>
<th>Slogan</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giữ gào nuôi linh!</td>
<td>Guard the rice to sustain the soldier!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hãy nhập Hội liên hiệp quốc dân Việt Nam!</td>
<td>Hurry and join the Vietnam National Alliance!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoa - Việt tương trợ!</td>
<td>Chinese - Vietnamese help one another!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hết sức quấy rối quân dịch!</td>
<td>Do your best to harass the enemy troops!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kháng chiến khắp nơi!</td>
<td>Resist everywhere!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kháng chiến nhất định thăng lợi!</td>
<td>The resistance will certainly win!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liên Hiệp dân Pháp, đánh thực dân Pháp!</td>
<td>Ally with the French people, fight the colonists!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mọi làng là một pháo đài!</td>
<td>Every village a fortress!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mọi phố là một mặt trận!</td>
<td>Every street is a front!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mỗi viên đạn một quân thù!</td>
<td>Each bullet, one enemy soldier!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ứng hộ Chính phủ Hồ Chí Minh!</td>
<td>Support the Government of Ho Chi Minh!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quân dân một lòng!</td>
<td>Army and people, one heart and spirit!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tăng gia sản xuất để kháng chiến!</td>
<td>Increase production for the resistance!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thả chết không trở lại đời nô lệ!</td>
<td>Better to die than to return to a life of slavery!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theo gương kháng chiến anh dũng của đồng bào Nam Bộ!</td>
<td>Follow the brave resistance example of our fellow countyfolk in the South!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toàn dân đoàn kết kháng chiến lâu dài!</td>
<td>All of the people unite for a long resistance!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toàn dân kháng chiến!</td>
<td>All the people resist!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triệt để dùng chiến thuật du kích!</td>
<td>Thoroughly use guerilla warfare tactics!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Văn nghệ sĩ giúp kháng chiến!</td>
<td>Artists and writers, help the resistance!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Việt Nam độc lập thống nhất muôn năm!</td>
<td>Long live an independent, united Vietnam!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Việt Nam nhất định độc lập, Trung, Nam, Bắc nhất định thống nhất!</td>
<td>Vietnam will most certainly be independent, Centre, South, North undoubtedly united!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vừa kháng chiến vừa kiến quốc!</td>
<td>Simultaneously resist the enemy and build the country!</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Đội độc lập và thống nhất trong khối Liên hiệp Pháp!</td>
<td>Demand independence and unification in a French Union!</td>
<td>1947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cùng có chi bò, làm cho chi bò tự động!</td>
<td>Consolidate the Party cells, work for autonomous cells!</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cùng có hành chính cấp xã!</td>
<td>Consolidate administration at the commune level!</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hợp lý, mau lễ, kíp thôi!</td>
<td>Be sensible, quick to act, seize the day!</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Không một người dân mờ chữ!</td>
<td>Not one illiterate person!</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khẩu hiệu</td>
<td>Slogan</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngân dịch lại, chuyên sang giai đoạn thứ hai!</td>
<td>Check the enemy again, move towards the second stage!</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sáng tác và phát minh theo tinh thần yêu nước, cảm thucht!</td>
<td>Create and invent in a spirit of patriotism and revenge!</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tăng gia sản xuất để đủ ăn, đủ mặc, đủ vũ khí đánh giặc!</td>
<td>Increase production, so there is sufficient food, clothing and weapons to strike the aggressor!</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thi đua để đủ ăn, đủ mặc!</td>
<td>Emulate in order to have sufficient food, clothing!</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thi đua để thắng giặc!</td>
<td>Emulate in order to defeat the enemy!</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thi đua là đoàn kết, đoàn kết để thi đua!</td>
<td>Emulation is unity, unite in order to emulate!</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thi đua là kiên quốc!</td>
<td>Emulation is building the country!</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thi đua thắng lợi là kháng chiến thắng lợi!</td>
<td>Victorious emulation is victorious resistance!</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thực hiện đổi sống mới!</td>
<td>Realise a new life!</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toàn dân dúc thành một khối để kháng chiến lâu dài!</td>
<td>All the people make one bloc in order to carry out protracted resistance!</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yêu nước phải thi đua!</td>
<td>To be patriotic one must emulate!</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix VI
The Famine

Tao and Furuta, in their 1995 study of the famine in the northern and north-central parts of Vietnam, have estimated the proportion of people dead in various localities,\(^1\) some of their results being summarised in.\(^2\) Their estimates were collected by interviews with victims' relatives (some 50 years after the event) and by looking at what village and town records were available – this method of collection of statistics will, in my opinion, not produce very reliable or accurate results, but it may be the only method available to the authors at this distance in time. It is apparent that in these areas, all of which are in the Red River Delta, and all not far from Hanoi city, the death rate averaged around 35%.\(^3\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tây Lương [20°25’N, 106°31’W]</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quán Mục (Kiên An)</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Đông Côi (Nam Đình)</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bửi Xá (Quảng Yên)</td>
<td>75%(^4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bình Trung (Hà Nam)</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tây Yên (Ninh Bình)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Nhân Hạ (outside Hà Nội city)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phương Thống (Hưng Yên)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dương Húc (Bắc Ninh)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Khê Bắc (Hà Đông)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi Lai (An Lão, Hải Phòng)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nhữ Thình (Hải Dương)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cố Bi (Gia Lâm, Hà Nội)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table VI-1. Proportion of Population Dead by Starvation – some representative areas\(^5\)

To put these deaths into context, consider that over the nine year period of the Resistance Against the French, the number of Vietnamese who lost their lives is estimated at some 99,000,\(^6\) or an estimated 0.4% of the population.

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1 See Tao and Furuta 1995, pages 684–685.
2 Tao and Furuta quote their values to 3 or 4 significant figures – their method is unlikely to warrant such precision, and so I have rounded them to 1.5 significant figures for the purpose of this discussion.
3 Assuming the entry for Bửi Xá is a misprint, and should be 43.7%.
4 The figure as published is 73.7%, but this is probably a misprint, since these data were listed more-or-less in order of severity of the famine, and Tây Lương is named as the locality most severely affected (see Tao and Furuta 1995, page 684) – maybe it should be 53.7% or 43.7%.
5 was compiled by me from data published in Tao and Furuta 1995.
Colophon

This thesis was prepared using StarOffice 5.2 as the word processor, running on a FreeBSD 4.6.1 Unix system, with XFree86 Version 4.3.0 as the windowing system. The text was set using Adobe Type 1 fonts, mainly Times, with vntime and vnarial for the Vietnamese text. The Vietnamese fonts were converted from TrueType fonts from the set known as the ABC fonts. Pictures are generally JPEG or TIFF files. Endnote was used for the bibliography, and the database was prepared using FileMaker Pro, both running on a Windows XP system. The final copy of the thesis was prepared as a PDF file for viewing and printing using Adobe Acrobat Viewer. Copies are available on CD. The author can be contacted by e-mail:

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