

หนังสือพิมพ์และวารสารภาษาเวียดนาม
ในฐานะเอกสารประวัติศาสตร์
ในหอสมุดแห่งชาติอังกฤษ กรุงลอนดอน
The Vietnamese Periodical and
Newspaper Collection at the
British Library

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แม้ว่าหนังสือพิมพ์และวารสารภาษาเวียดนามในหอสมุดแห่งชาติกรุงลอนดอนจะมีจำนวนไม่มาก แต่นับได้ว่าเป็นเอกสารสำคัญยิ่งในการศึกษาสังคมเวียดนามในช่วงก่อนและหลังสงครามเวียดนาม หนังสือพิมพ์ของพรรคที่ตีพิมพ์ในแต่ละจังหวัดกว่า 30 จังหวัดในช่วง ค.ศ. 1964-1965 ที่เก็บอยู่ในหอสมุด นับเป็นบันทึกประวัติศาสตร์ที่สำคัญของเวียดนามในสองประเด็น คือ เรื่องสงครามเวียดนามและความพยายามที่จะสร้างรัฐสังคมนิยมเวียดนามในระยะเริ่มขณะเดียวกัน สื่อสิ่งพิมพ์จากสาธารณรัฐเวียดนาม (เวียดนามใต้) ก็เป็นหลักฐานประวัติศาสตร์สังคมและการเมืองของภาคใต้เวียดนามในยุคหัวเลี้ยวหัวต่อ ที่สื่อถูกใช้เป็นเครื่องมือของรัฐหลังสงครามเวียดนามยุติและเกิดคลื่นผู้อพยพชาวเวียดนามอพยพไปตั้งถิ่นฐานนอกประเทศ ได้นำไปสู่การเติบโตของสิ่งพิมพ์ของชาวเวียดนามอพยพ ที่เป็นบันทึกประวัติศาสตร์ของการต่อสู้กับอำนาจการปกครองที่กรุงฮานอยและการแสวงหาและดำรงเอกลักษณ์ของชาวเวียดนาม เอกสารเหล่านี้เป็นเอกสารอันสำคัญยิ่งของผู้ที่สนใจศึกษาเรื่องเวียดนาม



“Vietnamese newspapers and periodicals in the Vietnamese collections, the British Library”. They were taken by me on 1-6-2010.

Abstract

Vietnamese newspaper and serial collection at the British Library is a rich resource for anyone who is interested in undertaking research on contemporary Vietnam, especially the pre and post Indochina War period. The local and provincial newspapers from former North Vietnam during 1964–65 record an attempt of the Vietnamese Communist Party to create a successful socialist state in its nascent stage. It also demonstrates how printed media was used as a war propaganda machine. Likewise, printed media from former Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) during this period reflects an attempt by the state to use media as a counter propaganda machine. When Vietnam was officially reunited in 1976 and some Vietnamese chose to leave the country as refugees, the birth of newspapers and journals published by these overseas Vietnamese add a new aspect of Vietnamese studies. Their publications were used as a machine against the Hanoi regime. At the same time, they offered space for the overseas Vietnamese to discuss the problems of Vietnamese identities and ‘Vietnam-ness’.

Although **Gia Đình Báo**, the first Vietnamese newspaper in Vietnam was published from 1865¹, the collection of Vietnamese newspapers and periodicals at the British Library dates back only to the mid twentieth century. The oldest newspaper in our holding is **Công Báo** (Or.Mic.14116) from 1936–1949 and most of the materials in our collection date from the late 1950’s onwards. There are currently over 280 titles of Vietnamese periodicals and newspapers in the British Library’s collection. This report will only deal with some of the materials, namely those whose bibliographical details have already been checked.

In order to analyse the contents of these periodicals and newspapers, it is necessary to divide these materials into two groups; namely pre–1975 and post 1975 since the unification of Vietnam in April 1975 had some repercussions on publications in Vietnam.

¹ Nguyễn Ngũ Í. ‘100 năm báo chí Việt Nam’ in **Bách khoa thời đại**. No. 25 (15-1-1966), p.6

The pre-1975 periodicals and newspapers

Before the unification of Vietnam, the British Library received newspapers and periodicals from both the northern and the southern regimes. However, the materials we received from the North outnumbered those from the South in terms of both numbers of titles and volumes. Among these publications, the most interesting ones are arguably local or provincial newspapers from the North between 1964 and 1965. I believe the collection of these local and provincial newspapers at the British Library is unique and hence deserves to be discussed in detail.

Provincial newspapers from North Vietnam, 1964-1965: the reflection of nascent socialist Vietnam

The British Library has about thirty one titles of these newspapers in its holdings. None of these are complete and some titles have only a small number of volumes. All of them were run by the Vietnamese Workers Party (Đảng Lao Động Việt Nam—the official name of the Vietnamese Communist Party until December 1976) (Duiker, 1995 : 109) at provincial level. Most of them started publishing in 1964; some were published every five days and some twice a week.

