Bernard Fall and Vietnamese revolutionary warfare in Indochina

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Bernard Fall and Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare in Indochina

by

Nathaniel L. Moir

A Dissertation

Submitted to the University at Albany, State University of New York

in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

College of Arts & Sciences
Department of History
2019
Abstract

What accounts for Bernard Fall’s understanding and description of Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare in Indochina? How did formative experiences during and after the Second World War actuate Fall’s thought on the political nature of warfare in Indochina? What distinguished Fall’s thought on revolutionary warfare from others? Bernard Fall and Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare in Indochina addresses these questions through an intellectual history and contextual biography of Bernard Fall’s scholarship on the First and Second Indochina Wars. Bernard Fall, an authority on Vietnamese history, society, and the First Indochina War, began to explain in 1957 that subsequent war in Vietnam could not be won through military means because political legitimacy could not be achieved through intervention. War in Vietnam was a political and social conflict and Vietnamese communists used Revolutionary Warfare to succeed. The only effective response to this form of politically-oriented warfare was wide-spread acceptance of the Republic of Vietnam’s legitimacy among a majority of Vietnamese. As Fall knew, and as became increasingly evident in the later 1950s, the Republic’s legitimacy could not compete adequately with that of the Viet Minh and its government, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Bernard Fall and Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare in Indochina describes how Fall identified and described the Viet Minh’s efforts to undermine its competitors’ legitimacy, and that of its ally, the United States, towards the attainment of its goal of political victory.

The United States, Fall argued, did not understand the war in which it was engaged. He described this in a letter to John Paul Vann in early 1965, writing “Everybody speaks the platitude that the war will have to be won on the terrain and among the SVN people – and then goes on right
back to one more pass with M-113’s and napalm.”¹ Fall’s focus on legitimacy of governance grounded his argument that war in Indochina was a political and social revolution in which overly militarized intervention narrowed foreign policy options. He sought to utilize what he learned of the Viet Minh’s war against the French and the Associated State of Vietnam and apply that history and knowledge to his critiques of the United States’ foreign policy in the early stages of the Second Indochina War. Earlier, the Viet Minh had successfully subverted French authority and dominated local Vietnamese governance in northern areas of Vietnam. Fall recognized that their successors, the National Liberation Front, adopted similar methods of political subversion over open-conventional war against the United States. This led Fall to recognize the importance of political processes of governance that were often unmeasurable by military-oriented parameters, writing “When a country is being subverted it is not being outfought; it is being out-administered.”² Fall studied war by studying the political administration of it, not just how it unfolded through militarized mechanisms of power.

Fall was a dedicated anti-communist but he believed that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) did not pose a geostrategic or national security threat to the United States. He attempted to explain the historically strained relationship between Vietnam and China and that DRV leadership was as fearful of Chinese encroachment as it was of France’s return to Indochina after World War II. The importance of Vietnamese history, a major point of emphasis for Fall in his scholarship, was not heeded when it could have made a difference among American foreign policy-makers. Applying his knowledge of France’s recent history in Indochina, he described how

the United States would also face an insurmountable task should it engage in an overmilitarized intervention. Yet, because of his public criticism of foreign policy, he was surveilled by the FBI and blocked from employment at the Royal Institute in Phenom Penh by the U.S. State Department in 1958. This event, stemming from an article Fall published in May 1958, compelled Fall to find other non-government channels to research and write about the onset of the Second Indochina War in late 1958 and 1959.
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“L'avenir se dérobe, quand le soldat se tait.”
(“The future is obscured, when the soldier is silent.”)
- Jean Lacouture³

“Whoever of your correspondents overheard me, overheard me somewhat incompletely. My exact words were that U.S. fire-power had made the Vietnam war ‘militarily unlosable.’ Britain achieved a similar situation in Cyprus; France achieved it in Algeria, and the U.S. still holds Guantanamo. The political benefits derived from these three ‘unlosabilities’ are here for everyone to see.

I have never claimed for myself the place of ‘the No. 1 pessimist’ about Vietnam – but if a place of ‘No. 1 realist’ is available, I’ll be glad to stake out a claim for it.”

Bernard Fall, Howard University
Letter to the Editor
Newsweek, October 11, 1965⁴

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³ Jean Lacouture quoted in Roger Lévy, Politique étrangère, Vol. 32, No. 3 (1967), 268.
⁴ Bernard B. Fall, Letter to the Editor, Newsweek, November 11, 1965, Series 1.1., Box F-1, Bernard B. Fall Papers (BBF), JFK Presidential Library (JFKL), Boston, Massachusetts.
**Argument**

*Revolutionary warfare was “an ocean which could not be bound fast with a rope or dominated by force of arms.”*\(^5\)

*Bernard Fall and Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare in Indochina* is a history of Bernard Fall’s scholarship. It argues that Bernard Fall conceived of Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare as the product of interdependent social, political, and military factors unique to conflict in Indochina. He was uncommon as an insightful analyst of war because of the experience and knowledge he brought to his analysis, and his early recognition of Revolutionary Warfare that the Viet Minh developed to defeat the French in the First Indochina War. Their successors in the National Liberation Front and forces of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam further developed Revolutionary Warfare to undermine and defeat the United States and its ally, the Republic of Vietnam, in the Second Indochina War. The United States’ failure to understand the type of warfare that subverted French control, and its failure to address this warfare after the French defeat, adversely narrowed policymaking and led to overly militarized approaches to war in Vietnam. Moreover, Fall’s involvement in World War II and its aftermath were central to the development of his later understanding of Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare in Indochina. Fall would have been unable to formulate his conception of Revolutionary Warfare without this knowledge and experience.

This dissertation, therefore, is an account of the progressive development of Fall’s thought on Revolutionary Warfare, a term he used consistently after 1958 to describe conflict in Indochina.

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It is a history that also seeks to account for how Fall came to recognize processes forming Revolutionary Warfare, many of which -- targeting collaborators for example -- he first encountered as a member of the Maquis fighting Nazis in Haut-Savoie. In his work researching Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, Fall did not exclude broader geopolitical considerations in his work, but he did center his focus primarily on Vietnamese leaders, people, organizations, history, and society. Moreover, his interest in and understanding of the anthropology and sociology of Indochina’s people grew significantly after his first visit to the region in 1953 and this contributed to his subsequent analyses. Fall, in fact, may have been among the earliest of analysts to incorporate and apply ideas and methods from an emerging discipline, Operational Anthropology, to his study of contemporary political problems in Indochina.\(^6\)

The failure of other analysts and leaders, who did not share Fall’s interest in understanding Indochina, especially American policymakers unfamiliar with and uninterested in culture in Southeast Asia, meant that they never arrived at a similar level of analysis as Fall. The difficult political relationship between Vietnamese and American allies between 1955 and 1961 added additional strain to effective governance in South Vietnam. These years were critical because, even though South Vietnamese leaders and others were available and undeniably shared their knowledge of Vietnam with US authorities, problems with policy towards Vietnam, such as US financial assistance and aid projects between 1955 and 1961, still undermined political legitimacy in South Vietnam. Poor political decisions by South Vietnamese leaders, such as Ngo Dinh Diem’s

\(^6\) In the 1950’s Fall’s interest in anthropology and sociology of Indochina coincided with the development of Operational Anthropology. He did not refer to this discipline by name but, substantively, his research adopted many of its approaches. Writing in 1951, anthropologist Laura Thompson described this field, writing “it may be thought of as an emergent, integrative discipline which has not yet been theoretically systematized, but which has demonstrated its usefulness to a marked degree… [as] applied to large scale human problems, especially those of community and regional administration, wherein the need for solutions has been urgent.” For a foundational text see, Laura Thompson, “Operational Anthropology as an Emergent Discipline,” *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Winter 1951), p. 117-128.
decision to remove village elected officials and replace them with government appointees in 1956, did not help either and both problems, once created, were difficult to correct.

After 1958, significant changes occurred in South Vietnam, in the broader cold war, and in the progression of Fall’s thought and career. Low-level violence in rural South Vietnamese villages, resulting from villagers’ anger over the removal of elected leaders and their replacement by government appointees, contributed to conflict that emerged as the Second Indochina War. Fall witnessed these changes and saw that political-oriented violence and subversion he initially observed in Vietnam during the First Indochina War was slowly being replicated in South Vietnam. To be sure, there were many differences, due especially to the diversity of South Vietnam and the power of anti-communist Vietnamese, but he identified patterns of violence that grew dynamically after 1958 and his analysis entered a new phase because of these changes. The dissertation, therefore, intentionally periodizes this juncture in Fall’s thought and in the political environment of Vietnam by concluding in late 1958.

Fall knew that the “origins of the Second Indochina War [were] deeply rooted in the way the First Indochina War ended at Geneva in July 1954.” Nonetheless, the mid-to-late 1950s are conventionally regarded as an interwar period between the First and Second Indochina War. After 1958, Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare began to take on different dimensions because of the development of the National Liberation Front and its later emergence in 1960. The response to this included increased U.S. assistance and growing numbers of U.S. advisors to coordinate aid and further the training of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. Additionally, other events in Fall’s professional life in 1958, including the rescission of a contract with the U.S. State

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Department and his decision to enter full-time employment at Howard University, mark a transition point in his career before the Second Indochina War dominated his analysis. This dissertation, therefore, uses 1958 as an interval in the overall progression of his thought.

A Jewish émigré to France from Austria during World War II, Fall joined the French Resistance after his mother was deported to Auschwitz and his father was murdered by the Gestapo. His friend, François Sully, claimed that, “because of his experience in the French underground, Fall thought he was better equipped than anyone else to capture the essence of a guerrilla resistance movement.”\(^8\) According to Fall, “the hardcore guerrilla, the one fully-committed does not need hope to keep him going. In Europe, we would have fought to death, even if German armies had been victorious. People generally do not understand why guerrillas, even those animated by a just cause, sometimes resort to terrorism, sabotage, and intimidation. It is a hard necessity for survival.”\(^9\) This example indicates one of the factors, commitment, that Fall identified in Vietnam among the Viet Minh and their successors and such qualities are difficult to quantify. Accordingly, Fall’s conception of Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare was qualitative in nature.

Fall was careful to emphasize that Revolutionary Warfare was flexible and context-dependent. He did not provide a fixed definition of the term, except to say that adaptability was a defining and enduring characteristic. He did offer a working theory in 1965, but it would be inaccurate to consider that theory as a permanent crystallization and he was adamant that the intractable nature of Revolutionary Warfare was another one of its inherent traits.\(^{10}\) Fall offered a

\(^8\) François Sully Papers, “Sully comments on Bernard Fall,” Newsweek Files, Feb-March 1967, Series II, Subject Files, Box 2, Folder 31, 5.
\(^9\) Ibid., 5.
thought on its dynamism and how it may be countered: “There are no easy shortcuts to solving the problems of revolutionary warfare…I would like to close with one last thought which applies, of course, to everything that is done in the Armed Forces, but particularly to revolutionary war: If it works, it is obsolete.”\cite{Fall} It is likely that this kind of statement was not enthusiastically received by military officers whose job it was to codify successful practices and disseminate those across the U.S. armed forces. After all, infantry tactics, such as “shoot, move, communicate” found in a well-oiled fire-team, squad, and platoon, had done a pretty good job in the past. He wrote this because he knew that the only way Revolutionary Warfare might be sufficiently countered was through making flexibility, innovation, cultural awareness, and sophisticated and deeply informed understanding of local politics the absolute priority. The time-tested effectiveness of an infantry fire-team was, in Fall’s view, undeniable and it was important but, in dealing with Revolutionary Warfare, it was of secondary importance.

This dissertation is not a history of Revolutionary Warfare or Total War. Rather, it investigates how Bernard Fall understood and described Revolutionary Warfare in Indochina after World War II up to 1958. It is a history indelibly tied to Bernard Fall so it may be considered a form of contextual biography, but its focus is not Fall’s life. Rather, its focus centers on how Fall came to identify, study, and describe Revolutionary Warfare in Indochina. Necessarily, this entails that attention be given to Fall’s experience and the formation of his knowledge. He serves, thus, as a vehicle to describe the form of warfare that the Viet Minh and their successors successfully utilized to defeat two powerful western nations in the mid-to later twentieth century. Fall, like anyone, was imperfect and his analyses was not without flaws, but the timing of his study, his

\cite{Fall} Ibid., 223.
prolific scholarship, and especially his commitment to relate the facts as he saw them, and not as one wishes them to be, distinguish Fall’s thought and work. Fall’s understanding of Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare therefore, is “studied in terms of the multiple, political, social and cultural contexts that gave, and give it meaning,” at least, as it gave such meaning to Fall.12

How did Fall define Revolutionary Warfare? The most concise description he offered is in “The Theory and Practice of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency,” published in April 1965.13 “Revolutionary Warfare is the result of the application of guerrilla methods to the furtherance of an ideology or political system, political action is the difference. The political, administrative, ideological aspect is the primary aspect, the military aspect definitely always remains the secondary aspect.”14 Fall’s use of “revolutionary” was inspired by the work of French military officers who had fought in Indochina, such as Colonels Gabriel Bonnet and Charles Lacheroy, who also influenced Fall’s thinking on other important matters, such as parallel hierarchies.15 Parallel hierarchies, a phenomenon discussed in chapter five, were Viet Minh-led social administrative apparatuses used to form a shadow government and subvert and replace a competing government’s control. For instance, Viet Minh control over tax revenue through elimination and replacement of government tax collectors reliably indicated that parallel hierarchies and Revolutionary Warfare were at work. Taxation and control over teachers’ placement in villages were examples that he emphasized, particularly since military planners failed to see taxation, tax collectors, and teachers as ‘military targets.’ However, Fall recognized that the Viet Minh saw them as ‘political targets’ of considerable importance. He first saw these processes

12 Jeremy Black, Rethinking Military History (New York: Routledge, 2004), 19
14 Ibid., 210.
15 Bernard Fall, “Laos, Vietnam, and Revolutionary Warfare,” 61, Series 1.09, Box T-1, BBF, JFKL.
in Indochina in 1953, before he began using terms like Revolutionary Warfare and parallel hierarchies to describe them. Moreover, these processes were similar to local-level conflict he experienced in Vichy France as a French Maquis during the Second World War. These terms helped him describe what he saw.

Fall conveyed Bonnet’s description of Revolutionary Warfare as “a quasi-mathematical equation: ‘partisan war plus psychological war equals revolutionary warfare.’” Fall developed this further to conclude, “Revolutionary Warfare occurs when guerrilla methods are used to further an ideology.” The term also included factors, some of which Fall identified during World War II. His personal experience with the maquis’ targeting of collaborators, as one example, contributed to Fall’s identification of Revolutionary Warfare’s emphasis on gaining social and political control through targeting networks and individuals who might have been traditionally considered as non-military. In Indochina, Fall identified the Viet Minh’s targeting of government officials as a similar practice in social and political control at the local level. In adopting these practices, the Viet Minh were essentially operating within a framework of equilibrium found in Mao Tse-Tung’s thought. The Viet Minh did not seek to defeat military forces, but instead, they sought to gain administrative control over a local population within the critical social structure of the Vietnamese village.

Fall recognized that real Viet Minh victory, the political and social victory, preceded success on the battlefield and battles were only the final stage in a process. He was, in an important sense, analytically assessing the second stage of Maoist-inspired warfare, equilibrium, as it was applied by the Viet Minh in Indochina and he was determining how Revolutionary Warfare

\[\text{\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.}\]
developed to emerge eventually in strength towards a third stage in which conventional warfare was possible. Fall’s analysis was unique because he was describing a form of warfare that western scholars and military officers were encountering as a new phenomenon, even if it shared tactical characteristics found in the military operations of the American Revolution and Civil War. It was different because Indochina was different and Samuel B. Griffith, who translated Mao’s writing on guerrilla warfare, claimed Revolutionary Warfare “demanded further serious study of all historical experience.”\textsuperscript{17} Griffith, however, was likely unaware of Fall’s study of Revolutionary Warfare at the time, writing that in the early 1950s “a wealth of material existed then, and much more has since been developed, [but] no such study has been undertaken in this country [the United States], so far as I am aware. In Indochina and Cuba, Ho Chi Minh and Ernesto (Che) Guevara were more assiduous.”\textsuperscript{18}

It is possible that Griffith learned of Fall’s writing on Revolutionary Warfare, just not before 1961 when his update translation of Mao’s writings appeared. This is significant because it demonstrates that western readers, scholars, and military officers were grappling with a new form of warfare because of its dependences on the cultural context of Asia. The Viet Minh’s victory at Dien Bien Phu, for this reason, was a wakeup call. In Fall’s view, however, it was only a manifestation of a long, ongoing effort to undermine French control in rural villages where the majority of Vietnamese lived. The Viet Minh’s victory at Dien Bien Phu, more than anything, was the event through which “the whole illusion of French control collapsed [because] the area was solidly Communist infiltrated.”\textsuperscript{19} Revolutionary Warfare, in other words, was the setting of

\textsuperscript{17} Samuel B. Griffith, translator, \textit{Mao Tse-Tung on Guerrilla Warfare} (New York: Praeger, 1961), 8.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 8-9.
conditions that enabled victory at Dien Bien Phu. Fall was on the scene documenting a form of warfare that was, in many respects, new, difficult to discern, and difficult to describe.

Fall believed the United States had little chance to succeed in Vietnam, despite the deployment of Marines in 1965 and the growing number of forces deployed later. It is clear, moreover, that Fall knew the war could not be won after 1965, short of complete devastation of the country. The question, “how did Fall know that?” drives this study. What were the sources and nature of his trenchant insights? Many histories of the Vietnam War begin in 1965. Fall began writing about the war in 1954, but his study of the roots of conflict in Vietnam would eventually go back much further than that. This is crucially important, because part of what made Fall’s work so insightful is that he took the deeper historical context into account when trying to understand contemporary events. And one of the most important threads Fall identified as tying all those years together was Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare. Vietnamese anti-colonialism, communism, nationalism, and a diverse and complex sense of Vietnamese identity and communal pride, let alone those of Laos and Cambodia, formed a social fabric. Revolutionary Warfare was threaded into and throughout that fabric and was contested by other Vietnamese forming it. Short of its utter destruction, it was difficult, if not possible, for outsiders to weave themselves into that fabric to change its character, let alone its future. Fall knew, as a European, that he could not weave his way into Vietnamese society. He could, however, recognize the way war developed and functioned in a society through empathy generated by his own experience with war that destroyed his family and much of Europe.

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Fall made two critical distinctions between Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare and guerrilla warfare. First, “In a normal guerrilla war, the objective may be the enemy’s communications, his arms depots or industrial installations. In revolutionary warfare, the key objective is the population’s allegiance.” Second, “Once the allegiance of the population has switched to the revolutionary side, the fact that the legal government still possesses its regular army and is in control of the government apparatus in the capital becomes totally unimportant.” He observed, “This is the way the West lost the Chinese mainland. This is the way the French were defeated in Indochina. This is the way Batista was defeated in Cuba—and that is the way Laos and South Viet-Nam may go tomorrow.”

Fall continued, “As long as we mistake its main objective to be objects rather than people, the cards are strongly stacked against the West.” This focus upon people was the reason he believed studying people, their cultures and the societies in which they lived, were more important than developing military solutions. Countering revolutionary warfare certainly did require military force, but it would be useless, even detrimental, unless it was discriminate, carefully planned and legitimately used among the population in the midst of which it was conducted. Political legitimacy was central to Fall’s thought on Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare and he argued that this legitimacy was never firmly established by the French, the United States, or the Republic of Vietnam after 1955. Insurgency, directed against political authorities, did not account for the comprehensive nature of warfare in Vietnam. An insurgency could replace the government without changing the society. Revolutionary Warfare was a complete social revolution aimed at eliminating imperialism and colonization in Southeast Asia, but it was also about social changes from a Confucianist world order to a more modern society. “Counterinsurgency,” a currently popular term used to describe

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efforts to defeat resistance to political control, imperial or otherwise, does not account sufficiently for the broader socio-political changes in Indochina. Fall did use the term ‘counterinsurgency’ at times, but primarily as a means to initiate readers into the more comprehensive world of Revolutionary Warfare.

The fundamental difference between Fall and French theorists he studied is that Fall remained focused on applying his thought to warfare in Indochina. In contrast, though French officers and theorists of la guerre révolutionnaire based their ideas on their experiences in Indochina, they developed these ideas for use in the war in Algeria that began in late 1954. As historian Peter Paret writes, theorists of la guerre révolutionnaire were not interested in “understanding the complex origins of the Indochinese War’ but rather developed their theories to gain insights that could be turned to operational use in other contexts.”

Fall also incorporated what he learned during World War II and in the war’s aftermath as a research analyst for the War Crimes Commission during the Nuremberg Tribunals. Still, he consistently credited Bonnet’s influence, especially the formula “political action plus guerrilla warfare equals revolutionary warfare.” As he characterized his relationship to other Revolutionary War theorists:

“A nucleus of French officers around Colonels Lacheroy and Gardes, now assigned to the Psychological Warfare Section of the French Army in Algeria, began to transform the Communist weapon of yesterday into a weapon of their own. Probably more articles were written in France on Communist Psychological warfare (and studiously left unread over here) than in any other country outside the Soviet bloc. Finally, in 1958, Colonel Bonnet, a former professor at the French Higher War College, wrote a book which was to become the ‘bible’ of the new school of thought. It was simply a history of insurrections and revolutions from 3000 B.C. to Algeria…In it, it was for the first time recognized that ‘guerrilla warfare’ and ‘revolutionary warfare’ are not interchangeable and that the major

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danger of the West is faced with today is not one of being able to cope with the armed forces of a revolution but with its spirit.”

Fall’s focus upon the “spirit” of Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare set his work apart. This is why he devoted much effort to understanding Viet Minh organization, the importance of Vietnamese village life and leadership, the multiple and diverse cultures making up Vietnam, and the methods the Viet Minh developed to gain control over Vietnamese society. He explained, “The Communists have correctly identified as the central objective of revolutionary warfare the human beings which make up a nation; while on our side, the securing of communication lines, the control of crops and industrial installations, and the protection of one small power group to the exclusion of all others seem to be overriding considerations.” He added, “the population as such can only become an ‘object’ – something that gets shoved out of the way because it ‘impedes’ military operations; whereas the Communists build the civilian population right into their battle plan and make utmost use of it, from the simple 10-year old who becomes a messenger to the hapless villagers who are rounded up to serve as bullet shields in an attack.”

Political legitimacy was the goal of Revolutionary Warfare and that was why the Viet Minh gained and held control of the administration of the country. As Fall observed, “When a country is being subverted it is not being outfought; it is being out-administered.” The achievement of administrative control was of far greater importance than military control. He would document this by examining tax collection records and teacher placement because these social practices

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24 Bernard Fall, “Books by Fall-Two Viet-Nam’s Draft Critique, p. 309” Series 1.02, Box B-3, BBF, JFKL.
indicated control over a place more effectively than military metrics. Moreover, he believed that extensive use of military power obscured political, ideological and administrative factors, writing “Once we understand this, we will understand more of what is actually going on in Viet-Nam or in some of the other places affected by Revolutionary Warfare.”26 The problem was that this was not the approach taken by the United States in 1965 and thereafter. In a letter to John Paul Vann on January 1, 1965, Fall explained “Everybody speaks the platitude that the war will have to be won on the terrain and among the SVN people – and then goes on right back to one more pass with M-113’s and napalm.”27 Military power was irrelevant without political legitimacy. As he put it to François Sully, “A US Marine can fly a helicopter better than anyone else, but he simply cannot indoctrinate peasants with an ideology worth fighting for.”28

Revolutionary Warfare is not now an archaic term that describes only wars of decolonization after World War II, or conflicts during the Cold War across the global south. Fall recognized that it was an approach to conflict that could not be addressed solely through military force. Historian Douglas Pike, in agreement with Fall, later contended “The Vietnamese Communists conceived, developed, and fielded a dimensional new method for making war…and most important, that it is a strategy for which there is no known proven counterstrategy.”29 Fall’s analysis of Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare and competitive control serve as applied history because this approach to warfare continues to resonate and pose destabilizing threats to governments, as scholars Craig Whiteside and David Kilcullen point out. Whiteside remarks that the inspiration for his paper “The Islamic State and the Return of Revolutionary Warfare,”

26 Ibid., 210.
originated with Fall “whose writings about the Vietnam wars often reflected an amazement of the subversive nature of revolutionary warfare and its paralyzing effect on government.” Whiteside added, “Fall delighted in contrasting public pronouncements of government control by French military or American political observers who counted secure provinces instead of obscure assassinations or uncollected taxes.” Whiteside has also written, “the Viet Minh campaign against the French and their native forces in Indochina, which led to a strategic surprise and sudden collapse…is exactly what happened in Mosul and other areas of Sunni Iraq… the Islamic State slowly consolidated and patiently cultivated [Revolutionary Warfare] in a masterful, combined campaign of terror, assassination, limited conventional attacks, and the harnessing of tribal and public support.”

This is significant because Whiteside’s scholarship explicitly demonstrates the relevance of Fall’s work as history, but also as applied history useful in our time.

Revolutionary Warfare, as Whiteside shows, is increasingly prevalent in contemporary conflict. Whiteside additionally points out two fallacies: the idea that the Cold War “heralded an end to ideological warfare, and the return of power and interest-based conflict now that the war of ideologies was over” is wrong, and, second, that “The demise of revolutionary warfare turned out to be a fantasy.” Events in Mosul and, more recently, Manbji, Syria in January 2019, as well as scores of other attacks carried out by the Islamic State, demonstrate the cogency of Whiteside’s arguments. These attacks demonstrated “how throughout Iraq the group has focused with laserlike precision on killing ‘moktars,’ or village chiefs, as well as tribal elders and local politicians… ‘If

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31 Ibid., 744.
ISIS can come to your town and kill the most important person in your town any night of the year, do you feel you’ve been liberated?” New York Times Journalist Rukmini Callimachi described how, ISIS “realized you don’t have to mount 6,000 attacks per month…you just have to kill the right 50 people each month.” This description parallels Bernard Fall’s descriptions of Revolutionary Warfare in Vietnam in the 1950s. But Fall attempted to address a bigger problem: getting decision-makers to understand this form of warfare. And this problem is still with us. In Iraq and Syria, “these targeted assassinations drew little coverage in the international news media, and yet they have helped undercut the trust Iraqis place in their government’s ability to protect them – as well as drive young men back into ISIS’s fold.” ISIS may be eventually eliminated, but Revolutionary Warfare will not.

This dissertation seeks to inform policy addressing Revolutionary Warfare because this form of warfare is prevalent in contemporary conflict. It does so by demonstrating the relevance of Fall’s thought. Craig Whiteside is rightfully concerned with the development of revolutionary warfare through a Salafi-jihadism adaptation. Military force is not always or consistently relevant to these sorts of conflicts from Vietnam to Afghanistan. As New York Times journalist C.J. Chivers observed, watching an F/A-18 flying over western Afghanistan in early 2012, “Some of the world’s most expensive attack aircraft were being applied to small and seemingly unsolvable tactical problems in remote corners of the earth…Sophisticated targeting sensors, guided munition, and tactics refined through a dozen years of air-to-ground war could not change the facts on the

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35 Ibid.
ground.” Chivers’ statement reflects the same thoughts and problems, with updated equipment, that Bernard Fall described from 1953 to 1967. Technology has irrefutably changed warfare since Vietnam, but the importance of political legitimacy in these sorts of conflicts has not changed.

David Kilcullen is another scholar who builds on ideas Fall developed. Kilcullen not only views Fall’s ideas as relevant, but as contributing to a more fully formed “Theory of Competitive Control,” towards which Fall’s thought was trending. “In irregular conflicts (that is, in conflicts where at least one combatant is a non-state group), the local armed actor that a given population perceives as most able to establish a predictable, consistent, wide-spectrum normative system of control, is most likely to dominate that population and its residential area.”

“The mechanism of competitive control isn’t restricted to insurgency or civil war but is rather a universal aspect of the way in which non-state actors control population groups.” Kilcullen, like Fall, derives value from universalistic concepts – such as competitive control which may exist in a range of contexts across time – but he applies these concepts’ utility and determines their relevance to local conflict in specific contexts. And those contexts are all the project of unique historical developments that have conditioned those contexts over years and continue to do so when conflict unfolds. Both Kilcullen and Fall stress that functional, rather than organizational models are needed when thinking in terms of competitive control as a process within Revolutionary Warfare. In this respect, Kilcullen developed a more elaborate framework than Fall. Yet, “Fall’s later writings,” Kilcullen claims, “give a series of examples of this idea of competitive control – an idea that’s not spatial (‘insurgent-controlled’ or ‘contested areas’) or structural (‘networks’ and ‘movements’) but rather

39 Ibid., 151.
Kilcullen’s work demonstrates how Fall contributed to ideas that are innovative and complex and critically relevant to understanding present-day and future conflicts.

**Literature Review**

This dissertation is the first book-length study to assess Bernard Fall’s scholarship. Dorothy Fall wrote a biography of her husband, but it does not provide scholarly analysis of Fall’s work. According to anthropologist Gerald Hickey, Fall’s close friend correspondent François Sully, planned to write a book about Fall after retiring in the early 1970s. But, Sully died before he could complete his planned work. The literature available on Bernard Fall may be organized into three categories. The first of these are the numerous obituaries published in late February and early March 1967, many of which included critical observations of U.S. policy and Fall’s political position regarding U.S. actions in Southeast Asia. The *Harvard Crimson*’s obituary for Fall, for example, not unsurprisingly politicizes as much as it celebrates Fall’s work. More objectively, French scholar Philippe Devillers published a detailed review of Fall’s life in French that described Fall’s contributions to understanding conflict in Indochina. The second category of writing consists of comments on Fall’s life that surged in 2007 with numerous book reviews following the publication of Dorothy Fall’s biography. These reviews ranged from praise of the book and

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40 Ibid., 133.
Fall’s life to critical reviews of the biography that pointed out what he got wrong, particularly his views regarding the interrelationship between the National Liberation Front and the North Vietnamese state.46

The third category of literature on Fall includes references to Fall by prominent figures such as John McCain and Colin Powell, an acknowledgment of Fall’s career on the fiftieth anniversary of his death, and two peer-reviewed journal articles on Fall.47 Prominent journalists, including Peter Arnett, Walter Cronkite, I.F. Stone, David Halberstam and others, also referenced Fall as an authority in their reporting. As Peter Arnett, explained, “Bernard gave us the moral support to look at the negative aspects the war at a time when U.S. authorities were insisting that we look only at the positive.”48 Author Jonathan Schell added, “Bernard Fall was the acknowledged authority and writer on the subject [of Indochina]. He was the man to read, who people turned to, if they wanted to find out about this country that we were tearing apart.”49 Academics also regarded Fall as an authority. French scholars Paul Mus, Philippe Devillers, and Jean Lacouture wrote about him and often contributed to his scholarship or referenced his work.50 Among American scholars,

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Fall is invariably cited in studies on the wars in Vietnam, yet his scholarship is rarely the subject of extended analysis. U.S.-based scholars invariably make only passing reference to Fall and his ideas, and in two cases, rely on identical citation of his scholarship.\textsuperscript{51} It seems that reference to Fall is mostly a pro forma exercise in academic writing on the First and Second Indochina Wars. Sustained engagement with Fall’s work, by scholars such as Craig Whiteside, David Kilcullen and Michael A. Inness, is exceptional. Their work is unique because of its policy-relevance and because each author builds on Fall’s ideas to develop innovative thinking on other contemporary conflicts.\textsuperscript{52} Even so, neither Fall nor his scholarship is a primary subject of inquiry in any book-length treatment. Most references to Fall are brief, and the most substantial work is a highly critical M.A. thesis from 1968.\textsuperscript{53}

Nonetheless, Fall’s work can appear in unexpected places and ways. James George’s and James Rodger’s \textit{Smart Data: Enterprise Performance Optimization Strategy} drew inspiration from Fall. Smart Data, “as a corporate priority,” was touted as a business strategy that “could revolutionize government or commercial enterprise performance much like ‘six sigma’ or ‘total quality’ as organizing paradigms have done in the past.”\textsuperscript{54} While perhaps not as well-known as

Six Sigma business strategy, James George, creator of Smart Data writes that “One thing that stood out from Bernard Fall that influenced my own thinking when I wrote *Smart Data, Enterprise Performance Optimization Strategy*, and that is how to associate seemingly related, but dissimilar elements to make conceptual relationships that can be proven when facts are added to the equation. I confess that his equation for revolutionary war was perplexing to me, ‘RW=G+P’. I will never forget it. Revolutionary War = Guerilla + Political Action…you must read his papers to understand this powerful idea and to be able to apply it to understanding the Middle East today.”

George references Fall’s scholarship on Revolutionary Warfare because it emphasized organizational flexibility.

Fall’s analysis, moreover, examined functionality and the type of organizational flexibility and optimization found in network-focused organizations. Retired General Stanley McChrystal has also written about these types of networked organizational structures and capabilities. McChrystal demonstrates how networked organizations effectively function because “shared consciousness, transparent information sharing, and empowered execution” of decentralized decision-making are central tenets. McChrystal stresses that “being effective……is less a question of optimizing for a known (and relatively stable) set of variables than responsiveness to a constantly shifting environment. Adaptability, not efficiency, must become our central competency.”

McChrystal’s approach to organization, exemplified in his leadership of the Joint Special Operations Task Force and other military organizations, focused on eliminating ‘stove-pipes,’ helping the large, bureaucratic U.S. military to become more effective. Increasing the

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57 Ibid., 20.
political and historical training of special operations forces, one of several outcomes stemming from McChrystal’s influence, continues to assist in creating greater adaptability and increasing local political and contextual knowledge.

The impetus to increase organizational effectiveness has a relationship to Bernard Fall’s analysis of Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare. In the case of the Viet Minh during the First Indochina War, independence of command entailed significant risk, but it also provided the Viet Minh freedom to capitalize on opportunities that undermined French operations and control: “This ruthless procedure of letting each unit carry its own responsibilities to the utmost was one of the hallmarks of Viet-Minh command practices and always works to their fullest advantage. On two other occasions when the French High Command hit hard one Viet-Minh unit in the hope of drawing off other Communist units from their initial objectives, the French found to their dismay that the enemy commander never used fresh reserves merely to cover the withdrawal of already expended troops.”