These newspapers give an impression that, as a party political organ, they shared the same task of propagating communist ideas to the Vietnamese at local level. However, perusing them allows readers to have a wider picture of rural Northern Vietnam in the 1960's. For instance, many newspapers published stories of how to build successful communes in different villages across the North. In its editorial on the 4th November 1964 issue, **Hải Dương Mới** called for cooperation from everybody in the province to help the Party to build

prosperous socialist communes by increasing financial power of village cooperatives. It said that the commune's finance was the foundation for the country's finance. To achieve this goal, collectivisation of agricultural cooperatives was vital and it would turn the countryside into socialist society.² The front page of these newspapers always published photos of members of a commune helping each other in rice fields or farms which helped to replenish the country's food supplies. **Hà Đông** reported on its 15th November 1964 issue that Hòa Xá, Phú Yên and Ngọc Sơn cooperatives had fulfilled their duties of providing food provisions (mainly rice) in form of taxes for the government. Many cooperatives started sowing summer rice seeds but still late.³ Reports on an increase in agricultural products in each season were also regularly published. A headline which reads 'Đầu Lãm cooperatives produce 1,103 kilogrammes of rice per mầu (about 3,600 square metres) – an increase of 193 kilogrammes compared with last year'⁴ or similarly can be found in almost every issue of these provincial newspapers.⁵ These stories clearly reflect nascent socialist North Vietnam after slightly over a decade of implementation of socialism and nationalisation of land which began in the mid 1950's. The Party needed to prove to the Vietnamese that socialism, and in particular the commune system, worked and it needed to encourage its people to co-operate with the Party and to work hard to build a successful socialist state. **Lạng Sơn** (SU224/19) published in its 1 November 1964 issue that the province had seen 4,058 households more become members of

² "Tăng cường lãnh đạo tài chính xã, phục vụ xây dựng chủ nghĩa xã hội, làm cho nông thôn giàu, đẹp" in **Hải Dương Mới**. No.260 (4-11-1964) (SU224/18), p.1

³ "Xã Hòa Xá, Phú Yên, Ngọc Sơn đã hoàn thành nghĩa vụ lương thực, nhiều nơi gieo mạ chiêm còn chậm" in **Hà Đông**. No.172 (15-11-1964) (SU224/14), p.1

⁴ **Hải Dương Mới**. No.263 (14-11-1964), p.1

⁵ For example; 'Gặt xong 95% diện tích mùa lúa nhiều xã khá tốt' in **Hà Đông** No.175 (30-11-1964) (SU224/14), p.1; 'Nhân dân tỉnh ta đã nhập kho được 4,870 tấn 678 cân thóc nghĩa vụ' in **Hà Bắc** No.170 (17-11-1964) (SU224/13), p.1

agricultural cooperatives because they realised it would be beneficial for them to join the cooperatives under the party's leadership.⁶

Newspapers as a war propaganda machine

As the Indochina War escalated in the 1960's and the Johnson administration began the systematic heavy bombing of the north⁷, these local newspapers were used as a war propaganda machine to spread anti-American and anti-South Vietnam regime propaganda. On its 2nd June 1965 issue, **Hà Tây** published on its front page a call from the Hà Tây provincial central administrative bureau of the Party to the people of the province to keep up revolutionary spirit in order to protect the province and its inhabitants, to strengthen their agricultural and industrial productivity to support the fight against imperialist America and to help liberate the South.⁸ To further encourage revolutionary spirit and 'nationalism', the same newspaper published a photo of an American bombing aircraft flying over Hà Tây with a headline reading 'Five American planes shot down and three American pilots captured alive! People of the province take to the street to celebrate ...'⁹ In the 10th March 1965 issue, **Quảng Bình** published photos of successful military campaigns against American bombings of the province on 7th, 8th and 11th February 1965. The photos show American planes which were shot down and an American soldier who was killed during the attacks.¹⁰

⁶ "Tình ta có thêm 4,058 hộ xã viên htx nông nghiệp" in **Lạng Sơn** No.37 (1-11-1965), p.3.

⁷ Nicholas Tarling, ed. *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, Vol. 2. p.607

⁸ ...Xuất phát từ yêu cầu khẩn trương cứu nhiệm vụ. 'chống Mỹ, cứu nước'... nhiệm vụ trước mắt của đảng bộ và nhân dân trong tỉnh là: Nâng cao hơn nữa nhiệt tình cách mạng, ra sức khai thác khả năng tiềm tàng của địa phương để phát triển nông nghiệp, công nghiệp một cách nhanh, ... đồng thời tích cực chuẩn bị sẵn sàng chiến đấu và chiến đấu dũng cảm, đánh bại mọi âm mưu hành động xâm lược của đế quốc Mỹ, nhằm góp phần tích cực vào công cuộc xây dựng và bảo vệ miền Bắc, ủng hộ cách mạng giải phóng miền Nam và bảo đảm đời sống của nhân dân trong tỉnh. ... **Hà Tây**, No.1 (2-6-1965), p.1

⁹ **Hà Tây**, No.18 (29-7-1965), p.1

¹⁰ "Một số hình ảnh hoạt động của quân dân tỉnh ta trong những ngày chiến đấu chống máy bay Mỹ (7,8,11-2-65)" in **Quảng Bình**, Số 140 (10 May 1965), p. 3.