Viet Minh doctrinal flexibility in late 1952 and early 1954, demanded “a type of discipline which practically excludes initiative on the part of the individual...not because the individual does not value his life highly but because political training conditions him to ‘make the sacrifice of his life for better tomorrows.’” Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare stressed effectiveness at all costs and admittedly, the issue of individual initiative is an area of considerable difference between the Viet Minh and that fostered by contemporary military forces.

The Viet Minh’s form of warfare entailed losing troops, if necessary, but it avoided a worse fate: long-term damage to the overall cause. The United States, in contrast, allowed itself to

become sucked into a sunk-cost fallacy: increasing numbers of troops were poured into a war the United States was losing year after year while leaders told the American people and soldiers that they had to keep going because they had already lost so much, that they could win if they just continued to do more. This was the outcome that Bernard Fall wanted the United States to avoid for its own sake and that of its service personnel, but also for the millions of Vietnamese who died between 1955 and 1975, let alone for Cambodians and Laotians who suffered the collateral damage of the wars in Vietnam. Fall’s destiny was this: leaders making decisions he viewed as mistaken would not listen to him, but that did not stop him from trying to show those leaders the true nature of the wars in Indochina.

Dissertation Structure

This dissertation consists of an introduction, seven chapters, and a conclusion. Chapter one examines Fall’s life during World War II because his experiences during the war contributed to his later views on Revolutionary Warfare in Indochina. Fall was a Jewish émigré to France from Austria during World War II, and he joined several French Resistance groups before eventually joining the Maquis in Haut-Savoie, and the Free French Army in later stages of the War. He decided to do this after his mother was deported to Auschwitz and his father was murdered by the Gestapo. Chapter one focuses primarily on this ‘war-time’ era of Fall’s life. His experience of war extended to the Nuremberg Trials in 1947 and 1948. There, he worked for the War Crimes Commission conducting analysis of the Krupp Corporation and its role as a key producer of Nazi armament using slave labor. The Krupp Corporation was also a key financial supporter of the Nazis and its private corporate ownership in support in the Nazi’s war effort was
codified personally by Adolf Hitler and the Krupps in the compact, “Lex Krupp.” This agreement, along with Fall’s war experience and other post-war analyses, compelled him to consider the institutional matrix of Nazi ideology and corporatism that enabled the Third Reich to establish power in 1933 and pursue war throughout Europe.

Fall was a serious anti-communist, but he feared that the military-industrial complex inflicting war in Vietnam reflected a similar integration of industry and militarization responsible for destroying his family and most of Europe. This was especially concerning to Fall because he believed that Vietnam did not pose a direct national security threat to the United States. It was also troubling because domino theory-related rationales for intervention were already discredited before large-scale intervention, and also because of the United States’ almost unlimited capacity to wage war.60 In December 1965, Secretary of State Dean Acheson remarked, “The end sought by our foreign policy…is, as I have said, to preserve and foster and environment in which free societies may exist and flourish. Our policies and actions must be decided by whether they contribute to or detract from achievement of this end. They need no other justification or moral or ethical embellishment.”61 This was precisely the mindset Fall feared that attempted to justify unlimited warfare in Vietnam. This apprehension, at its core, was rooted in his knowledge and life enduring the Second World War. Fall spoke to this directly: “I spent 1946-48 at the Nuremberg trials as a young research analyst and in a number of cases I heard the Germans attempt to excuse

60 Sherman Kent, one of the fathers of modern intelligence in the United States, served as the Chairman of the Board of National Estimates in 1964 and contributed to a weakening view on the Domino theory in official channels: “We do not believe that the loss of South Vietnam and Laos would be followed by the rapid, successive communization of the other states of the Far East… it is likely that no nation in the area would quickly succumb to communism as a result of the fall of Laos and South Vietnam. Furthermore, a continuation of the spread of communism in the area would not be inexorable, and any spread which did occur would take time -- time in which the total situation might change in any of a number of ways unfavorable to the Communist Cause.” See "Sherman Kent Memorandum to the CIA Director," 9 June 1964, National Security File, Vietnam Country File: Box 54, LBJP, LBJL.
61 Bernard B. Fall, “This Isn’t Munich, It’s Spain,” in Last Reflections on a War (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1967), 233
atrocities as acts committed by troops of their allies. This did not absolve the Germans of their responsibility. (By the way, both Viet-Nam and the United States have signed and ratified the 1949 Geneva Convention on War Victims.) The reality in Viet-Nam is that the international rules of war are not obeyed and, contrary to popular belief, the rules do apply to guerrilla wars as well…there seems to be a predisposition on our side to no longer be able to see the Vietnamese as people against whom crimes can be committed. This is the ultimate impersonalization of war.”  

It is almost impossible to believe that Fall could have understood the significance of war in Indochina, both in the First and Second Indochina Wars, without his direct understanding of the impersonalization of war he knew dominated the type of violence inflicted upon civilians during the Second World War. Chapter one, therefore, grounds his knowledge in his first impressions of warfare in Europe.

Chapter two focuses on the specific research Fall completed and the knowledge he gained while working as an analyst for the War Crimes Commission at the Nuremberg Tribunals. As a member of this organization, Fall’s analyses examined the Nazis’ ascent to power, the holocaust, and the contribution of the Krupp Corporation to German war-making. Readers familiar with only Fall’s major works may be surprised at the degree to which World War II shaped his overall thought and the frequency with which he referred to his experience of the Second World War and Nuremberg in his other scholarship. As chapter two shows, his involvement with the war and the Nuremberg Tribunals formed a lens through he saw intersections between business and military power that undeniably influenced the way he viewed western ways of war after World War II. The preference for military solutions, and reliance upon military power to destroy until unconditional

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62 Ibid., 234.
surrender was rendered by the opposition, was one of many legacies from World War II. After the Nuremberg Trials ended in 1948, Fall continued to work and study in Europe, eventually moving to the United States as a Fulbright Scholar in 1951. As one of the first students to take up this opportunity, Fall consolidated his knowledge of World War II by studying how the Nazis came to power and how German rearmament during the Interwar Years (1919-1939) contributed to the Nazis’ ascent. Graduate study and reflection enabled Fall to consolidate his experience and thought and refine his research skills developed at Nuremberg.

Chapter three describes how Fall decided to study the wars in Indochina under the tutelage of Amry Vandenbosch, a professor at SAIS. As a result of his decision and new focus, he traveled to Indochina to study the war first-hand in 1953. Chapter three documents this nearly ten-month research trip during which Fall gathered extensive materials for his first book, *The Viet-Minh Regime*, his doctoral dissertation, and articles he published between 1954 and 1956. His first trip to Vietnam formed a foundation for not only his first book, these other materials, and *Street Without Joy*, it also provided a research baseline to assess subsequent changes in Indochina in later trips. Chapter four focuses on events in Indochina leading to the First Indochina War and the two different Vietnamese governments formed after World War II. After the return of France’s troops to Indochina, conflict between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, led by Ho Chi Minh, and the French-supported Associated State of Vietnam, led by Vietnamese Emperor Bao Dai, set the stage for three decades of war.

Chapter five examines the communist Vietnamese, the Viet Minh, in further detail. They were not the only anti-colonial organization to emerge after the Second World War, but they

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dominated other Vietnamese groups and became the most consequential organization during the war of decolonization with France. Fall’s 1954 study, *The Viet-Minh Regime*, focused on Viet Minh history and organization, and how it was successful in fighting the French and its Vietnamese competitors, such as Nationalist Vietnamese and other organizations. Chapter five also devotes a section to the internal security apparatus of the Viet Minh. Fall showed that groups, like the Cong An, Trinh Sat and Dich Van were essential to the social-political control of the Vietnamese population and in fighting the French. These organizations used tactics Fall recognized from his time in the Maquis during World War II, especially anti-collaboration measures. Chapter five ends with later developments, particularly the French military effort in Operation Lorraine and how several other events, land reform for example, led towards total war against the French.

Between 1953 and 1956, Fall began to recognize how individual components -- land reform, internal security, mass mobilization, a war of decolonization, and Viet Minh organization -- contributed to an overall socio-political-military phenomenon he would eventually call Revolutionary Warfare. During his first trip to Vietnam, he rarely used the term “Revolutionary Warfare,” but 1953 was his first experience in Indochina and it served as a foundation on which he would build his understanding of warfare unfolding there. Fall went on a second research trip to Vietnam in 1957 during which he confirmed his identification of the socio-political-military phenomenon he observed earlier. This second research trip provided updated information and a new set of terms borrowed from French officers, such as Gabriel Bonnet and Charles Lacheroy, that helped him understand what he saw in Vietnam as Revolutionary Warfare from that point on.
Chapter six focuses on Fall’s 1957 return to Vietnam. The changes he witnessed resulted in an article for *The Nation*, “Will South Vietnam be Next?” published in May 1958. Fall also described these changes in a speech to the Association of Asian Studies meeting in New York City in April 1958. The speech and article sharply criticized the United States’ aid program to the Republic of Vietnam, outspoken honesty that had negative professional consequences. Chapter seven analyzes another critical article Fall published in September 1958, “South Vietnam’s Internal Problems.” These two 1958 articles identified serious political and military problems in South Vietnam that would eventually lead to the formation of the National Liberation Front, known as the Viet Cong, in 1960.

Chapter seven also describes how American officials, notably advisor to Ngo Dinh Diem Wesley Fishel, were coming around to the view that Fall’s criticisms were, in fact, justified. Chapter seven also includes a detailed description of Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare, a term Fall consistently used from 1958. It describes the concept broadly and how it functioned in North and South Vietnam. Revolutionary Warfare differed regionally, due to diversity in population and environment, but it shared characteristics that shaped the lead-up to the Second Indochina War. The dissertation’s conclusion considers Fall’s influence in the public sphere, among other intellectuals, military personnel, and members of the U.S. Congress. It includes a brief overview of his scholarship between 1959 and 1966, a period of time that would form another phase in Fall’s scholarship.

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65 Bernard B. Fall, “South Viet-Nam’s Internal Problems,” *Pacific Affairs*, September 1958, Series 1.01, Box F-1, BBF, JFKL.
On the campus of St. Olaf College, located on a hill in Northfield, Minnesota, Holland Hall’s leaden windows offered a view of oak trees and red, yellow, and orange sugar maples in the autumn of 1960. The campus outside of the classrooms in the department of religion and history exemplified the type of bucolic environment that eventually led to Northfield adopting the motto, “cows, colleges, and contentment” for signs along routes entering the town. As the professor of a course on comparative religion that autumn, a forty-six-year-old professor, Dr. Ansgar Sovik, met with one of his students after class to offer some advice. The individual, a young man, was thinking about whether to join the U.S. Navy and sought Sovik’s perspective. The young man wanted to see the world, an opportunity afforded by service, but he was also aware of ongoing conflict in Southeast Asia and wanted to learn more about Indochina and its history. Sovik told the young man, my father, that if he wanted to learn about the region and its history, that he should read the work of Bernard Fall.

Sovik possessed ample reason to recognize the relevance of Fall’s work on Southeast Asia. The son of Norwegian missionaries, Sovik was born in Hankow, China on March 3, 1914, and attended grade school at the Kikungshan American school until the mid-1920s. As an elementary student, Sovik recalled seeing a skirmish between Kuomintang and Communist soldiers in the far distance from his classroom window. Investigating the place where the fight had recently concluded, Sovik saw an eleven-year-old friend mistakenly pick up a grenade only to have it explode in his hand. Like his parents, Sovik studied religion and graduated from St. Olaf College

in 1934, with subsequent study at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota and at the Menighetsfakultet in Oslo before returning to St. Olaf College in 1938. When the United States entered World War II, Sovik volunteered for military service as a Navy chaplain in 1942. Sovik’s first assignment in the military was the First Marine Division where he went ashore in 1942 for the duration of fighting on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. Sovik stayed with the First Marines in the South Pacific, witnessed much of the brutal island-hopping campaign, and fulfilled his military commitment in 1944. Sovik dealt with his wartime experience inwardly, through the consolation of religion, and outwardly, as a teacher and human rights advocate with significant world experience. He continued graduate study at Princeton Theological Seminary, earning a Masters of Theology degree in 1946, and then a Doctorate of Theology degree at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago.

Fall shared much in common with Sovik regarding wartime experience. Both encountered war at a young age and the Second World War added to their knowledge. In a similar manner, individuals such as the young man at St. Olaf College in 1960, my Dad, who later deployed to Vietnam, had to find his own understanding of war and had to make sense of it on his own terms. Fall’s scholarship helped him, Ansgar Sovik, and many others to understand Indochina and the wars taking place there. In his own experience of war, George Orwell recognized “The fact is that every war suffers a kind of progressive degradation with every month that it continues, because such things as individual liberty and a truthful press are simply not compatible with military efficiency.” To the extent he was capable, Fall fought against degradation in reporting by writing

67 Ibid.
about the facts as he saw them in Southeast Asia. To gain access to them, Fall believed, he had to see them for himself. His effort to understand war accelerated after his family emigrated to southern France from Austria after the Anschluss by Germany on March 12, 1938. There, in France, finding a path that led him to write about war perceptively began with the loss of his parents to Nazi persecution.
Chapter One – “First Impressions of a War”

I – Nice, France 1939

The outbreak of war in Europe on September 1, 1939 challenged Bernard Fall’s earliest preconceptions of war. Later in his life he described this, writing “You know, I was just an average young boy and to me war was….I’d seen war in the movies, of course, and war, somehow in European movies, always gets depicted as being either at night or in the middle of rain and I’ll never forget….when war broke out...it was a perfectly sunny Riviera day…I was waiting for the thunder and the rains to come down and nothing happened. In a way I was quite disappointed that war would start out on this perfectly banal, beautiful day.”71 War, from his first experience of it, was more than tanks, battles, and soldiers fighting from one trench to another. It could be something a person did not even know was taking place around them. Fall’s reflections on his experiences as a twelve-year-old boy in September 1939, described in November 1966, three months before his death, are poignant considering the adversity Fall faced as World War II began. They are also revealing because warfare did not reveal itself to Fall like it did in books and movies. Instead, from his first experience of it, Fall noticed that warfare unfolded in ways that were more prevalent in day-to-day existence, than in the exceptional warfare endured on the contested ground of a battlefield.

In September 1939, Fall did not experience a dark rainy night from which war descended upon him on a red horse in his home in the South of France. Yet, whether he could see it or not,

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he was at the beginning of a struggle with war. World War II shaped not only Fall’s life, but also his views on warfare. The war provided a framework and references points for Fall’s analysis of conflict, but he did not accord a historical weight to his life in a manner that predetermined his later views on warfare in Indochina. Fall lost a great deal in World War II. Yet, he also gained and developed an ability to look forward that used his past experience in the Maquis and French Army to understand war in comprehensive ways. And he did so in a manner that transcended social and cultural boundaries that were otherwise challenging to work through without these prior experiences. His efforts against Nazi aggression and his personal knowledge of Nazi atrocity, additionally, formed a basis for his tactical understanding of warfare’s conduct in the later stages of World War II as a member of the Maquis and, intellectually, in its aftermath though work for the War Crimes Commission at the Nuremberg Trials. Fall’s later analysis on Revolutionary Warfare in Indochina is difficult to understand fully without knowing his early life.

Bernard Fall was born in Vienna, Austria on November 19, 1926 to Anna Seligmann and Leo Fall, a merchant. As a Jewish family, the Falls endured growing anti-Semitism. After the Anschluss of Austria in March 1938, Leo and Anna sent Bernard and his younger sister Lissette to Paris. Fall stayed with Anna’s sister and her husband, Marcelle and Auguste Biret, a couple who owned a bookshop near the Champs-Élysées, while Lissette remained with another sister of Anna’s.72 Anna and Leo remained in Austria to provide for members of Leo’s family and, after several chaotic months, Anna managed to reunite with Lissette and Bernard in Paris. Leo Fall later reunited with his family in Vichy-controlled Nice after Anna had relocated Bernard and Lissette there from Paris. In Nice, the Fall family moved to the Villa Beauregard, a kibbutz

72 Philippe Devillers, France-Asia, No. 188 (Winter 1966-67), 148.
administered by the Nice Refugee Committee, an organization of French Jews supporting Jewish émigrés.73

The 1942 Nazi subjection of Vichy France hit families like the Falls hard. As a result of Nazi jurisdiction, the Falls’ residence at the Villa Beauregard, like many others where Jewish émigrés lived, was raided by Vichy police in August that year to evict foreign-born Jews for deportation.74 Fall’s family was one of thousands betrayed by Vichy France, but denunciations of foreign Jews by French Jewish councils that led to the breaking of Fall’s family and others were especially divisive and painful.75 The raid had a lasting and profound effect upon Fall and this period of his life is significant because it decisively contributed to Fall’s drive to understand war as a transformative phenomenon. Fall also later identified his physical and mental capacity for academic work, directed toward understanding and recounting war, as his “machine.”76

During the raid on the Villa Beauregard, Fall’s father, Leo Fall, believed that Vichy authorities sought only to detain the male occupants. He managed to flee but all inhabitants of the Villa were targeted including Fall’s mother and sister. Bernard’s sister Lissette avoided deportation due to a temporary Vichy regulation that spared children from deportation with parental agreement. Anna, Fall’s mother, made the agonizing choice to leave Lissette without understanding she had spared her daughter’s life. Anna, however, was detained in Drancy and then deported to Auschwitz, where she was killed.77 Bernard, ill at the time, avoided arrest only because a Vichy officer sympathetically decided to delay arresting him until he recuperated. With

77 Ibid., 16; Philippe Devillers, France-Asia, No. 188 (Winter 1966-67), 148.
this break, he was subsequently rescued by Henry Frankiel, a French army veteran and family friend who protected Bernard in his home in Nice through recuperation and after. According to Fall, his father joined the French resistance after his wife’s arrest, but he was captured in late 1942 and sent to a military barracks known as Caserne d’Auvare.

Bernard Fall, already having lost his mother, also lost his father at the age of sixteen: the experience would undeniably drive Fall’s “machine” to understand and write about the war taking place around him. After several months, most likely in the summer of 1943, Leo Fall was transported to the Hopital Pasteur after developing a hernia. In November 1943, he developed peritonitis and, again, he sought treatment at a private clinic arranged by Bernard. On November 27, 1943, the Gestapo raided the clinic and beat, tortured and murdered Leo Fall. In a 1966 interview, Bernard claimed that “we found his body in a ditch with twelve other people….” Fall, and members of Les Eclaireurs Israélites de France, a Zionist organization forced underground after being banned by Vichy Commissioner for Jewish Affairs Louis Darquier de Pellepoix earlier in 1943, buried Leo Fall in a Cimiez cemetery in northeast Nice, possibly the Cimetiere De Monastere. Fall added, “it’s quite incredible for Americans to believe that people could live like that – but we did.” After the death of his mother and father, Bernard’s participation in the French resistance intensified and he would join the Maquis in Haut-Savoie and the Free-French Army later.

These transitions created the foundation for Fall’s life’s work as a scholar analyzing warfare and the political conditions surrounding it. The day-to-day life this young man understood

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79 Bernard Fall, “Letter to MAJ Nulsen,” Series 1.01, Box F-01, BBF, JFKL.
was destroyed by Nazi aggression. These events would instill a life-long commitment, almost an obsession, to understand how and why such violence and disruption could occur. The prodigious extent of Fall’s scholarship, demonstrated through his study of political violence, indicated his drive to comprehend how force and power functioned politically. This effort began when his father was murdered and when his mother was deported to Drancy, and thereafter to Auschwitz.

After Anna Fall’s deportation, Bernard initially joined a Vichy youth paramilitary organization called *Les Compagnons de France*. At this point, Fall changed his name from the Germanic Berthold to the more common, Francophonic “Bernard,” but kept B as a middle initial, perhaps to maintain a sense of identity in the face of his changing life.\(^8^3\) Fall’s spouse, Dorothy Fall, describes Fall joining *Les Compagnons de France* as cover for participation in several underground Zionist groups including *Les Eclaireurs Israélites de France* (EIF), *Armée Juive*, and *Mouvement de la Jeunesse Sioniste*.\(^8^4\) Fall later described the *Compagnons* as a “plain boy scout movement in France but at that time even the boy scouts were political.”\(^8^5\) Fall did not emphasize Jewish religiosity as a motivating factor for his joining these groups but, instead, opted to emphasize his participation in secular factions of the resistance. Political, social and religious divisions among the Jewish population of France, particularly between recent émigrés to France and “French” Jews, intensified Fall’s comprehension of social distinctions and difference at a formative age. His ability to connect ideological association with political and social consequences was already acute at the time of his father’s death, when Bernard was sixteen, and this socially-oriented intuition grew dynamically at this time. In turn, he decided to abandon his Jewish identity as a result of losing his family. His family’s émigré status, a political condition,

\(^8^4\) Ibid., 20-25.
mattered more than a shared ideological conviction in faith among Jews, at least among those who denounced Fall’s family.86

In contrast to his diminishing Jewish identity, Fall recounted his subsequent participation in the secular French resistance with pride, particularly his service in Haute-Savoie where he claimed, “I was (finally) in a real Maquis.”87 This experience, and his later participation in Forces Francaise de l’Interieur (FFI), framed an important and self-defining period for Fall’s life and especially for his later scholarship on the relationship between political and military functions in warfare. Additionally, his service in the French resistance and army provided a legitimacy that underscored his later scholarship on warfare.88 He would often return to the knowledge and experiences he gained during this time in future work. His first-hand participation in warfare as a guerrilla fighter not only was a formative experience, but enabled Fall to channel the pain of losing his parents. The repudiation of his strongly-held Zionism, and his anger over the betrayal of his family and others by collaborators was unambiguous. According to Dorothy Fall, before the death of his parents, “Bernard was an ardent Zionist in those days, but by the end of the war his attitude would change, and he rejected his Jewish identity. One major reason for this was the willingness of the Jewish committee, the organization of Jewish elders who worked with the Vichy police, to give up the names of the refugee families in the Villa Beauregard to the police…whatever justifications the Jewish elders might offer, he could never forgive such a betrayal.”89

88 Bernard Fall, “CV”, Series 1.01, Box F-1; “Howard University Magazine, Vol. II, No. 3, April 1965,” Series 1.10, Box AM-1, BBF, JFKL.
At the time, Fall’s alternatives were grim. He could either join the resistance after his father and mother were murdered or take the chance of remaining in Nice to be dragooned for conscripted labor sent to Germany. As a young Jew, he would either endure horrible work conditions at a munition’s factory in Essen, or elsewhere as a laborer supporting the Third Reich’s war effort, or face deportation like his mother. Fall’s decision to join the resistance received considerable impetus with the conscription of men in France for labor in Germany through the “Service for Obligatory Labor,” established in February 1942 through collaboration between Vichy and the Nazis. Initially, the Service mandated the recruitment of individuals born between 1920 and 1922 for labor in Germany but these age parameters quickly expanded with Nazi wartime requirements and soon included Fall’s birth year-group. For Fall, it was only a matter of time before he would face conscription, along with immense numbers of French men and women, for labor and deportation.

Fall fought against the Nazis from a non-ideological stance. He despised fascism and totalitarianism, but especially fanaticism in any form. Fall eagerly joined the French resistance and displayed, like others, a commitment that determined survival or not. The impoverishment and war facing Europeans, and the deportations Jews faced in 1942, provided either few or no options. On a personal level, Fall directed his pain towards positive ends, or at least towards an intellectually-based, action-oriented means to work through the trauma he experienced losing his family and fighting with the Maquis. This intellectual outlook, formed through first-hand understanding of Nazi atrocity in Europe, crucially shaped the intellectual framework for his later scholarship.

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Fall described his first attempt to join the Maquis on November 8, 1942, two months after his mother’s deportation. “I was arrested by Italians with a group that had hijacked La Penerf, a French tanker, to join the Americans in North Africa after they had landed. Released (I was under 16 and the Italians were nice guys), I joined again and ‘graduated’ to the permanent maquis in Savoy.”

Everything turned on the legitimacy of what Fall regarded “permanent” Maquis in this case and the “real” Maquis in other places. The only clarification concerning this distinction centers on Fall’s decision to avoid any subsequent association with fronts like Les Compagnons de France but, instead, to commit to the resistance by joining a group of Maquis in Haut-Savoy locked in fighting for its survival against Nazi troops. This was an irreversible decision and motivation and endurance in a fight against well-equipped and well-trained German soldiers was paramount. Fall explained that his commitment had to be total, writing “There were no recruiting posters offering me free travel and education while protecting my country; no recruiting sergeant in a shiny uniform had mirrored in front of me the wonderful opportunities that military service held…the Vichy government of Marshal Petain had driven home the point that the Resistance was in Britain’s pay and that Germany was not only invincible – the time was before Stalingrad and El-Alamein – but was the wave of the future.”

91 Bernard Fall, “The Guerrilla Craze,” Undated, Series 1.5, Box P-1, BBF, JFKL.
93 Bernard Fall, “The Guerrilla Craze,” Undated, Series 1.5, Box P-1, BBF, JFKL.
II - The Maquis

The likelihood of forced labor further motivated Fall to join the resistance. Shortly before Fall attempted to join Free French Forces in North Africa by boarding La Penerf, pressure upon the Vichy Administration escalated with Nazis requirements that all Frenchmen between eighteen and fifty register for work by September 4, 1942. By February 1943, registered males between twenty-one and twenty-three were compelled to work. Another expansion of compulsory labor occurred in 1944 as males between sixteen and sixty and women between eighteen and forty-five were subject to compulsory labor in yet another agreement established between Marshall Petain and Fritz Sauckel, the Plenipotentiary for the Employment of Labor for the Third Reich. It would have been almost impossible for Fall to avoid this expanding net for labor conscription. With this understanding, Bernard Fall realized joining the Maquis provided a one-way street: it was either committed action against the Nazis or nothing. As Fall described his fate after joining the Maquis, “…for us there was nothing except the endless tunnel.”

In addition to anti-Nazism and other motives, increased membership in the Maquis was also spurred by German demands for labor. As a Jew, Fall’s likely deportation to Germany, or a concentration camp elsewhere, made joining the resistance a logical choice. Fall’s experience with these grim alternatives was typical. According to Robert Gildea, “Men and women of Jewish origin were an important part of the Resistance in France, fighting the war against Germany but

also a ‘war within the war’ against both the Germans and Vichy to prevent their own extermination.”

Gildea also writes that these Jewish resisters constitute a historically marginalized but important part of the diverse French resistance. Bernard Fall exemplified this phenomenon even though he opted for secular organizations after initial membership in Jewish resistance groups.

Jewish resistance members’ contributions were marginalized because the memory of the Holocaust served, in Gildea’s view, as the predominant lens through which the Second World War was perceived, whereas Jewish resistance was not a dominant narrative. Fall avoided description of his resistance as Jewish, because his actions, like his father’s, originated in anger over their political denunciation by others that, in Fall’s eyes, repudiated an assumed brotherhood of shared Jewish faith. Fall was outraged that the categorizing of his family as émigrés mattered more than a sense of Jewish solidarity that might deter such denunciations. The Falls’ Jewish faith made them vulnerable like all Jews, but their émigré status was a political sanction that increased their susceptibility as targets for betrayal. Still, Fall had no recourse but to join the resistance. As an older teenager entering adulthood, regardless of his religious belief, Fall would have likely joined the resistance because of draconian labor conscription affecting all French citizens. In Fall’s case, however, his fundamental motivation originated with, and was shaped by, his family’s betrayal by collaborators. This distinction made a difference: his mother and father were dead because of it. Collaboration, thus, was not a vague political act but deeply personal. Instead of association with Jewish factions of the resistance, Fall sought validation in his actions against the Germans through an aggressive and secular course. These distinctions revealed early developments in Fall’s

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awareness of how social and belief structures, such as religious views, contributed to the fate of people, like his family, caught up in war.

In late 1943, Fall joined an alpine Maquis in Haute-Savoie and he participated in combat in the Tarentaise Valley and in Haute-Maurienne, one of the provinces of Savoy. Fall fought at the mountain pass at Col de la Madeline in July and August 1944. At an elevation of almost two thousand meters, Maquis groups and units of the FFI and French regular army joined to fight elements of the Werhmarcht. With the advance of Allied armies into Europe’s interior, Fall joined the Forces Francaise de l’Interieur (FFI) on September 4, 1944 at the age of eighteen. The Maquis, like the FFI were absolute commitments because “There was no such thing as living at home like a solid citizen and then go out and shoot up a few Germans and then go back home and stay camouflaged…you actually fought all the way through.” Fall’s combat experience thus stemmed from a period in which his military role, and the ‘outlaw’ character that Maquis units characteristically embodied, were in transition. Charles de Gaulle established the FFI in March 1944 to unify all elements of the resistance, including clandestine units and the diverse Maquis, with the regular French military in anticipation of the potential Allied invasion in June.

Fall’s experience of war in difficult geographical conditions gave him first-hand insight regarding the importance of terrain in guerrilla warfare. Fall was assigned to this region not only for his language capabilities in French and German but also because of his ability to ski. During the autumn of 1944, Fall served as a guide for an officer of the Royal Canadian Artillery, possibly

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99 Bernard Fall, “CV,” Series 1.1, Box F-1, BBF, JFKL.
102 Bernard Fall, “Biography,” Series 1.1, Box F-1, BBF, JFKL.
a member of a Jedburgh team, and Fall was wounded by a grenade in his left leg and right arm during combat with Nazi soldiers.\textsuperscript{103} Fall often reflected upon his experience in the Maquis in his later writing and this revealed Fall’s preoccupation and personal knowledge of guerrilla warfare as a tactically oriented effort that made up part of the larger war he knew was going on around him. Fall’s familiarity with war did not include an inculcation of overt political ideology or even specific technical training. His morale and convictions during the war owed more to his anti-fascism and anti-totalitarian views than to his belief in the stated ideals of the French Republic.\textsuperscript{104} Those principles were not uncomplicated for perhaps most French citizens, given the role of Vichy in France, and they were certainly fraught in Fall’s view.

Vichy betrayal contributed to the secularization of French Jewish identity and collaboration degenerated French society. It created an “ordeal of legitimacy” in which “it is hardly surprising that many French Jews, faced with suspicion of Jewish particularism across the political spectrum and with virulent right-wing anti-Semitism, have historically reacted by embracing a version of assimilation that stopped only at the church door.”\textsuperscript{105} Spiritually, Fall’s rejection of Jewish identity was not atypical. He chose a secular course in life because his faith was contextualized in terms of politics, race-hatred, and fear. The potential spiritual value of Fall’s faith did not, like his parents, survive the war. Regarding political and physical training, Fall observed of his time in the Maquis that “Nobody had read Mao Tse-tung. Nobody had been to Fort Bragg and other Special Warfare Schools and the Americans from the OSS or the British from Special Operations

Executive who were parachuted in, weren’t guerrilla leaders, but communications specialists or demolitions experts.”

At the time, Fall thought of warfare in terms that privileged guerrilla tactics and emphasized kinetic components, whether of a conventional or irregular nature. He did not necessarily consider warfare as underscored by nuanced socio-political factors: the Nazis offered a clear-cut case of aggression worth defeating that, if he wanted to survive, required and justified killing if necessary.

Fall’s war against Nazi Germany and French collaborators provided a Manichean sense of purpose, though targeting collaborators remained a particularly difficult problem in the French Resistance. Generally, rationales for killing collaborators ranged from “self-justifying to outright banditry and murder.” It would become an issue Fall encountered after his Maquis unit merged with regular French forces in the months following D-Day in late 1944. During the liberation of France, Fall was assigned to the 1st French Army, led by General de Lattre de Tassigny, and then to the intelligence branch of the 27th Alpine Division because of his fluency in French and German. Subsequently, Fall was transferred to the 4th Moroccan Mountain Division as a mortar platoon leader and he remained with this unit until demobilization on March 19, 1946.

Fall’s involvement in military operations before D-Day and during the liberation of France are important for several reasons. In addition to possibly palliating the loss of his parents, Fall’s experience in the French resistance and military provided legitimacy among other military

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106 Bernard Fall, “The Guerrilla Craze,” Undated, Series 1.5, Box P-1, BBF, JFKL.
108 In 1945, after the Nazi defeat, approximately ten thousand individuals were killed in extrajudicial reprisals in France. In Italy, the number approached twenty thousand. In Yugoslavia, approximately seventy thousand suspected collaborators were executed by partisans. See Benn Steil, The Marshall Plan: Dawn of the Cold War (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 16.
109 Bernard Fall, “CV”, Series 1.01, Box F-1; “Howard University Magazine, Vol. II, No. 3, April 1965,” Series 1.10, Box AM-1, BBF, JFKL.
personnel and it grounded his authority to comment on military operations among both veterans and civilians.\(^{110}\) He understood war as someone who experienced it first-hand and he did so as a young civilian, as a refugee from Austria, as a guerrilla fighter, as a soldier, and as an aspiring scholar. War was not an abstraction or distant event studied from a desk, instead, it took his parents, it injured him physically, it undermined his spiritual faith, and it likely traumatized him psychologically. This background contributed to his perspective on warfare and knowledge of the military that, while not unique among his generation, was undeniable in offering credibility to support his scholarship on conflict. His experience in war also insulated him from potential criticism alleging lack of patriotism in the defense of France or doubt of his personal courage. These were virtues on which he would build.

It is worthwhile to point out how Fall chafed at military and political leaders who denigrated the irregular military contributions of groups such as the Maquis. Charles de Gaulle, who Fall otherwise admired, described the Maquis “as composed chiefly of outlaws who had always to keep to the country. The only kind of warfare to be expected of them, therefore, was guerrilla warfare.”\(^{111}\) Fall was clearly aware of this disdain for “guerrilla bands” due to their perceived intractability. Some units could run wild, eliminating collaborators for reasons ranging from questionable necessity to vigilante justice unsupported by evidence, and, in de Gaulle’s view, they could only be effective if adequately controlled within the context of a professionally managed military command. De Gaulle’s concern was to ensure unity of command within the French military when “at last – the landing of the armies came” on D-Day.\(^{112}\)

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\(^{110}\) Bernard Fall, “Biography,” Series 1.1, Box F-1, BBF, JFKL.