The headline of **Nam Hà** of 28th May 1965 reads “300 American aircrafts have been shot down in the North”. The news further reports that between 5th August 1964 and 27th May 1965, three hundred American aircrafts were shot down. The latest success took place on 25th May 1965 when the army and people of Thanh Hòa and Nghệ An shot down three aircrafts and on 27th May 1965, another American aircraft was shot down in Vinh.¹¹

News coverage of the success of military campaigns in the South, especially in Biên Hòa and Mỹ Tho where American air forces and armies were based, was a regular feature in these local newspapers during this period. For example, the headline of **Hà Tĩnh** on the 6th June 1964 issue reads ‘The liberation army seizes Bien Hoa air field, destroys 27 American aircrafts, 36 Americans die and injured’¹² In its 30th December 1965 issue, **Nam Hà** reports the success of its guerrilla warfare against America. During the 1-12 December military campaigns in Mỹ Tho and Biên Hòa, 113 enemies were killed and an F4 jet was shot down.¹³

When Nguyễn Văn Trôi, a member of the National Liberation Front in the South was arrested and was sentenced to death by firing squad on 15th October 1964, almost every local newspaper in the North published the news and articles about him and portrayed him as a martyr. His last words before he was executed were published in the front page of **Hải Dương Mới** as he said ‘Remember my words. Down with American imperialism! Long live Vietnam! Long live Ho Chi Minh’ (Hãy nhớ lấy lời tôi. Đả đảo đế quốc Mỹ! Việt Nam muôn năm! Hồ chủ tịch muôn năm!). The same newspaper also published an article dedicated to him on page three with a title ‘Nguyễn Văn Trôi

¹¹ “300 máy bay Mỹ bị bắn rơi trên miền Bắc” in **Nam Hà** (SU224/20), Số 4 (28th May 1965), p.1.

¹² “Quan giải phóng tiến công sân bay Biên Hòa, bắn tan và bắn hỏng 27 máy bay Mỹ, 36 tên Mỹ chết và bị thương” **Hà Tĩnh**. No.224 (6-11-1964), p.1

¹³ “Chống càn và đánh địch trên các đường giao thông, diệt 113 tên” in **Nam Hà**, Số 91 (28-12-1965), p.4.

who lives and dies as a communist' (Nguyễn Văn Trôi sống và chết như một người cộng sản).¹⁴ Other newspapers also published his stories in their front page.¹⁵

The communist party's mass mobilisation in the north was orchestrated throughout society and did not limit itself to local newspapers. As the party controlled all publications in all sectors, it expanded the rôle of the press as a war propaganda machine to every sector of society. Pupils, students and teachers were also targeted. **Người Giáo Viên Nhân Dân** (SU226/5), a weekly newspaper published by the Ministry of Education to report news on education started to launch anti-American War campaign in 1965. In its 18 February 1965 issue, Võ Thuần Nho, deputy minister for Education wrote an article which made a headline on the front page of the newspaper. He urged all teachers, pupils and students to do their best to teach, to study and to work together and to be vigilant and be prepared to join the defence of the fatherland.¹⁶ It also published a photo of a self defence unit of the teaching personnel at Quảng Bình province who were ready to launch attacks at American aircrafts. It should be noted that Quảng Bình was heavily air bombed by the Americans in the 1960's. All through 1965, the newspaper kept on publishing articles on its front page to remind teachers, students and pupils to maintain their fighting spirit against the Americans and their determination to build Vietnam as a successful socialist country.

Thiếu Niên Tiền Phong (Children's Vanguard/SU224/3), a fortnightly newspaper for children, did not miss any opportunity to promote

¹⁴ For instance; **Hà Bắc** published his photo before he was brought to the gallows with a caption: Trước khi bị giặc xừ bắn...anh Nguyễn Văn Trôi hiên ngang và đêm tình nâng cao đầu, cất giọng đanh thép: "Hãy nhớ lấy lời tôi! Đả đảo đế quốc Mỹ! Việt Nam muôn năm! Hồ Chủ tịch muôn năm". **Hà Bắc**, No.167 (6-11-1964), p.1; **Hà Đông** published the same photo and had a similar headline. **Hà Đông**, No.170 (5-11-1964), p.1.

¹⁶ "Toàn thể cán bộ, giáo viên, sinh viên, học sinh hãy ra sức công tác, giảng dạy, học tập, nâng cao cảnh giác, chuẩn bị sẵn sàng tham gia bảo vệ tổ quốc" in **Người Giáo Viên Nhân Dân**, Số 129 (18th February 1965), p. 1.

anti-American sentiments and pride in the nation among children. Its news coverage on the Tết Offensive of January–February 1968 demonstrates the exaggerated success of North Vietnam. In its 20 February 1968 issue, **Thiếu Niên Tiền Phong** reports the success of the Tết Offensive campaigns by listing high numbers of casualties of the American and South Vietnam regime and details of attacks in the various places in the South.¹⁷

Publications in the South: Counter propaganda attacks from the South

Whilst the communist regime in the north used the press for its propaganda purposes down to local level, the southern regime did not exercise its propaganda machine as vigorously as its northern counterpart. Anti-communist newspapers published in South Vietnam were mainly based in Saigon. The British Library holds a small number of these newspapers from the 1950's. Among them, **Tiếng Dội** (Echo, OP731/1 or OR MIC12138) and **Thần Chung** (Morning Bell, OP730) are arguably the most interesting daily newspapers from the South in the 1950s that the Library has in its collection. Both newspapers were published in Sài Gòn by pro-French and anti-communist groups. Although the collection of these two newspapers is incomplete and the Library only has in its holdings between 1951–1954, it is the record of one of the most interesting junctures of Vietnamese history; i.e., the First Indochina War. The newly established communist regime in the North was not welcome among pro-French and anti-communist southern Vietnamese. This attitude was clearly reflected in **Tiếng Dội** and **Thần Chung**. In its 21st June 1951 issue, **Tiếng Dội** published an article on its front page

¹⁷ “Qua 6 ngày tổng tiến công và nổi dậy đồng loạt, quân và dân miền nam đã: diệt hơn 5 vạn tên địch (hơn 1 vạn tên Mỹ)” in **Thiếu Niên Tiền Phong**, số 555 (20-2-1968), pp.1-2.

entitled “Một dân tộc phải có một lịch sử!! (‘A nation must have history’), which strongly criticised the Việt Minh. Some of the article reads as follows:

Người Việt quốc gia từ trước đã bảo Việt Minh là Cộng sản, mọi người không nhận và không cho là đúng, một phần vì V.M. cực lực che dấu bộ mặt thật Cộng sản...người Việt quốc gia bảo Cộng sản là bán nước, là nô lệ cho Nga-sô...¹⁸

(The Vietnamese have long pointed out that Viet Minh are communists. It is correct that everybody does not accept and does not allow partly because Viet Minh vehemently conceal the true face of communists... The Vietnamese who are communists are selling the country and are the slaves of the Soviet Union...)

During the critical juncture of the First Indochina War, both newspapers had news coverage of the fighting between the Viet Minh and the French-South Vietnamese troops in the northern and central Vietnam. Most of the time, they reported the military successes of the French-South Vietnamese forces in various battlefields. However, as the First Indochina War came close to an end, news from the battlefields also changed. Interestingly, there was hardly any coverage on the defeat of the French-South Vietnamese forces at Điện Biên Phủ in May 1954 issues of *Thần Chung* even though the newspaper had reported on the preparation for the battle of Điện Biên Phủ since January 1954. There were also reports on the Geneva conference to solve the Indochina questions right after the fall of French in Vietnam.

The serials from South Vietnam during the Second Indochina War in 1960s in our holdings include **Chiến Hữu** (Brothers-in-Arms)(SU216/84,

¹⁸ “Một dân tộc phải có lịch sử” in *Tiếng Đội*, Năm 3, số 407 (21 Juin 1951), p.1, p.4.

only one issue from August 1966) **Chiến Thắng** (Victory)(SU209/2, only one issue of 23 October 1966), **Chiến Sĩ Công Hòa** (Republic Soldiers) (SU203, 1967-1972, odd issues and 1968 missing) and **Gió Việt** (Wind) (SU209/4, 1968-1969). **Chiến Sĩ Công Hòa**, as its title suggesting, reports news on military operations and military cooperation between the United States and the Saigon regime against communists in the south. Many issues publish photos of loss of life and war casualties as a result of communist attacks in the villages in the south. For instance, in its 1st July 1970 issue, **Chiến Sĩ Công Hòa** published two pages of photos of the villagers of Phú Thạnh, Đà province, who were attacked and killed by communist armies who “liberated” the village on 11 June 1970. All together, 78 people were killed, 87 people were seriously injured and 316 houses were destroyed.¹⁹ Stories of successful military operations against the Vietcong were also published to boost morale of both servicemen and people in the south in general. In its 1st October 1971 issue, **Chiến Sĩ Công Hòa** ran a story and photos entitled “Operation Lâm Sơn 810”.²⁰ It summed up the success of the military operations of the Hắc Báo Unit up to 15th September 1971: 172 communists killed and a long list of war equipments and provisions of the Việt Cộng being confiscated and destroyed.²¹ These stories are historical records of Vietnam during the war, regardless of how distorted they may be.

Gió Việt (Wind) (SU209/4), a fortnightly journal published in Saigon in favour of the southern regime with strong criticism of the Hanoi regime had a column called Vietnam Digest at the end of each issue. This column

¹⁹ “Cộng quân tàn sát thường dân xã Phú Thạnh” in **Chiến Sĩ Công Hòa**, No.225 (1st July 1970), pp.8-9.

²⁰ Operation Lâm Sơn was a military campaign against the communists operated by the South Vietnamese regime and supported by the Americans in 1971. They were to test whether the Vietnamisation would work and also to stop the communists travelling along the Hồ Chí Minh Trail to South Vietnam. (Morris & Hills, A.,2006 : 59)

²¹ “Cuộc hành quân Lâm Sơn 810” in **Chiến Sĩ Công Hòa**, No.253 (1st October 1971), pp.8-9.

presents news round up from English and French language newspapers which are clearly in favour of the southern regime and blamed Hanoi for breaking the Geneva convention. For instance, in its November 1969 issue, **Gió Việt** re-published an article entitled “Uninvolved Hanoi” from **Los Angeles Times** (14 October 1969) about the way the prisoners of war were treated by Hanoi. It reads:

North Vietnam has consistently maintained that the Geneva Convention does not apply to the war since the Hanoi regime is not involved in it. The American prisoners it holds are being held not as prisoners of war but as civil criminals and therefore are outside the protection of the Geneva Convention, Hanoi contends. The ICRC has been seeking admission to North Vietnamese POW camps on humanitarian grounds but without success...²²

The criticism that it was Hanoi who was in the wrong in the Indochina War was reiterated throughout **Gió Việt**. In its October 1968 issue, the journal published “Message from R.V.N. Minister of Foreign Affairs to U.N. Secretary General U Thanh” which reads:

...The ink was hardly dry on the Geneva Agreements which they themselves signed in 1954 before the North Vietnamese leaders began to violate them systematically....Then began a period of propaganda along with acts of terrorism so as to undermine the authority of the legal Government and intimidate the people. North Vietnamese politico-military cadres, weapons and ammunition were infiltrated at an increasing rate into the South....

²² **Gió Việt**. Số 38 (Tháng mười một, 1969), p.31.