\(^{112}\) Ibid., 272.
Fall’s experience in the Maquis, FFI, and French regular army, contributed to his understanding of tension between irregular and conventional forces and their positive and negative qualities. His perspective on cultural and bureaucratic differences within the French military and its allies provided him with insight at a time when irregular approaches to war – best exemplified by Jedburgh Teams, the British Special Operatives Executive (SOE), and American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) – were only recently initiated by western nations. It is important to note that Fall’s awareness of the condescension towards “guerrilla fighters,” such the Maquis in the eyes of many French military leaders, was an early and eye-opening insight into the realities of social constructions of military hierarchy. Achieving unity of command over irregular forces, while also granting them autonomy to conduct guerrilla-oriented tactical operations assigned to them, was challenging. This created pressure within western democracies’ militaries and complicated important tenets of military bureaucracy and oversight.

On a larger social scale, the liberation of France also marked the first time many, including Fall, met the United States through its troops and culture. As he initially encountered them, Americans and the idea of America, appeared as a revelation. In a 1966 interview, he described how American music epitomized a sense of optimism and how the liberation, “to me is going to be forever just one vast orchestration of Glenn Miller.”113 In the interview, Fall also described hearing “In the Mood” on a radio just prior to engaging in combat with the Germans in the winter of 1944, and, upon returning to his original position three hours later, recalled hearing it still playing “presumably after X-many station breaks….this is exactly why it became really engraved in me.”114 “In the Mood,” it appears, was the perfect metaphor for the promise of American

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114 Ibid., 21.
liberation and only one of the early indications of potential opportunity that Fall perceived in the French ally. Due to his service in the French military, Fall was naturalized as a French citizen but his engagement with America in war-time Europe demonstrated that his eyes were on the west beyond France.115

Fall envisioned America as a canvas onto which he could project his conflicted identity and recast himself. Its promotion of liberty was an opportunity for spiritual reclamation as much, or even more, than material needs. While Fall considered his taste in music as “a very happy lowbrow,” Glenn Miller’s music “so much represented the Americans in the confident, rich, lovable characters. You know, this was not an Army of professionals - these were the American citizens – the guy on the street – the New York taxi driver – this was to us the first Americans whom we ever saw in our lives.”116 Particularly after disengaging with his Austrian background and discarding what remained of his diminishing Jewishness, America perhaps offered Bernard Fall an opportunity for reinvention. He, like millions of others, saw in America a country that offered individuals an outlet to rebuild themselves as much as it offered resources to rebuild Europe.

After Fall’s demobilization from the French army in 1946, he was later awarded the la Médaille de la France Libérée.117 As an official confirmation, the Medal of French Liberation validated his legitimacy as a veteran, provided credentials as a verified non-collaborationist – a credential not afforded to all resistance claimants due to the pervasiveness of Vichy supporters who later “claimed to have worked for the French Resistance” – and the award reaffirmed other

115 Bernard Fall, “Howard University Magazine,” Vol. II, No. 3, April 1965, Series 1.10, Box AM-1, BBF, JFKL.
116 Ibid., 21.
117 Bernard Fall, “CV,” Series 1.1, Box F-1, BBF, JFKL.
benefits including access to French military archives and other resources.\footnote{Robert O. Paxton, “Vichy on Trial.” \textit{New York Times}, October 16, 1997, \url{https://www.nytimes.com/1997/10/16/opinion/vichy-on-trial.html}, accessed September 15, 2018} Fall’s interest in pursuing his post-\textit{Lycée} education meant that these latter benefits were potentially handy and his military education augmented a parallel education in formal academic studies, which he began directly after the war.

However, there was much for Fall to reconcile from his experience of war before commencing classwork. Consequences from the war, understandably, conditioned his formal studies and shaped his outlook on the rules and politics of warfare. It is important, in order to understand fully his later views on revolutionary warfare, to consider Fall’s perspective on the most difficult of questions in war: killing. How did Fall’s approach to warfare, particularly among civilian populations, qualify his understanding of the moral validity or legitimacy of violence? At what “point” was violence justifiable against, for example, collaborationists? Civilian collaboration was a critical issue for the Maquis and, generally, for the French Resistance against German occupation of France, as it would be in any irregular or revolutionary environment. Yet, it was especially critical against a French civilian population that was, according to Robert Paxton, “more collaborationist than resistant.” Indeed, as Paxton observed, “Vichy France was the only Western European country under Nazi occupation that enacted its own measures against Jews” and only the most visible collaborators were targeted by the Maquis and executed during the liberation.\footnote{Ibid.}

The fact that a collaborationist government controlled a large portion of France added an important dynamic to the social war in the country. The Maquis expended significant effort in propaganda among the French populace “to show the population that the maquis were not the
rabble of foreign bandits portrayed by Vichy propaganda,” and that their operations against Germans and French traitors “were carried through with a military control and precision.”¹²⁰ This message was symbolically conveyed in operations conducted in the village of Oyonnax, located in the region of Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes. There, the Maquis emerged as a consciously designed symbol of power when elements of the German army were defeated in the village in November 1943. Oyonnax, thus, provided an instance of moral clarity regarding the Maquis’ actions against the Germans and those directly helping them.¹²¹ The issue of collaboration, however, remained significant during and after the war due to its extensive prevalence in French society, particularly in Vichy-controlled France. Eliminating collaborators often failed to exude the unambiguous military righteousness of the fight in Oyonnax.

**III - The Problem of Collaboration**

Fall knew that targeting French collaborators created acrimonious social discord. This knowledge informed his views on the legitimacy, or lack thereof, of warfare among civilian populations during and after World War II. As he turned his attention to later warfare in Indochina, his understanding of the dynamics of collaboration in Vietnam were developed from his experiences in Europe. The issue of legitimacy was central to the matter of targeting collaborators and without specific evidence of betrayal, cycles of retribution ensued. This subject was important to Fall because perceived legitimacy determined whether targeting collaborators effectively

¹²¹ Ibid., 65-66.
separated the population from the enemy, or would drive them away and undermined the Maquis’ effort, if their targeting was perceived as illegitimate. Targeting collaborators was suffused with motives of revenge and difficult to delineate as some form of objective military operation. Fall’s understanding of legitimacy on this matter, and his recognition that perceived verification of collaboration - resulting in the legitimate targeting of collaborators - depended on social, political, ethnic, and cultural conceptions of legitimacy, but they also depended on more clear-cut distinctions about whether one supported or opposed Nazi aggression. Unquestionably, many instances of revenge against collaboration resulted from vigilante justice, but debates over the issue contributed to Fall’s later analysis of collaboration during the Indochina wars. Targeting collaborators was not only an issue at local levels, but a substantial problem across French society.\textsuperscript{122} Collaboration, therefore, would present Fall with a dilemma. In World War II, it was an action he clearly perceived as treachery. In Indochina, it would become an issue with greater complexity. As an anti-communist who would help Vietnamese achieve a non-communist government, Fall would work with government officials who the Viet Minh accused of collaboration. Fall would be forced to reckon with the possibility that perspective determined whether killing collaborators was justified or not.

In Europe during the Second World War, the number of collaborators was substantial. Fall’s research indicated that approximately 40,000 French pro-Nazi collaborators were killed by the French Resistance.\textsuperscript{123} This number exceeds Robert Paxton’s 1997 account in which he


determined that 9,000 suspected collaborators were summarily executed during the liberation, 1,500 collaborators executed after trial, and 40,000 received prison sentences. Nonetheless, these are still considerable numbers. Targeting others, even if they formed a proxy for revenge, also clashed with the reality that justified targeting of collaborators required clear evidence of betrayal. The fact that Fall’s parents were murdered by Nazis was not a grey area for debate, however. No known evidence exists to suggest that Fall personally executed or injured collaborators and no archival records directly or indirectly suggest he exacted vengeance against Nazis for his mother and father’s deaths. Fall, however, possibly envisioned his own desire for vigilante justice in his account of Eliahu Ztkovitz, written almost 20 years after World War II.

Fall’s factual-based narrative implied that losing his family during the war drove his subsequent analysis of war. He rarely commented on his own family in any writing, but the enduring anger he may have felt appeared through indirect means. His account of a young Romanian Jew, Eliahu Ztkovitz, who survived Nazi persecution is a vivid example of this. Fall began his narrative describing the Ztkovitz’s family’s murder in a concentration camp in Eastern Romania by another Romanian, a “coldly efficient SS-type” named Stanescu. After swearing that “he would kill the man, if it took his whole life to do it,” Eliahu Ztkovitz found and killed Stanescu’s son in 1947 and served five years in a reformatory for juveniles. Ztkovitz emigrated to Israel, served in the Israeli Army paratroops, and then learned from other emigrés that Stanescu had joined the Foreign Legion and was in Indochina. Ztkovitz transferred to the Israeli Navy,


125 All quotes in this paragraph are from Fall’s account, see pages 286-290 in Bernard B. Fall, Street Without Joy: The French Debacle in Indochina (Guilford, Connecticut: Stackpole Books, 1961).
abandoned the force while it was on shore leave in Genoa and “crossed over to Menton, France, without the slightest difficulty” and “three days later, Eliahu had signed his enlistment papers in Marseilles and was en route to Sid-bel-Abbès,” for service in the Foreign Legion. He eventually found Stanescu near Bac Ninh and, confronting him, as Fall recorded it in his riveting account, said, “‘Stanescu, I’m one of the Jews from Chisinau,’ and emptied the clip of his MAT-49 tommy gun into the man’s chest. He dragged the body back to the road: a Legionnaire never left a comrade behind.” Fall might not have avenged his parents by finding those who denounced his family at the Villa Beauregard in Nice, France, let alone those who murdered his mother and father, but it is almost impossible to believe that he did not live vicariously through Eliahu Ztzkovitz’s mission. Fall’s extensive recounting of Ztzkovitz, years after his own parents’ murders, possibly demonstrates an enduring enmity and sorrow that never diminished. It also stands out in Fall’s writing not because of its astounding features as genuine account but because of its disclosure of Fall’s possible thought regarding the loss of his parents.

Fall also felt strongly about moral and legal limits separating belligerents and civilians in conflict. It is clear that he had conceived of war, perhaps as a youth, as that which only involved soldiers, but the reality of World War II proved how shielding civilians from conflict was never a reality in times of war. He commented, however, on the need for rules of warfare to contain violence against civilians, writing “I’m not a pacifist, I’m sorry. I fought four years against the Germans and don’t regret it one damn bit, so I can’t stand here and say I condemn war as such. But I condemn the hurting of innocent and disabled people.”

The problem, however, was that collaborationists’ efforts were often intentionally obscured to avoid reprisal. As a teenager, Fall was not in a position among other Maquis to direct operations, let alone decide such matters as

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126 Bernard Fall, “The Way It Is,” Series 1.2, Books by Fall, Box B-08, BBF, JFKL.
determining collaborators’ guilt or innocence. Based on Fall’s later comments, however, it appears that his experiences in the Maquis may have engendered a certain degree of cognitive dissonance on the matter. In writing about violence against civilians and collaborators, he described what is now known in technical military parlance as “distinction,” which refers to legal differences between civilians [or non-combatants] and combatants in conflict.\textsuperscript{127} Such acts troubled Fall because he was sensitive to the dehumanization required for the perpetration of violence.

In an assessment on this dehumanizing process, “manufactured contempt” - a psychological denial of, and contempt for a victim’s humanity - requires levels of desensitization, conditioning, and denial defense mechanisms as steps towards violent action against victims.\textsuperscript{128} This process possibly undermined efforts to contain violence through laws and rules in the conduct of warfare. Manufacturing contempt, whether through inciting revenge, manipulating racial and ethnic stereotypes, or other exploitation of human’s proclivity towards violence, could destroy efforts to mitigate violence, especially when directed against vulnerable populations. Fall, even as a soldier, viewed distinctions as important in its conduct. What remains unclear is the extent to which Fall viewed dehumanization as occurring within the perpetrator as a condition for perpetrating violence against ambiguously guilty victims, which collaborators sometimes were.

Fall’s views on distinctions between innocent civilians, proven collaborationists, and belligerents, however, clearly evolved and originated in his wartime service. They were views that would certainly evolve as he gained greater understanding of the rules of war while a research

\textsuperscript{127} Fall discussed this point at length, see “Blitz in Vietnam: Bernard B. Fall on the Impersonal War,” \textit{The New Republic}, October 9, 1965, in François Sully Papers, Box 6, Folder 28. For technical distinctions, also see Joint Publication 1-04, 17 August 2011, \textit{Legal Support to Military Operations}. Distinction is a principle in law of war that includes proportionality, honor, military necessity, and humanity.

analyst during the Nuremberg Trials. Fall described his position concisely in his later work on the Vietnam War, writing, “If total disregard of signed treaties is allowed to continue, then the Vietnam war will degenerate to an ignominious level of savagery far below that experienced in other wars since World War II,” adding, “To me, the real moral problem which arises in Vietnam is that of torture and needless brutality to combatants and civilians alike.” What is clear in Fall’s discussions of civilians, combatants, and collaborators is his awareness of dehumanization that occurs through the perpetuation of unjustified violence. This, Fall feared, was “what such methods of warfare finally do, to the men who practice them or who tolerate them in their surroundings, [they] will have to be faced up to by the United States, just as the problem of torture in Algeria finally had to be faced up to by the French: not just by their government but by every citizen, every educator and every clergyman all the way up to the Cardinal Primate of Gaul.” These were views that, undeniably, had a foundation in Fall’s encounter with extreme violence in World War II.

Fall maintained a moral ground on this issue. Despite the anger over his family’s betrayal, Fall recognized that rules of war and distinctions between combatants and civilians were vital to society. They were, he believed, clearly critical for his personal sense of humanity. Laws governing warfare could never eliminate human propensity for violence, but they could at least attempt to constrain it and pursue justice as a moral and legal human right. Because he could not personally avenge his parents, it appears that Fall mitigated the moral ambiguity of potential revenge by attempting to pin-point cases in which eliminating collaborators was legally and

131 Ibid., 20.
morally justifiable and served a military purpose. Fall knew that revenge was morally base, and dehumanizing, and though he may have seen some of himself in the case of Eliahu Ztzkovitz, he believed revenge dehumanized him but, in war conducted by rules, he also understood that military goals were evaluated by what they achieved.¹³² Fall, remarkably, was able to identify that revenge exacerbated war because of revenge’s cyclic nature. The problem of collaboration, and revenge for it, straddled an edge between making war worse and achieving a form of justice that could only justifiably exist for individuals affected. Fall seemed to recognize that collaboration engendered a cycle of violence that, once initiated, was difficult to contain. In public remarks, Fall provided a view on collaboration that demonstrated how cycles of violence may be controlled, prevented, or unleashed to achieve specific goals. He explained how targeting French collaborators, was “a key activity of (a) guerrilla movement with cross influences on undermining enemy morale and discipline.” Fall clarified his position further by noting, “guerrilla discipline is harsh in two fields: security of unit and relations with civilian populations.”¹³³ Fall’s comments, in this instance, are focused on cases where military necessity legitimatized targeting and it was a matter he discussed with others.¹³⁴

“At first, they tried to kill German sentries, German soldiers. It seemed terribly heroic in the beginning. But the Germans would take fifty hostages and execute them for each killed German soldier, which was unproductive in terms of kill ratios. The French population was tired of bearing the brunt of their guerrilla activities. That worked against the guerrilla. So finally, in 1943, by trial and error, they switched to killing French collaborationists. There was a triple advantage to that: (a) the French collaborationist would not be armed, which helped, (b) the French Vichy rarely would take hostages in reprisal for the killing of a collaborationist, (c) for every collaborationist killed, there would be another five

¹³³ Ibid., 22-23.
¹³⁴ Bernard Fall, “Letter to MAJ Nulsen,” Series 1.01, Box F-01, BBF, JFKL.
thousand Frenchmen who wouldn’t give the time of day to the German Army henceforth.”

Eliminating collaborationists, rather than targeting stronger German occupation forces, was a tactic that required specificity and this rationalized its justification. The deliverance of the local population’s support vindicated action against those assisting German soldiers. The legitimate targeting of collaborators, Fall wrote, “was the kind of deterrent effect we were actually looking for, the kind that would isolate the German troops from the population, in fact insulate them. There would be complete loss of contact with the population without creating any kind of adverse reaction toward us.” The “insulation” taking place was important not only because it insulated them, but because it also separated them as civilians protected according to the laws of war – even if these laws were completely ignored by German forces - but also tried to physically separate civilians from combat. Conversely, illegitimate targeting would reverse this process and achieve the opposite of a “deterrent effect.” Fall would later refer to this form of social insulation as part of a process of “competitive control” among populations. The dynamics among French civilians, such as the Maquis who increasingly targeted civilians cooperating with the enemy, was a critical dynamic that did not entail direct conflict with German soldiers. However, it served as a powerful tool undermining local civilians who might be willing to supply information or other support. Fall most explicitly described, writing, “any sound revolutionary warfare operator (the French underground, the Norwegian underground, or any other European anti-Nazi underground) most of the time used small-war tactics, not to destroy the German Army, of which they were

136 Ibid., 22-23; See also, Bernard Fall, “Subversive Warfare – A Structural Analysis,” Undated, Series 1.5, Box P-3, BBF, JFKL; Bernard Fall, “Memorandum – Some Thoughts on the Problem of Subversion,” Series 1.5, Box P-3, BBF, JFKL.
thoroughly incapable; but to establish a competitive system of control over the population.”

This was the kind of social and political control that Fall found so compelling in a war as violent as World War II.

What also concerned Fall was that he learned how cycles of violence, through killing that spurred revenge, could be manipulated at local levels, but also for broader strategic purposes. This was a critical step in Fall’s thought on warfare because targeting civilians, or collaborators without evidence of their guilt, besides its immorality, reversed “deterrent effects” that might isolate the population from German troops. Illegitimate targeting, Fall also knew, was effective in its destruction. He understood that revenge killings, such as targeting collaborators and traitors, could create cycles of violence that, if produced, could be intentionally reproduced. If it could happen in his experience, it could happen anywhere. This was a nihilism that was anathema to Fall, but he appeared to realize that violence and revenge, made worse by the dehumanization of anti-Semitism as devised and fanned by fascist ideology, formed cycles of violence.

Fall’s belief in western social values and legally backed rules in the conduct of warfare were important because rules of war prevented the type of depravity Fall experienced in Nazism. Fall’s commitment to rule of law in warfare remained central to his later critique of French operations in Indochina and especially of American aerial bombardment in Vietnam because, “the reality in Viet-Nam is that the international rules of war are not obeyed and, contrary to popular belief, the rules do apply…even a total military or technological defeat of the Viet Cong is going to be a partial defeat of our own purposes – a defeat of ourselves, by ourselves, as it were.”

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defeat of “ourselves,” to which Fall regarded and feared occurring, was a shift towards nihilism. His own experience of the Nazis’ nihilism informed this, and it was not the type of defeat he could countenance elsewhere. His anger and concern over this degradation of the human spirit was not something he read about, but that he personally saw as responsible for the loss of his family and as a source for the hatred leading to war in Europe. He did not want this to happen elsewhere. This personal encounter with nihilism was not something everyone writing about American intervention in later conflicts, such as Vietnam, knew with the same intensity as Fall. The problem he would later encounter in Vietnam was whether the United States, through its actions in Southeast Asia, undermined values it purported to believe in and protect as compelling reasons for its participation in World War II. What if the way the United States intervened in Vietnam subverted values such as the rule of law in warfare and others that served as a foundation worth reestablishing in the judgements of Nuremberg? These were questions Fall would later ask, in the late 1950s and especially after 1965, and they were questions with origins in Fall’s experience of World War II.

Fall’s views on war among civilians gained clarity after World War II because, following his discharge from the French military, Fall began work as a translator and then as a research analyst for the War Crimes Commission at the International Tribunal, held in Nuremberg, Germany between 1946 and 1948. 139 Fall’s participation as a research analyst and as an individual witnessing the Nuremberg Tribunals gave him time and space to consider his wartime experience, but also to learn how the Nazis gained control of the Weimar Republic and manipulated its constitution to gain control of Germany and precipitate a cycle of violence in Europe that surpassed World War I. Most critically at Nuremberg, Fall learned how advances in international law applied

139 Bernard B. Fall, “CV,” Box F-1, Series 1.1, BBF, JFKL.
to warfare in Europe during World War II and, especially, as they applied to administering justice after the war. Fall’s work at the Tribunals helped reestablish international law concerning warfare. It also helped in clarifying the importance of distinction among combatants, surrendered and injured combatants, and noncombatant civilians. The Nazis destroyed these distinctions during the war so what Fall learned at Nuremberg helped him understand how rule of law in warfare was restored and reminded him, even if he did not need reminding, why it was worth restoring.

IV - Nuremberg

Fall’s contribution to the prosecution of Nazi war criminals during the Nuremberg Trials decisively shaped his understanding of war and its consequences. His official title was “research analyst on the staff of the office of the Chief of Counsel for War Crimes” and he gained this position after working for the French delegation as a translator between April and September 1946. Moreover, the job formed a junction through which he could parlay his linguistic ability, understanding of warfare, and certainly his interest pursuing justice after the war, a goal he shared with the Chief of Counsel for War Crimes. According to Max Punch, the section chief for the French delegation who recommended Fall for the research position, “Bernard Fall is a serious and competent translator who works with assiduous effort. His perfect knowledge of German, which he speaks as a native language, makes him a valuable staff member.”

140 Bernard Fall, “Correspondence,” Series 2.3, Box W-01, BBF, JFKL. Fall’s position id was ETO-AG-424. “Bernard FALL est un traducteur serieux et competent qui travaille avec application et assiduite. Sa connaissance parfait de l’Allemand, qui’il parle comme sa langue maternelle, font de lui un auxillaire precieux.”
After his service translating, Fall was assigned to the second of the two Nuremberg Tribunals prosecuted by the War Crimes Commission. The first set of trials, which included French, Russian, British and American judges, tried some of the most infamous Nazi leaders and was known as the International Military Tribunal (IMT). The second series of trials, in which Fall served as a research analyst, was known as the Nuremberg Military Tribunal (NMT). The specific case to which Fall was assigned in the NMT was the case against the Krupp Corporation and its activity supporting and supplying the German Wehrmacht’s rearmament.\textsuperscript{141} Bernard Fall worked with a specific focus researching the Krupp Corporation’s conscription and exploitation of slave labor during World War II. In this role, Fall used his linguistic facility in German and French, and in his growing command of English. Additionally, as an observer during the first Tribunal, which judged the highest levels of Nazi leadership, Fall had a unique vantage on the Nuremberg Trial that was important to him personally and to millions of individuals who lost family members to Nazi atrocity. The fact that, at the age of twenty, Bernard Fall physically attended the trials and contributed to their prosecution was remarkable. Very few young Jews whose parents were murdered by the Nazis could sit, as Fall did, only feet away from the docket containing Herman Göring, Rudolf Hess, Albert Speer, Fritz Sauckel, and other Nazi leaders, and witness their prosecution directly.

How did the War Crimes Commission and the Nuremberg Tribunals inform Fall’s views? First, Fall learned more about distinctions between combatants, collaborators, and civilians from General Telford Taylor, a lawyer who served as the chief prosecutor in the Tribunals and for whom Bernard Fall worked. Issues involved in rules of war, especially as they were manipulated by the German military, complicated the way warfare was conducted in Fall’s experience of World War

\textsuperscript{141} Bernard Fall, “CV,” Series 1.01, Box F-1, BBF, JFKL.
II. According to Taylor, there was a clear difference between targeting German soldiers and collaborators as it pertained to justice. German soldiers’ executions of fifty to one hundred civilian hostages for every German soldier killed by partisans constituted war crimes. This was because the German military courts retained jurisdiction over German soldiers so enforceable rules punishing offenses were supposed to be in place.

Regulations against the punishing of enemy civilian populations, especially non-combatants, for actions committed by combatants such as partisans, however, were purposefully removed by the German high command. The only legal exception to such removal of regulations, according to Taylor, was in the unlikely case that “it was necessary for the discipline or security of the German forces.”\textsuperscript{142} In effect, restrictions against targeting non-combatant civilians were removed no matter what the civilian population did or what partisans might achieve. Taylor was concerned about the removal of rules preventing targeting of non-combatant civilians because such actions specifically demonstrated conspiracy on the part of the German high command. Taylor remarked that, not only was targeting non-combatant civilians indicative of conspiracy but that the Nazi conquests were unique, “especially in eastern Europe, (due to) the enormous scope of the atrocities, and the systematic planning and meticulous execution of these hideous enterprises.”\textsuperscript{143}

Differences between soldier and civilian, according to Taylor, “together with the soldier’s obligation to respect the rights of noncombatant civilians of enemy countries, remains to this day… a vital part of the structure and content of the laws of war.”\textsuperscript{144} These were the types of lessons shaping Fall’s views on warfare. Considered in this manner, collaborators counted as soldiers

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\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 89.
without uniforms to members of the resistance, whereas punishing civilians in reprisals for killing soldiers violated international law and constituted war crimes. This was a key lesson Fall learned from his experience of the Second World War. This distinction rested on the fact that members of the Maquis were not formally members of an army under military command, a problem Charles de Gaulle, for instance, saw as serious. However, the importance of Nuremberg centered on reestablishing distinctions among combatants and civilians, for one, but also in the attempt to codify international law on the conduct of war; the Nuremberg Tribunals clarified the rights of civilians and bolstered the development of human rights as a legally defensible concept.\footnote{Norbert Ehrenfreund, \textit{The Nuremberg Legacy-How the Nazi War Crimes Trials Changed the Course of History} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 121.}

Nazi execution of civilians in reprisal for targeting of German soldiers by partisans was one indication of Nazi willingness to forsake any pretense towards compliance with International Law. According to Telford Taylor, the Nazis’ disregard for international laws, including the execution of partisans “even if captured in uniform and in conditions of safety,” along with executing 50-100 hostages “for every German soldier killed by partisans” indicated conspiracy. This was more egregiously demonstrated by the establishment and use of “special police units to accompany the army in order to kill all the Jews discovered in the occupied areas.”\footnote{Telford Taylor, \textit{Nuremberg and Vietnam: An American Tragedy} (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 90; See also, Christopher R. Browning, \textit{Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland} (New York: Harper Collins, 1998).} These violations informed Fall’s views on the importance on the specificity of targeting collaborators instead of German soldiers and why collaboration altered the status of civilians as non-combatants.

The trials were significant because of the immense scale and scope of criminality leading to the Holocaust and they were also important for Fall with regard to how Germany came to power. Fall learned that, when World War I began in August 1914, no existing international law made an
individual or state liable to criminal charges for declaring and engaging in war. The elimination of resisters, such as those supporting escape of soldiers trapped behind enemy lines, did not count as a war crime. As an example, Edith Cavell, a British citizen who served as a director of a nurses’ training school in Belgium, was executed in October 1914 for her work in an “underground railroad” to help Allied soldiers avoid capture. The case caused outrage in Britain because, under the Hague Convention of 1907, her execution was not a war crime. For Londoners, this was salt to the wound because, since London was as a “defended” city, zeppelin raids against it did not constitute war crimes either. It was clear that World War I was a paradigm shift in world affairs of such consequence that the convention of 1907, let alone other constraints on conflict, failed to sufficiently account for changes in war initiated by the “War to End All Wars”.

As Fall learned, the Nuremberg Tribunals sought to build upon precedent from the Great War. The 1919 Paris conference, as an example, instigated the “Commission on the Responsibility of the Authors of the War and the Enforcement of Penalties.” It was created to investigate the Kaiser’s accountability but the commission eventually determined that, despite the Central Powers’ guilt initiating a war of aggression, that “this conduct did not provide the basis for a criminal charge under existing international law: it should, however, be strongly condemned and made a penal offense for the future.” As part of his duties, Fall documented the progression of the 1919 Commission’s work through a thirty-six page report entitled “Trois Rapports sur l’Armament et la Cavalerie du IIIe Reich” (“Three Reports on the Armament and Cavalry of the Third Reich”). In it, he focused on the illegal rearmament of Germany after World War I that

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148 Ibid., 11.
149 Ibid., 13.
150 Ibid., 15.
151 Ibid., 15.
violated numerous articles from the Treaty of Versailles.\textsuperscript{152} Fall was aware that the 1928 Treaty of Paris, from which the Kellogg-Briand Pact emerged, also provided a basis for the International Military Tribunal to argue, after 1946, that Nazi lawyers’ criticisms of \textit{ex post facto} justice (establishment of laws after a crime to prosecute that crime) were unfounded since Germany had signed the pact.\textsuperscript{153} Fall was clearly aware that Nazi lawyers sought several avenues in defense of their clients and \textit{ex post facto} claims were one of these contested positions. Additionally, Fall referenced the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 (Articles 46-56 inclusive) as a basis for what became the London Charter, also known as the Nuremberg Charter.\textsuperscript{154} The London-Nuremberg Charter (referred to hereafter as the Nuremberg Charter) was completed by the European Advisory Commission on August 8, 1945, and formally signed by France, the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom.\textsuperscript{155}

The background of the War Crimes Commission’s mandates mattered to Bernard Fall because they provided the legal framework guiding his research for the Commission’s investigation of the Krupp Corporation. These frameworks, critically, also guided his later criticism of war in Vietnam and he referenced conventions he knew well writing, “As personal questions to both American and Vietnamese unit commanders have shown, there is only the vaguest of ideas among them as to what is exactly covered by the 1949 Convention; in the few cases where the terms ‘rules of war’ meant anything at all, the officer concerned very often

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\textsuperscript{152} Bernard Fall, “\textit{Trois Rapports sur l’Armament et la Cavaleria du IIIe Reich}”, Series, 2.3, Box W-03, BBF, JFKL. This report would serve as a foundation for Bernard Fall’s master’s degree thesis at Syracuse University in 1952, initiated after serving as a research analyst for the War Crimes Commission.


\textsuperscript{154} International Military Tribunal (IMT), XI. Judgment, A. Opinion and Judgment of Military Tribunal III, 1338, 1340; Bernard Fall, “\textit{Trois Rapports sur l’Armament et la Cavaleria du IIIe Reich}”, Series, 2.3, Box W-03, BBF, JFKL.

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confused the rules of land warfare of the Hague with the Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War of 1929, the 1949 Convention, the Red Cross Convention, and the American Code of the Fighting Man.” \footnote{Bernard Fall, “Blitz in Vietnam: Bernard B. Fall on the Impersonal War,” The New Republic, October 9, 1965, p. 19 in François Sully Papers, Box 6, Folder 28, UMass-Boston.} As a solution, Fall added “It should not be impossible to provide every American serviceman in Vietnam with a handy resume of his obligations under the existing laws and treaties toward the hapless civilian population as well as toward the enemy combatant.” This mattered to Fall because civilian casualties and mistreatment of prisoners led to the “September 29, 1965 announcement by Hanoi that henceforth American pilots caught in the North will be treated as “war criminals” and “this is a direct consequence of Washington’s lack of foresight on the POW and civilian problem.” \footnote{Ibid., 20.} Accusations of “war crimes” was not one-sided and pilots shot down over North Vietnam would suffer as a result of legal disintegration that otherwise might have possibly constrained brutalization of POWs.

Fall’s understanding of rules of war, and the importance of their enforcement in World War II, but also in future wars, began at Nuremberg. As he studied legal changes attempting to address warfare in the early to mid-twentieth-century, he also learned of the cynicism with which the accused historically defended war crimes and the dissembling efforts used to scuttle allegations against them. In a case from the Tribunal Judgement of Krupp, for instance, the prosecution studied World War I violations of the Hague and Geneva Conventions of 1907 to inform the multiple cases brought against Nazi defendants in the first and second Tribunals. Fall learned that during the First World War, German military leaders “sought to justify their use of gas by the insistence that in the view of the explicit stipulation that ‘projectiles’ are prohibited, the use of gas
from ‘cylinders’ was legal.”158 If any naivete still existed for the twenty-year old Fall before his work at Nuremberg, the trials and awareness of bureaucratic maneuverings from the previous war removed any remaining illusions. In terms of the Kellogg-Briand Pact’s precedent as an inter-war era restriction on war making, Telford Taylor assessed that the Pact was “…not intended to condemn resorting to war in self-defense, but what about launching an aggressive war? Opinions differed sharply at the time, and still did when World War II brought the question to a head in 1945, public and official attitudes toward the laws or war had undergone a sea change.”159

Other factors figured into the Nuremberg Trials at this pivotal period in Bernard Fall’s life. Even the decision to conduct the trials was contentious and conducting them presented several serious challenges. These included the legality of “Victor’s Justice,” the creation of law after the commission of crimes (ex post facto), the determination of individual liability for “acts of State,” immense financial costs, and the anticipated lengthy period required to collect evidence and conduct the trials.160 In a dissenting view published after the trials in 1951, Viscount Maugham, former British Lord Chancellor during Neville Chamberlain’s government, wrote that the Nuremberg Charter “did not purport to be based on the rules of international law” and that it “was framed to provide only for the trial of a small number of major war criminals, most of whom were believed to be guilty, in circumstances so exceptional that it may reasonably be hoped that they will never occur again.”161

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Others, including Winston Churchill, Hans Morgenthau, and the Soviet Union’s leadership demanded that the summary execution of Nazi leadership by firing squad take place without delay. Instead of the idealistic minimum Maugham saw in the Nuremberg Charter’s mandate, or the maximum sought by Churchill and Stalin the Nuremberg Principles set a significant precedent. It is consequential to Fall’s work that he witnessed the establishment of these principles. On a personal level, as Fall saw it, and at the social level of Europe, the Nuremberg Principles sought to restore normative values of legal protection of civilians shattered by Nazi atrocity and defeat Nazi attempts to restructure legal codes according to Hitler’s diktat. In his later scholarship on war, the Nuremberg Principles served as a cornerstone on which Fall, and others including Fall’s supervisor at Nuremberg Telford Taylor, built their critique of war in Vietnam. These principles established and then expanded the inviolability of human rights in time of war. However, they were not codified as law, let alone made enforceable for future violations. Still, the principles at Nuremberg were viewed as an exceptional advancement in legal protection of civilians in time of war.