...Throughout these last 14 years, the people and Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam are therefore the daily victims of an immense campaign of subversion and aggression fomented, directed and ceaselessly supported by the Hanoi regime, with the assistance of the Communist bloc...²³

Việt Nam Đấu Tranh và Xây Dựng (War and Reconstruction) [SU205/5 (2)], an illustrated monthly magazine published in Sài Gòn demonstrates strong anti-communism in the North. It portrays the communist regime in Hà Nội as oppressive and the people who live under the regime had to suffer tremendously.²⁴ Similarly, **Vietnam: Yesterday and Today** (SU201/7) a monthly magazine published in English by the Southern Vietnamese Embassy in London gives an image of the regime in South Vietnam as a peace seeker and the communist regime in the North as the aggressor. Its cover of the no.9 (October 1968) issue publishes the following lines “South Viet-Nam wants peace and a chance to build in freedom. North Viet-Nam, backed by the Communist bloc, wants a military victory and domination of the South by force, regardless of the cost in blood.”²⁵ Hence there were regular reports of civil casualties as a result of the communist attacks in the South with illustrations of dislocated villagers or badly destroyed and war-torn communities. The main contents of the magazine were obviously aimed at promoting the southern regime and the close co-operation with the United States and its allies. However, it also contains interesting articles on Vietnamese culture, history and literature. Since the Paris peace talks resumed from 1969 after the Tết Offensive in the previous year, it published

²³ **Gió Việt**. Số 4 (tháng tuần tháng mười, 1968), p. 31.

²⁴ For example “Mua xuân hòa bình và thống nhất” claims that “...tài miền Bắc gần 17 triệu đồng bào ta phải sống dưới một chế độ áp bức và bóc lột.” in **Việt Nam Đấu Tranh và Xây Dựng**, số 1 (January 1965?), p.17

²⁵ **Viet-Nam Yesterday and Today**, no.9 (October 1968), front cover.

provocative reports on the progress of the peace talks and off course with negative and critical comments of the communist regime in North Vietnam. In its February 1969 issue, there was a detailed report of the peace talk on 25 January 1969 in which Mr Pham Dang Lam, the Vietnamese ambassador, told the meeting

“...The Communist side must not be misled by our desire for peace, but have the courage to look squarely at the truth to recognise that it has failed in its designs of aggression and annexation of South Vietnam. If the Communist side should persist in its dreams and illusions of victory and not forego its dark designs, the war will go on...let your side be brave enough to accept the truth—that your war of aggression has completely failed. You will never able to take the South by force...”²⁶

In comparison to the communist press from North Vietnam, **Vietnam: Yesterday and Today** was probably the most aggressive propaganda machine of the southern regime that the British Library has in its collection.

Two other interesting publications from South Vietnam are **Công Báo Việt Nam Cộng Hòa, Ấn Bản Quốc Hội** (Vietnam Gazette) (SU193 (1)&(2) and **Hạ Nghị Viên** (Lower House)(SU193/3, 1968–1970). **Công Báo Việt Nam Cộng Hòa, Ấn Bản Quốc Hội** published minutes from the Senate sessions. The British Library has in its holding from 1959–1975. **Hạ Nghị Viên**, which was published fortnightly, reported meetings of the House of Representatives. Interesting arguments and debates on the Indochina War and South Vietnam foreign policy by the members of these two houses can be found from both newspapers.

²⁶ “The republic of Vietnam takes part in the new Paris meetings” in Vietnam: **Yesterday and Today**, no.2 (February, 1969), p.10.

The Library also has in its collections two interesting official publications from the Republic of Vietnam; i. e., **Việt Nam Niên Giám Thống Kê** (Statistics of Vietnam) (SU200) and **Niên Giám Hành Chánh** (Vietnam Directory) (SU198/5). **Việt Nam Niên Giám Thống Kê** or Statistical Yearbook of Vietnam is a useful source for economic and social studies of South Vietnam. The Library has in its holdings from 1950–1972. As for **Niên Giám Hành Chánh** or the administrative directory of South Vietnam, it gives useful information of central and local administration of the Republic of Vietnam. The Library has in its holdings from 1963–1971. These two titles can be considered as an important official source for South Vietnam in our holdings since the British Library has a much smaller number of official publications from South Vietnam in comparison to those from North Vietnam during the Indochina War period. However, readers should take extra care in using data from either South or North Vietnam during the war period since many publications were at least in part political propaganda.

Tin Tức Miền Bắc (News from the North) (ZOR1993.a.197), a monthly²⁷ journal probably published in South Vietnam is a very strong and systematic critic of the communist regime in the North. It gathered excerpts from the North Vietnamese press and then presented them grouped under various topics such as politics, military operations, culture and education. At the end of each section it would have analytical criticisms with the purpose of counter attacking the northern regime and to point out that all of the strategies and policies employed by the North were doomed to failure.

²⁷ “...Lý do là tại miền Bắc...phong trào hợp tác hóa nông nghiệp trên nghiên tấcdược xem như đã hoàn tất. Ruộng đất, trâu bò, cây bừa đều thành của nhà nước và nông dân trở nên những người làm thuê cho đảng (nấp dưới chiêu bài hợp tác xã). Nhưng một khi phương tiện sản xuất đã là của chung thì không ai đại gì bỏ công lao, thì giờ để săn sóc, giữ gìn nữa. Người ta chỉ làm cho xong công việc giao phó để hưởng công, điếm còn mùa màng có xấu, trâu bò có đói, họ cũng chẳng quan tâm....” in “Nông nghiệp : bài phân tích”, **Tin Tức Miền Bắc**. Số 14 (tháng 9 năm 1965), p. 62.

For instance, while the communist press in the North during 1964-1965 reported the great success of agricultural co-operatives and collectivisation, **Tin Tức Miền Bắc** in the same period claimed that there was chronic shortage of food and agricultural products and the people in the North were faced with poverty. It furthered argued that the root cause of all these problems was the introduction of the co-operatives and collectivisation in agricultural production by the communist regime. Thanks to the collectivisation, all rice fields, cattle and farming tools became state property and farmers became employees of the communist party under the mask of the co-operatives. Since the means of production now became communal property, nobody wanted to contribute their labour to the work because they thought it was a waste of time. They just did what they were assigned to do in order to get work points, notwithstanding whether the harvest would be poor or if the cattle would starve.

Tập Sân Quốc Phòng (National Defence)(SU209/12), a monthly journal published in Sài Gòn offers serious research articles on military, political, economic and social affairs of South Vietnam with severe criticism against the northern regime. The articles also have abstracts in English. In hindsight, it is interesting to see how analytically truthful these articles were when authors analysed political circumstances in South Vietnam during the war year. For instance, in Trần Văn Trí's articles entitled Leadership in Vietnam, the author suggests

“The war which is being conducted by the South Vietnamese people against the Communists is a self-defence one. Although South Vietnam has become the real victim of an overt aggression, this country received only little moral support from the countries in the world. The main reason to explain it is that our Information and Propaganda Agencies as well as our Diplomatic

Missions have failed to function properly and effectively so as to convince the world's opinion of the just cause of our fighting.”²⁸

As far as newspapers are concerned, the British Library has a relatively small number from South Vietnam in comparison with those from North Vietnam. **Nhật Báo Tiền Tuyến** (Front Line) (SU209), a daily newspaper published in Saigon gives a general news round up of what was happening in the war against the communists. Its front page normally carried headlines which illustrated American-South Vietnamese military success against the communists in a similar fashion to what the press in North Vietnam did during the war. In its 3rd December 1968 issue, **Nhật Báo Tiền Tuyến** reported that under the Operation Hung Quân 1/81, 453 communist soldiers were struck off, 88 weapons were confiscated, 54 secret tunnels were destroyed and 3,000 people were liberated in the Đà Nẵng-Quảng Nam region.²⁹ Reports on peace negotiations or attempts to organise peace talks were regularly published. **Tia Sáng** (Ray of Morning Sunshine) (SU209/3), another daily newspaper published in Sài Gòn demonstrates strong anti-communist standing; however, the Library only has a very small number of this title (20-26 September 1969) in the collection. **Tin Sớm** (Early News) (SU209/9), another anti-communist newspaper published in Sài Gòn has a good coverage on the coup d'état which toppled Prince Hihanouk in 1970. However, the Library keeps only one issue of this title (No.1617, 20-21 March, 1970)

Other serials -pre-1975

Apart from the obviously political-orientated publications from North and South Vietnam, the British Library also keeps a good number of serials

²⁸ Trần Văn Trí. “Vấn đề lãnh đạo ở Việt Nam” in **Tập San Quốc Phòng**, số 25 (tháng 7, 1972), p.72.

²⁹ “453 Cộng quân bị loại trong chiến dịch Hung Quân 1/81 gần Đà Nẵng, 88 vũ khí bị tịch thu, 54 hầm bí mật bị phá hủy, 3.000 dân được giải thoát” in **Nhật Báo Tiền Tuyến** Số 1081 (3-12-1968), p.1.

which can be considered as non political-orientated or mildly-political-orientated. Again in this respect, publications from the North have greater volumes than the ones from the South. A large number of these publications are for professional or educational purposes and their titles clearly indicate the publication purposes. Some of the pre-1975 still existed after the end of the Indochina War. Examples of these professional or educational serials are **Kỹ Thuật Công Nghiệp Nhẹ** (Light Industry Technology), **Kỹ Thuật Công Nghiệp** (Industrial Technology), **Luật Học** (Law Studies), **Điện** (Electricity), **Chăn Nuôi** (Husbandry) and **Ngôn Ngữ** (Language and Literature), etc.

Post-1975 materials

After the Indochina War came to an end in 1975 and Hanoi began to convert the South to socialism in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, many Vietnamese left Vietnam. Vietnamese refugees who were eventually allowed to settle in the third countries (mainly in the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia) started to build their new life in a foreign land. It was during this period that overseas Vietnamese started to write about their homeland and published a large number of publications to reflect their feelings and their political viewpoints. Even before the fall of Sài Gòn, the overseas Vietnamese, especially those who resided in France, started to publish newspapers to reflect their opinions and concerns about the political situation and the war in Vietnam. They also expressed their disappointment with the southern regime and the United States. Two examples of this are **Tin Quê Hương** (Homeland News) (SU209/8) and **Tin Sáng Hải Ngoại** (Overseas Morning News)(OP1205), both published in Paris.

Overseas Vietnamese publications in the early period after the fall of South Vietnam reflect two main features: nostalgia for their homeland and

Vietnamese culture and strong antagonism towards the communist regime in Vietnam, as clearly demonstrated in their titles, such as **Hồn Việt Nam** (Vietnamese Spirit), **Đất Việt** (Vietnamese Land), **Chính Nghĩa** (Just Cause) and **Độc Lập** (Independence).