The “sea change” establishing the Nuremberg Principles occurred at the San Francisco conference between April and June 1945, at which the United Nations and the International Military Tribunal were formed. Associate Supreme Court Justice, Robert H. Jackson, was appointed by President Harry Truman to lead the American prosecution during the first

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Tribunal. Jackson, a former attorney general during Franklin D. Roosevelt’s administration and Roosevelt appointee to the Supreme Court, was critical in advocating that the prosecution’s charges against Nazi leadership include criminal conspiracy. This was a critical distinction because the determination to try the cases as criminal acts, rather than acts of war, fundamentally changed international jurisprudence relating to war. According to the Chairman of the United Nations War Crimes Commission, Lord Robert Wright, the goal was as lofty as seeking to change human nature, or at least its basest elements. Wright believed the world might gain from the Nuremberg Principles, but he also realized that “law by itself is not enough, unless it voices, and is inspired by, a change of heart among the nations, an active sense of justice, charity, and humanity.”

Wright’s hope was commendable but did not offer the type of realism needed to address effectively Nazi atrocities in a way commensurate with the suffering of victims such as Bernard Fall and millions of others. But the more concrete justice promised by the Tribunal moved closer to reality when the charter for the United Nations was signed at the San Francisco conference on June 26, 1945 and the Charter for the International Military Tribunal, also known as the Nuremberg Charter, was signed on August 8. Eventually, the long-term legacy of the Tribunal provided a basis for protecting individual rights during war. On December 10, 1948, “the United Nations

165 Jackson was appointed to the Supreme Court by Franklin D. Roosevelt and served from July 11, 1941 to October 9, 1954. He took a leave of absence from the Supreme Court to assume the position of U.S. Chief of Counsel for the International Military Tribunal. For more on Jackson’s appointments, see Peter Irons, A People’s History of the Supreme Court: The Men and Women whose Cases and Decisions have shaped our Constitution (New York: Penguin Books 1999), 343.
167 Ibid., v.
168 Ibid., v.
169 Ibid., vii.
recognized the Nuremberg principles when the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”

The War Crimes Commission’s mandate was significant and his research supporting it provided Fall an important professional opportunity and education due to the complexity and historical importance of the trials. Fall was uniquely positioned, especially considering his background, amid this scene of profound change in the role of international justice and accountability in warfare. The challenge of the Commission’s task was penetrating the intricacy of the interdependent bureaucracies of the Nazis and the Krupp corporation. Connecting the dots and working through immense amounts of documentation to support the prosecution’s case during the trials proved to be a serious challenge. It is difficult to overstate the task before the Commission and its research analysts, including Fall. Nazi Schutzstaffel (SS) documents detailing interactions between the SS and Gestapo with the Krupp Corporation alone, at least those not intentionally destroyed to hide evidence, filled over six train freight cars.

The Nazis extensively documented the extent and speed of their imperial expansion throughout Europe, and much of the Soviet Union. The German Third Reich the Nazis envisioned dominating Europe required not only military might and labor to support it, but complex agrarian, economic, and foreign policy to sustain a Nazi economy, all of which required production of staggering amounts of bureaucracy and documentation. The Nuremberg Tribunals depended, ironically, upon the Third Reich’s files to confront and judge the incalculable

suffering it caused in Europe during World War II. The extent of Nazi atrocity was staggering as Fall encountered its scale and intensity after the war. Philippe Devillers, noting the influence of Nazi aggression on Fall, wrote: “B. Fall, who wanted to search for the truth, thus obtained membership in the war crimes commission at the International Tribunal from 1946 to 1948 for these investigations, which are a milestone in contemporary history, and which have revealed, in all its scope, the horror of ‘modern’ war.”

In addition to their historic importance in understanding and judging Nazi atrocity, the trials built upon the institutional sea change at the San Francisco Conference. Together, they formed a paradigm shift in the development of international law to prosecute - as criminal acts and not acts of war- the Nazis’ atrocities as “war crimes” and their waging aggressive war as a criminal conspiracy. The organizing principles outlined in the Charter of the International Military Tribunal and drafted at the London conference, thus, “set out the constitution, jurisdiction and functions of the first international war crimes trial in history.” The Tribunal’s first set of trials, thus, opened against twenty-two leaders of the Nazi party on November 20, 1945 with authorization under the Nuremberg Charter. Although broadly considered as a collective trial, the cases against Nazi leaders were individually deliberated and included Herman Göring, Rudolf Hess, Alfred Jodl, Albert Speer, Fritz Saukel, Joachim van Ribbentrop, and sixteen other defendants. The proceedings, led by Robert H. Jackson as lead prosecutor, concluded on October

175 Philippe Devillers, France-Asie, No. 188 (Hiver 1966-67), 148. “B. Fall, qui voulait participer à la recherche de la vérité, a alors demandé et obtenu d’entrer dans l’organisme de recherche de crimes de guerre auprès du Tribunal International et a participé de 1946 à 1948, à ces enquêtes qui font date dans l’histoire contemporaine et qui ont revele, dans toute sa dimension, l’horreur de la guerre <<moderne>>.”


1, 1946 with the sentencing of seven individuals to imprisonment for terms of ten years to life, three acquittals, and twelve death sentences.179

Bernard Fall attended the first and second Nuremberg Trial proceedings, but his research analysis only figured into the second of the two Tribunals. The second Tribunal’s legal mandate was different from the first tribunal because the case was prosecuted only by the United States under authorization corresponding to the Nuremberg Charter but entitled “Control Council Law No. 10,” enacted on December 20, 1945.180 Among the twelve trails that made up the second component of the Nuremberg Trials, deliberation on the heinous crimes of experimentation committed by Josef Mengele, known as the “Doctors’ Trial” and the “Judges’ Trial,” which investigated illegality among the Nazi judiciary, figured prominently.181 Other cases included prosecution of the German Army High Command, known collectively as the “militarists” who exemplified, in the perspective of the prosecution, a symbol of German aggression spanning the periods of both World Wars.

Fall developed real enmity against these separate groups, in addition to the “industrialists,” which included the Krupp Corporation, the I.G. Farben Corporation, and the Frick Corporation. He learned at the trials that Nazism’s ascent could not have occurred without interdependence between German private industry and the German military. Together, they persistently violated articles of the Treaty of Versailles that mandated that the German General Staff, “shall be dissolved and may not be reconstituted in any form.”182 The considerable power of German militarism

leading to World War II, despite the attempt to prevent its illegal reconfiguration at Versailles in 1919, concerned Bernard Fall to a significant degree because it undermined the idea of a world-based order exemplified in the “Wilsonian moment” concluding World War I. At Nuremberg, however, Fall did not focus upon the magnitude of other debates, including the “colonial question” pertaining to the Treaty of Versailles, although these would inform his later scholarship. It is possible, however, that he was aware of broader changes taking place as they related to colonial sovereignty during the interwar years, but he remained focused on his work for the War Crimes Commission and how the subversion of Versailles was relevant to rearmament during the interwar period.

Nuremberg marked a period of closure in one respect, but it also marked a period in which Fall’s understanding of government power, especially its limits, evolved and gained clarity as he studied the Krupp Corporation, the Nazi ascent to power, and the Allies’ indecision in the face of events leading to a new war. Fall knew that the failures at Versailles, as they related to World War II in Europe, were manipulated by Nazi policy makers. Fall’s research on the Krupp Corporation and its war-time actions, however, forced him to understand this industrial giant’s formation and importance because it was the most significant contributor to the German armaments’ industry. With the filing of indictments by the Secretary General of Military Tribunal III on August 16, 1947, the case against Krupp was initiated and the window for Bernard Fall to conduct research supporting the Tribunal’s case opened. The collection of evidence would close ten months later.

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on June 9, 1948.\textsuperscript{184} With the help of others, Fall’s work began with digging into the Krupp Corporation’s past to understand its leaders’ recent criminal actions.

\textit{V - Krupp}

The Krupp Corporation’s exploitation of forced labor was extensive and intricately bureaucratic. As early as October 1938, the German Armed Forces planned to utilize forced labor from prisoners of war and civilians in countries it planned to occupy.\textsuperscript{185} Slave labor [known as Slavern] was central to conspiratorial planning between the Nazis and the Krupp Corporation’s executive leadership.\textsuperscript{186} Fall himself learned of growing labor requirements after the June 1940 invasion of France by simply looking around him in Southern France and seeing the registration of workers and later, their conscription. What was new information to Fall was the forced labor system’s extensive reach throughout Europe, especially across eastern Europe and into the Soviet Union.

For the armaments industry, forced labor was a significant factor aiding the achievement of production quotas. By the middle of the war in 1942, one of every five workers in the Third Reich was a forced laborer and in January 1944, over ten million forced laborers worked for the Nazis and their industries. Of these laborers, 6.5 million were civilians, 2.2 million were prisoners of war, and 1.3 million were laborers taken from, or working in concentration camps such as

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\item \textsuperscript{184} International Military Tribunal (IMT), XI. Judgment, A. Opinion and Judgment of Military Tribunal III, 1327.
\item \textsuperscript{185} Ibid., 1327.
\item \textsuperscript{186} Eugene Davidson, \textit{The Trial of the Germans: An account of the twenty-two defendants before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg} (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), 506.
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Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Ravensbrueck, and others.\textsuperscript{187} What Fall learned, therefore, was striking and horrifying, particularly since he was aware of his mothers’ deportation from Drancy to Auschwitz where, as an older woman, her chances for labor conscription were nil.

In the second tribunal, Fall observed Alfried Krupp from approximately fifteen to twenty yards away in an area of the courtroom reserved for the prosecution’s staff. In an experience that mirrored Fall’s attendance at the first Nuremberg Trial – at which he sat near Hermann Göring - Fall’s self-control at such close physical proximity to the defendants during the trial is notable. Due to fears that an aggrieved family member might assassinate a defendant, the Nuremberg Palace had been chosen specifically because of its security infrastructure, in addition to the symbolism of Nuremberg as the former geographic heart of National Socialism. Other Nazi leaders, Albert Speer and Fritz Sauckel, who were judged in the Nuremberg Palace in the first series of the Tribunal’s cases, oversaw the massive armament industry fueled by Krupp that continued to grow until 1945. Despite massive Allied bombing, Nazi plants included over three hundred thousand square meters of underground workspace to produce fighter planes through 1944 and, until D-Day, included plans to create over three million square meters for underground armaments production.\textsuperscript{188} As a member of Hitler’s inner circle, Speer served as the Armaments Minister while Sauckel, a Gauleiter in Thuringia, was the Plenipotentiary for the Employment of Labor. These individuals were directly connected to Alfried Krupp who oversaw the

\textsuperscript{188} Eugene Davidson, \textit{The Trial of the Germans: An account of the twenty-two defendants before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg} (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), 492. Note: Three hundred thousand square meters is equivalent to 7,200 acres.
manufacturing processes and the internal organizational functioning of his corporation as it filled Nazi armament orders.\(^{189}\)

The Krupp Corporation and other German industrialists engaged in a complicated bureaucratic competition for conscripted labor. In addition to the Krupp Corporation and I.G. Farben, the Wehrmacht and the SS also vied for slave labor with significant political infighting among the organizations. Competition for labor between Heinrich Himmler and Speer was particularly strenuous.\(^{190}\) The Nazis’ bureaucratic dissention over filling labor requirements demonstrated the type of details Fall learned while conducting research during the Nuremberg Trials and in the early stages of the prosecution’s investigation. Fall’s work provided experience in research, but it also provided him with substantive knowledge of Nazi politics, Nazi documentation, and interdependence among the Nazis and German industry and military. The first-hand knowledge Fall gathered from the field between 1947 and 1948 additionally served as evidence of these connections and it was material upon which he built in later scholarship as well.\(^{191}\)

The Krupp Corporation’s history was complex and extensive. It operated as a critical business in the armament and equipment fabrication sectors of the German economy for decades prior to World War II. Along with the militarists of the German General Staff after World War I, the German armament industry, generally, was a feature “of the German landscape, pervasively

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\(^{189}\) Speer was sentenced to twenty years in prison and Sauckel was hung on October 16, 1946. See Markus Urban, translated by John Jenkins, *The Nuremberg Trials* (Nurnberg: Geschichete Fur Alle e.V. – Institut fur Regionalgeschichte, 2012), 45, 70.


\(^{191}\) Bernard Fall, “The Keystone of the Arch: A Study of German Illegal Rearmament 1919-1936,” M.A. Thesis, Maxwell School of Citizenship, Syracuse University, 1952, Series 1.5, Box P-2, BBF, JFKL.
feared and condemned in world public opinion.”192 The key actor in this overall armament landscape was Krupp of Essen, founded in 1811 and an industrial empire by 1914.193 Due to a break in lineage of the male line in 1902, ownership of the corporation passed to Bertha Krupp until 1906 when Bertha married a German diplomat named Gustav von Bohlen und Halbach, soon to be renamed Gustav Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach.194 The couple would oversee the production of massive and escalating armament manufacturing, particularly in artillery as Germany competed with the French and Russian militaries’ capacity in 1913.195 Infamously, shorter-range, 420mm artillery were nicked-named “Big Berthas” while 211mm Pariskanonen – much longer-range siege guns, capable of throwing shells over seventy miles - were used to bombard Paris in 1918. An updated siege cannon, Schwerer Gustav [Heavy Gustav] was developed and unveiled in 1940. Its 80 cm caliber, 106-foot-long barrel had a range between 24 and 30 miles. Affectionately or not, artillerymen called it “Dora.”196 Fall was meticulous in his accounts of these kind of technical details, concerning armament and its capacity and limitations, and he had displayed a fascination with military subjects since finding a book called Der Weltkrieg in Bildern (The World War in Pictures) as a boy.197 Regarding the corporation’s ownership, the lineage issue was rectified with the birth of Bertha and Gustav Krupp’s oldest son, Alfried, in 1907.198 This figure, along with his father Gustav to a lesser degree, figured prominently in

195 Christopher Clark, The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914 (New York: Harper Perennial, 2012), 331. In 1913, the German “peacetime army grew by 136,000 to 890,000 officers and men.”
Bernard Fall’s research because this family history would have consequences for the Krupp Trial at Nuremberg.

When World War II began, Gustav Krupp led the industrial giant but was sixty-nine in 1939 and suffered a stroke in 1941 that left him alive but incapacitated. As members of the Reich Economic Council and President of the Reich Association of German Industry, the Krupp family were among the most devoted supporters of Adolf Hitler. In November 1943, Alfried officially gained leadership of the Krupp Corporation, which temporarily had returned to Bertha Krupp after Gustav’s stroke. Alfried’s leadership was certified by Adolf Hitler in a document known as the “Lex Krupp,” a specialized law codified as a federal law in Nazi Germany on November 12, 1943. The law certified private ownership of the corporation by the Krupp family to ensure it remained under family, thus private, control. This decree mandated that “Krupp alone was enabled to continue as a family enterprise free from the manifold burdens of a corporate structure.”

The German public would not learn of the “Lex Krupp” until January 1950 when, after the death of Gustav Krupp that month, Bertha Krupp attempted to disavow Hitler’s certification of Krupp family control of the corporation. She manipulatively claimed that Lex Krupp was issued “in violation of the law of the land,” yet Bertha’s ultimate concern centered on regaining the five hundred million USD fortune in limbo after Gustav’s death. The privileged relationship between the Krupp Corporation, led by Gustav, Bertha, and then Alfried, stemmed from early, long-standing, and massive financial contributions to the Nazi Party along with personal friendship

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200 Ibid., 26.
with Adolf Hitler.\textsuperscript{203} In the tribunal against Krupp, the “Lex Krupp” was “only one of many things which served to mark the special position held by the ‘weapon forge of the Reich.’”\textsuperscript{204} In a form of financial bloc-support, the Krupp family directly promoted and financed the Nazi Party’s rise to power in 1933 as well as Hitler’s seizure of ever greater power accomplished through the Reichstag Fire Act and the Enabling Act of 1933. The Krupps even compelled other industrialists to support Hitler and the Nazi Party.\textsuperscript{205} This effort formed what was known as the Adolf Hitler Spende which “was to become institutionalized as a regular contribution to the maintenance of Hitler’s personal expenses….and provided a large cash injection at a moment when the party was severely short of funds and faced, as Göring had predicted, the last competitive election in [Weimar’s] history.”\textsuperscript{206} The issue of determining responsibility of ownership as it pertained to prosecution in the Krupp trial, however, proved problematic and this was a matter which involved Bernard Fall’s research. Even if he was incapacitated, should Gustav stand trial or should Alfried?