The British Library has in its holdings a good number of overseas Vietnamese publications, especially journals and magazines from Northern America and Europe. Among these, **Hồn Việt** (literary translated as Vietnamese spirit), a monthly magazine published by the Vietnamese in California, is arguably the most notable as it is the largest in number in our collection. It claims that it is the first Vietnamese magazine published by Vietnamese refugees in the United States.³⁰ The British Library holds this title from 1981 to the present (with one issue from April 1976 and one issue from September 1978) under the shelf mark 16641.e.5.

Hồn Việt was first published in 1975, not long after South Vietnam fell to Hanoi in April of that year. During its early years, **Hồn Việt** reported on the changes brought into South Vietnam by the communist regime from the North. When the Hanoi regime introduced strict socialism to the South and many Vietnamese left the country and became refugees, the issue gripped the magazine. Many issues of **Hồn Việt** in the early 1980s contain reports covering the plight of Vietnamese refugees, especially those who were detained in refugee camps in Thailand.³¹ It also runs a column called “sợi giây (contact) to help Vietnamese refugees who lived in different places to track down or to get in touch with their relatives.

As a long running publication, **Hồn Việt** reflects changing attitudes of overseas Vietnamese in different aspects over time. For instance, in its 15th

³⁰ “Tờ báo Việt ngữ đầu tiên của người tỵ nạn tại Hoa Kỳ.” **Hồn Việt** (Jan-Feb. 2006), p. 4.

³¹ “Một lòng một dạ với 13 ngàn đồng bào tỵ nạn lâm nguy ở Thái” in **Hồn Việt** Số 131 (1-15 September 1981), p. 4.

July 1981 issue, the magazine published an interview with Nguyễn Cao Kỳ, former vice president of the Republic of Vietnam on occasion of the meeting of Hội Cựu Chiến Sĩ Việt Nam (the Association of Former Vietnamese Soldiers) in California on 28th June 1981. The discreet purpose of this association was to unite former South Vietnamese soldiers who lived abroad after the fall of Saigon to fight against the communist regime in Hanoi. When asked by the interviewer whether he would like to say something before the meeting started, General Kỳ said that South Vietnam was defeated because the army was divided. The former Vietnamese soldiers must try to unite with one purpose; i.e., “to return to Saigon and liberate our homeland” (...tại sao không ...) ³² However, eight years later, in his interview with the BBC in September 1989 and published in the October 1989 issue of **Hồn Việt**, General Kỳ said that under current circumstances, the overseas Vietnamese must change their method to fight against the communists in Vietnam because the arms struggle was not practical anymore. (...phương thức dùng vũ lực để đấu tranh với Cộng Sản Việt Nam của những người Việt ở hải ngoại là điều không thực tế...) ³³ It should be noted that General Nguyễn Cao Kỳ gave this BBC interview fourteen years after Vietnam was unified and by 1989 the Hanoi regime seemed to be able to establish political stability both in the North and the South and the country had been under the economic reform.

In the 21st century **Hồn Việt** is still critical of some of Hanoi’s policies. However, it now places more emphasis on cultural issues and entertainment than political ones. There are columns that introduce Vietnamese culture, literature and language to the second generation of overseas Vietnamese. It also keeps overseas Vietnamese updated with the latest political and

³² “Phỏng vấn tướng Kỳ” in **Hồn Việt** S ố 128 (15th July 1981), pp. 16-17.

³³ “Cựu phó Tổng Nguyễn Cao Kỳ trả lời phỏng vấn đại BBC” in **Hồn Việt** Số 73 (October 1989), p. 8.

economic developments in Vietnam. **Hồn Việt** nowadays works as a link between the overseas Vietnamese and their fatherland, which is in line with its editorial on the occasion of its sixth anniversary, announcing that it has the difficult task of keeping, protecting and developing the mother tongue and fatherland. (...Cũng kính xin góp phần vào công việc cam go: Giữ Thơm, Bảo vệ và Phát Huy Tiếng Mẹ, Nước Mẹ”)³⁴

Tạp Chí Văn Nghệ Tiền Phong (Art and Literature Vanguard) (16641.e.11), a fortnightly magazine published in Virginia is dedicated to “the good old days” of South Vietnam. Its front cover always publishes photos of southern towns or scenic spots of South Vietnam. The contents have columns in which overseas Vietnamese express their nostalgic feelings; for instance, in its 1985 Vietnamese New Year issue, it published a poem written by Hoàng Thị Đáo Tiếp entitled “Nhớ Việt Nam” (Missing Viet Nam). Part of the poem reads:

Ôi Việt Nam trái tim ta đó
 Của đời ta và của các con ta
 Của mỗi người đang phải đi xa
 Yêu thương lắm viết sao tròn nhưng nhớ³⁵

(Oh Vietnam our heart
 Our lives and our children’s lives
 Vietnam, the heart of everybody who is far away from it
 How can I write to get over my passionate love?)

Together with nostalgic sentiments, the magazine was also very critical of the communist regime in Hanoi. It reported the activities of the **Mặt Trận Quốc Gia Thống Nhất Giải Phóng Việt Nam**” (the National United

³⁴ “Thư cáo biệt đọc già” in **Hồn Việt**, Số 126 (15th June 1981), p. 3.

³⁵ Hoàng Thị Đáo Tiếp. “Nhớ Việt Nam” in **Văn Nghệ Tiền Phong**, Xuân Ất Sửu, 1985. pp.24-25.

Front for the Liberation of Vietnam) which was an organisation of overseas Vietnamese against the Hanoi regime. It also published articles or readers' letters criticising Hanoi's policy. When Hanoi changed the name of Sài Gòn to Hồ Chí Minh City, Nguyễn Quân wrote in the June 1985 that the loss of the name Sài Gòn led to the loss of the city's atmosphere of prosperity and vitality. Even though after 1975 Sài Gòn was still livelier than Hanoi, it was not as bustling and lively as it used to be. The Saigon people on the street looked very miserable and quiet, as if they were going to a funeral.³⁶

Ái Hữu (Association, Intimate, Close Friend), a serial published by overseas Vietnamese in south Paris, demonstrates a strong political viewpoint; i.e., fighting against the Hanoi regime. The illustrations and captions on many of its covers clearly expressed political disagreement with the communist government. For instance, the 9th issue (1-05-1981) has a caption *Quốc Hận* 30-4 (national resentment, hatred), referring to the last day of the southern regime at the end of April 1975 with graphic designs of army tanks (from the north) invading the south with blood and skulls and a dead body of a woman alongside. In its Vietnamese New Year 1982 issue, **Ai Hữu** published the editorial entitled *thống nhất hay liên hợp* calling all overseas Vietnamese to unify and co-operate to bring down the communist regime in Hanoi. It said that since the end of the Saigon regime, the anti-communist movement had become stronger. However, this movement could be divided into two groups. The first movement placed emphasis on culture and mutual aid. Even though they would like to fight against the communist regime, they did not have the capability to achieve their goal. Most overseas Vietnamese belonged to this group. The second group was

³⁶ 'Từ thủ đô Sài Gòn đến thành phố Hồ Chí Minh' (From Saigon to the town of Hồ Chí Minh's spirit in **Tạp Chí Văn Nghệ Tiền Phong**, Số 226 (June 1985), p. 3.

dedicated to fighting against communism and they comprised mainly notable personalities who experienced political fighting with arms. However, their membership was limited to a small group of Vietnamese and their activities were only known among themselves, not to the public.³⁷ No individual Vietnamese grouping from the south would be able to achieve the ultimate goal of toppling down the communist regime. The only way to achieve was to reunite both groups together and adopted two strategies; mass mobilisation on the one hand and fighting on the other hand.³⁸

Like many other overseas Vietnamese publications, **Thông Luận**, a monthly review published by the Vietnamese Fraternity Association in Athis-Mons, France, was very critical of the Hanoi regime. When the Communist government in Hanoi started to undertake the reform policy, better known as **Đổi Mới**, in the second half of the 1980's, overseas Vietnamese communities questioned the integrity of Hanoi. Tôn Thất Thiện, a professor at a university in Quebec and a former Minister of Information in the Saigon regime wrote an article in **Thông Luận** suggesting that the Vietnamese should not either get too excited about it or be strongly against it. The Hanoi regime needed to bring about the reform because the Soviet Union put tremendous pressure on it. In addition, it needed to change the way it ruled Vietnam since the strict socialist reform, implemented in the south in the late 1970's and the first half of the 1980's, had led to strong resistance from the Vietnamese people. If Hanoi wanted to survive, it had to bring about change. However, the Vietnamese should not applaud the regime because it did not undertake the reform for the sake of the people, but for their own sake. Communists were

³⁷ “thống nhất hay liên hợp” in **Ái Hữu** (Xuân nhân tuất), Feb (?) 1982. p.6

³⁸ *ibid.* p.8.

always communists and once they regained their strength, they would continue to find a way to destroy us.³⁹

Văn Lang (ZOR1994.a.72), a journal published in California to promote understanding of Vietnamese culture and history, is different from many other overseas Vietnamese journals which touched upon the same issue. **Văn Lang**, which is the first known name of Vietnam, dated back to 1876 B.C., employs an academic approach in presenting cultural and historical issues. Nguyễn Thế Anh, a famous Vietnamese scholar is a regular contributor to the journal.

The publications of the overseas Vietnamese also work as political and social networking among overseas Vietnamese in different countries. Most of these publications share some common features. They normally have a column which reports events in Vietnam, mainly to remind them of how oppressive the Hanoi regime was. Coverage such as the arrests and trials of former South Vietnamese officials or anybody whom the communist regime considered ‘reactionary’ (phản động), was reported regularly.⁴⁰ They also reported anti-Hanoi activities among many overseas Vietnamese who organised meetings, demonstrations or political groupings. Many magazines published a special issue or articles for their April issue to commemorate the fall of Saigon and South Vietnam.⁴¹ Many have columns for Vietnamese culture and history probably as a reminder of their roots.

Summary

Although the Vietnamese newspaper and serial collection during and immediately after the Indochina War at the British Library is relatively small,

³⁹ Tôn Thất Thiện. ‘Cộng sản cởi mở và đổi mới: chung ta nên hoan hô hay đã đảo?’ in **Thông Luận**, Số 18 (tháng 7+8 1989), pp. 3, 5.

⁴⁰ ‘Hà Nội lại vừa bỏ tù thêm số phản cách mạng’ in **Nội San Hội Văn Hóa Việt Nam**, Số 14 (tháng 6, 1985), p.6.

⁴¹ ‘Sinh hoạt quốc kháng 1984 tại Toronto’ in **Lửa Việt**, Số 41 (Tháng tư, 1984), p.3.

it is unique and contains a rich body of information about Vietnam during this important juncture of Vietnamese history. Our collection will certainly contribute to a better understanding of many aspects of Vietnamese society before and after the Indochina War.

Notes on references

Source materials used in this article are based mostly on the Vietnamese collection at the British Library. The press marks are indicated in parentheses, for example, (16641.e.11), (SU209/8) and (ZOR.1994.a.72).

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