Initially, in the American prosecution’s perspective, Alfried Krupp was considered the sole owner of the Krupp Corporation. His name was therefore submitted as a defendant for the first series of trials to the U.S. State Department, the entity responsible for construction of the overall defendant list, on August 26, 1946.\textsuperscript{207} However, the British contingent, led by Sir Hartley Shawcross, believed that his delegation had a much stronger cased against Gustav Krupp and the disagreement initiated a bureaucratic struggle over the correct person to try. Sydney Alderman, of

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{203} Ibid., 364.
\bibitem{204} “NMT – Case No. 10, “Krupp Case” closing statement, June 24, 1948. Telford Taylor Papers, Butler Library, Columbia University, Series 5, Subseries 2, Box 39, Folder 2.
\end{thebibliography}
the American delegation to Nuremberg, was the first to recognize this problem and wrote on August 28 that there existed “confusion yesterday on the name of Krupp. We had Alfried, the son, on our list. The other three delegations seemed to have Gustav, the father. We ought to be certain of an agreement.” Unfortunately, agreement was not certain, and it would bear powerfully on the result of the prosecution against Krupp.

The result of the confusion is that neither Krupp, father nor son, stood trial as part of the first Tribunal of the Nuremberg Trials before judges from England, the United States, France, and the Soviet Union. Alfried was eventually selected to stand trial, but, because of the delay, he was prosecuted in the second Tribunal. Telford Taylor, the chief prosecutor during the second of the Nuremberg Trials clarified the implications of this bureaucratic mess in his memoir. “If the main emphasis was to be involvement in the conspiracy to initiate aggressive war, the obvious choice was Gustav…If the principle charge was to be war crimes, then the defendant should have been Alfried, for the principle acts of plunder, and exploitation of concentration camp and slave labor, had occurred after Alfried had replaced his father as actual head of the family and, in 1943, as sole proprietor of the Krupp enterprise.” As William Manchester described it, “the Fuhrer had not asked Alfried Krupp to take advantage of the victims of Auschwitz. Alfried Krupp exploited them voluntarily.” So the defendant chosen was Alfried.

With Alfried Krupp finally in the docket to stand trial for the second Nuremberg Tribunal, Fall’s research mission was underway. What specific work did Fall complete as a research analyst

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208 Ibid., 92-93.
for the War Crimes Commission? Fall’s research into the Krupp Corporation consisted of Staff Evidence Analysis, research trips collecting evidence, interviewing and taking depositions from surviving laborers and developing lines of inquiry for prosecutors questioning Krupp and his associates. It also included unconventional tasks that presumably broadened and sharpened Fall’s attention to detail gathering evidence for analysis. The range and intricacy of Fall’s evidence is worth considering closely because it reveals the nascent scholarship he added to combat experience, personal loss, and professional on-the-job training gathering research for the War Crimes Commission.

Fall’s research was organized around documenting specific violations of International agreements as it pertained to the Krupp Corporation. The first Tribunal established that the Third Reich systematically violated multiple articles (46, 50, 52 and 56) of the Hague Convention of 1907 and several articles (2, 3, 4, 46, 51) of the Geneva Convention of 1929. In the case of Fall’s research, the Krupp corporation violated Article 52 of the Hague Convention and Article 6(b) of the Nuremberg Charter which dealt with slave labor. Fall’s task, therefore, was to document evidence regarding how the Krupp Corporation supplied, through coordination with the SS and Gestapo, slave labor in its armament’s industries to support the Nazi war effort. To accomplish this task, Fall charted locations at which slaves labored and he attempted to account for frequency of violations when possible.

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212 Bernard Fall, “World War II/Nuremberg Trial Materials,” Series 2.03, Boxes W-01, W-02, W-03, W-04, BBF, JFKL.
214 Bernard Fall, “World War II/Nuremberg Trial Materials,” Series 2.03, Boxes W-01, W-02, BBF, JFKL. The Hague Convention Article 6(b) provides that the “ill treatment or deportation to slave labor or for any other purpose of civilian population of or in occupied territory” shall be a war crime. History of the United Nations War Crimes Commission and the Development of the Laws of War, Compiled by the United Nations War Crimes Commission (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1948), 227.

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The task initially overwhelmed Fall and the Trial III research team supporting the prosecution because the Krupp Corporation privately owned and managed 138 forced labor camps. Fall sought to substantiate claims that, in addition to precedent set in the Hague (1907) and Geneva Conventions (1929), that article 6b of the Nuremberg Charter had also been violated. Fall contributed to the Krupp prosecution team’s findings that at least five million individuals in occupied territories were forced to work for the German war effort to include armament production and other components of the German defense industry. The prosecution team and its research analysts, including Fall, had significant work before them. By this time, Fall had experienced much that was formative in his thought and understanding of war. He had witnessed the complexity of war in irregular and partisan contexts, but also in the complicated environment of conventional warfare as a member of the FFI and with French forces towards the end of the war. Now, he was tasked to study how Nazi disregard of rules of war added further complexity to World War II and he was learning how principles and rules of war, guided by the UN-mandated Nuremberg Charter, sought to reestablish order. Fall knew war as a combatant, recognized the ambiguities of resistance and collaboration, and he was learning of the importance of affirming international justice in the judgment of war. These experiences formed who he was and shaped his thought because he had endured violence and injury from tactical combat and saw the sickening reality of war among humans, especially civilians, suffering through it. At the Krupp trials in Nuremberg, he would learn of the scale and intensity of civilian suffering through the Holocaust, slave labor, and the reality of legal prosecution against the Nazis’ crimes and against the war.

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Chapter Two – “Germany, 1946-1948”

I – At Nuremberg

In 1947, Fall’s field research took him to numerous locations in Germany, particularly Essen where most of Krupp’s factories were located, but also to Kiel and Hamburg. 217 What was the nature of Fall’s research for the War Crimes Commission and how did this research contribute to his analysis of war? This early period in which Fall conducted research mattered to development of his thought on warfare in several fundamental ways. First, Fall learned technical details about economics, the armaments industry in Germany, and the complicated bureaucracy and history of the Krupp corporation’s development. This was important information that supported his research for the prosecution and provided the rationale for the War Crimes Commission’s criminal investigations. In addition to his knowledge of the Krupp corporation and the War Crimes Commission, Fall developed skills in applied research creating analytical assessments for what the Commission’s lawyers called Staff Evidence Analysis, which was used to support the organization of the prosecution’s case. 218  

Second, Fall learned about the broader social and political consequences of World War II associated with the exploitation of slave labor. These laborers included women and children, but also prisoners of war who struggled to survive in horrific conditions. Third, Fall learned more about the importance of international law and its reestablishment in the judgment of war crimes. These factors contributed to Fall’s detailed but

217 Fall’s official title was “research analyst on the staff of the office of the chief of counsel for war crimes. His ID# was ETO-AG 424, Bernard Fall, “WWII/Nurnberg Trial Materials,” Series, 2.3, Box W-01, BBF, JFKL.

218 Fall’s papers at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library contain dozens of Fall’s Staff Evidence Analyses that he kept. See Series 2.3, Box W-01. Fall’s additional research files and related material to Nuremberg are in boxes W-02, W-03 and W-04, BBF, JFKL.
broad understanding of war among civilian populations struggling to survive. Fall already knew that war was much more than an aggregate of military-oriented components. But his research for the War Crimes Commission deepened and expanded his comprehension of non-military factors in war that were often of far greater importance and relevance than military capacities listed in tables of organization and equipment. These developments contributed to Fall’s understanding of warfare in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, but also helped him develop skills and insights that would help him understand what he would see later in Indochina.

Fall’s work began with collecting documentation to support the Tribunal’s prosecution of Alfried Krupp and the Krupp corporation. The tasks assigned to Fall varied and included conducting interviews with witnesses, modifying questions posed to defendants by the prosecution staff and providing detailed descriptions of the Krupp Corporation’s annual production charts at its Essen plants, also known as the Berthawerks and Gusstalhfabrik, from pre-war outputs up to 1943.219 One of his reports, dated 24 December 1946, documented steel outputs including “sheet-piling, rails, raw blocks” and other products such as “iron, ferrachrome and other materials.” These were technical minutia but the type of information he collected. Fall’s research was also prodigious, and he was held accountable for charting his own production by submitting weekly “screening work reports” to H. Russell Thayer, an attorney for the Military Tribunal prosecution team. In what appeared to be a typical week in early January 1947, for example, Fall listed his personal outputs: “25 folders were screened; 10 folders were considered as relevant and classified; 2 documents were translated; 2 SEA’s [Staff Evidence Analysis] have been done; the “Krupp

219 Ibid.
Folder File” has been completed and may be considered as ready to be used by the lawyers and (other) research analysts.”

Fall’s tasks also included transporting film, captured in the Krupp files at Essen by British Armed Forces, to the prosecution’s legal staff. These documents provided critical visual confirmation of Nazi operations and Krupp’s production. Archival records indicate Fall certifying delivery, with an affidavit, of twenty-seven films to the British Government’s cinematography advisor, W.J.G. Maloney in early 1947. Fall also provided analyses of these films. In one instance, “sequence 22” of film “2” depicted Baldur von Shirach, the Nazi Party’s leader of the Hitler Youth, urging his charges to follow principles of Mein Kampf at a torchlight meeting. Fall’s analysis contextualized wide-spread awareness of Nazi ideology in Germany by noting “that Nazi ideology’s aggressive aims were public knowledge.” This type of analysis demonstrated that Fall paid careful attention to popular sentiment and social-political factors in the context of war, while at the same time being attentive to technical details such as “sheet piling, rails, and raw blocks” produced by laborers in Krupp’s factories.

Fall’s military experience in the Maquis, FFI, and French Army certainly enhanced the research he conducted at Krupp’s factories. In one Staff Evidence Analysis, he examined the strength and armaments of Werkschutz (Works Police) at Krupp AG, in Essen. At this network of factories forming the heart of the Krupp Corporation, Fall gathered evidence documenting 272 Hauptamtliche (Major Officials) and 422 “minor, or low-graded works policemen. Total: 694 men.” Fall went on to note that their armament consisted of “3 Machine-guns, 8 Submachine-guns, 444 rifles of type “98,” Mauser, and Mannlicher, and 241 pistols, and revolvers, totaling 694

220 Ibid.
221 Ibid.
222 Bernard Fall, Series 2.3, Box W-02, BBF, JFKL.
individual weapons and 3 MG.” Fall’s military background was conspicuous in his analysis of firepower wielded by the plant’s security force and in his observation that this data “shows that the Works Police was of the strength of a light battalion.”

The armament and personnel of this unit suggested plant security capable of tactical maneuver for combat, especially with the addition of more machine guns and mortars. It certainly exceeded security oversight of malnourished, weary and often ill-slave labor. Many personnel in the Werkshutz were SchutzStaffel, suggesting the plants may have served as an SS station or transit base for German personnel moving through the Ruhr. According to a closing statement in the Krupp trial, “Krupp placed the dregs of Nazism, SA and SS men by preference in charge of their camps and of their guarding.” This indicated that Krupp had connections that did not bring average German soldiers for oversight of prisoners but committed Nazis. Moreover, Fall’s analysis of their military armaments brought an intelligence analyst’s perspective to the technical sides of his research as demonstrated in his description of the Work Police’s military capabilities because organizational strength and signature weapon systems are specific concerns of military intelligence. The broader subject of interdependence between the armaments’ industry and the German military interested Fall greatly, but he was clearly also repulsed by the service of the most malicious of Germany’s troops as guards over vulnerable laborers.

While he completed a variety of tasks for the prosecution, Fall’s research centered on documenting the operations of forced-labor centers operated by the Krupp Corporation. Krupp’s 138 work camps were too many in number for Fall alone to document. However, he managed to

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223 Bernard Fall, Series 2.03, Box W-01, BBF, JFKL.
224 Ibid.
document data on 75 camps, many near Essen due to the extensive network of co-located factories. At each installation, Fall documented camp surface area and, when possible, the number of workers, their nationalities and the number of families living within the factories’ concertina wire-encircled barracks.\textsuperscript{226} These details were significant to Fall and his fine-grained investigations demonstrated his recognition of the importance of collecting evidence first-hand. Fall methodically accounted for Krupp manufacturing activities as if he were documenting the details of a military operation, an approach he would take throughout the rest of his career as an analyst of war.

Fall’s research indicated that, even though labor was critical to production, Krupp meagerly provided only the barest of living essentials needed for a workforce that contributed to a quarter of the Third Reich’s total workforce in all sectors.\textsuperscript{227} Living and working in appalling conditions, slave laborers constituted forty percent of all war production laborers under Nazi control.\textsuperscript{228} Fall pointed out that these camps not only incarcerated large numbers of individuals but also included social services because so many workers were women with children. In fact, by August 1944, women made up one-third of foreign forced laborers in Germany.\textsuperscript{229} These services included nurseries for workers’ children, and, as Fall explained, “As to Krupp’s famous ‘social welfare program,’ it included also a clinic in Voerde, where female workers’ [fetuses] were aborted so that they would not divert any of their time from Krupp’s armament projects to the care of their

\textsuperscript{226} Bernard Fall, Series 2.03, Box W-02, BBF, JFKL.
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid. See folder “Krupp Case,” Box W-02.
newborn babies.”\textsuperscript{230} Fall, perhaps due to the loss of his mother and as a brother of a younger sister, seemed particularly sensitive to the plight of women.

Fall’s comments focused on an unimaginably brutal camp called Buschmannshof. This was a \textit{Konzentrationslager} for infants born to Eastern European and Ukrainian women where children were held under horrifying conditions, so their mothers could work in Essen. As historian William Manchester described it, “when female eastern workers employed at Krupp’s were expecting a child the confinement took place in one of the hospitals of Krupp. One part of the hospital was fenced off. There the women were delivered. After a certain time, it might have been three or perhaps six weeks, the women resumed work, while the children remained at the hospital.”\textsuperscript{231} The children born at Buschmannshof were often transferred to other quarters at Voerde-bei-Dinslaken, near Essen, where they were “fed a slimy gruel from bottles; many had ‘swollen heads’ and there was no child at all whose arms or hands were thicker than (a) thumb.”\textsuperscript{232}

Towards the end of the war, these infants and young children died at a rate of fifty or sixty every day and these individual death rates remained consistent because “every day, there was a constant influx of eastern female workers with children.”\textsuperscript{233} When the Allies finally encircled the Ruhr, significant numbers of remaining children were abandoned and died in a birch thicket in Voerde-bei-Dinslaken.\textsuperscript{234}


\textsuperscript{231} William Manchester, \textit{The Arms of Krupp, 1587-1968} (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968), see pages 562-570 for detailed description of the atrocity at \textit{Buschmannshof}.

\textsuperscript{232} Ibid., 568.

\textsuperscript{233} Ibid., 568-569.

\textsuperscript{234} Ibid., 568-569; International Military Tribunal (IMT), XI. Judgment, A. Opinion and Judgment of Military Tribunal III, 1408.
Krupp’s workers, particularly Prisoners of War, also confronted horrible circumstances. In an extraordinary document presented against Krupp at his trial, a ‘Colonel Breyer’ of the German High Command contacted the Gestapo liaison officer to Krupp, Fritz Von Buelow, to complain about the treatment of Krupp’s workers. Conditions, the document indicated, were so bad that they came to the attention of the Army’s high command through civilian reporting. Breyer wrote:

“The High Command of the Armed Forces has lately received from their own officers and recently also in anonymous letters from the German population a considerable number of complaints about the treatment of PW’s at the firm Krupp (especially that they are being beaten, and furthermore that they do not receive the food and time off that is due them. Among other things the PW’s are said not to have received any potatoes for 6 weeks.) All those things would no longer occur anywhere else in Germany…the conditions at Krupp would be looked into either by the Army District Command or by the High Command of the Armed Forces themselves.”

This document served as evidence, Fall and the prosecution team believed, that conditions at Krupp’s camps and factories were not dictated by “higher authorities,” such as the German military. Rather, they were the result of concerted Gestapo-SS-Krupp planning. The conclusion reached against Krupp maintained, “while the Krupp concern was eagerly seeking after concentration camp labor, other firms were refusing to employ such labor. Indeed, it was frequently difficult to obtain concentration camp labor and a firm had to have good connections with the SS in order to do so.” These kinds of details mattered because they supported the conspiratorial basis for Krupp exploitation of labor with the Gestapo and SS and this aided the

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prosecution’s case against Krupp. It is likely that they also mattered to Fall personally. His knowledge of conditions in which laborers existed could easily bring to mind the conscription for labor he managed to avoid by joining the Maquis after his parents’ deaths. The “Compulsory Labor Service,” an agreement between Vichy and the Nazis, included birth-year parameters that were very close to Fall’s age-group as early as 1942. It is difficult to imagine that he would have avoided labor, especially as a young Jew regardless of his growing disdain for identifying as a Jew. Additionally, if Fall had been caught as a member of the Maquis, after avoiding conscription, he would have suffered far more than forced labor, if he survived capture at all. Thus, Fall could easily have seen himself in circumstances he studied in detail over the course of almost two years of work as a researcher. He knew the fate he avoided had been a daily struggle for others.

Laborers began work at 4am with three quarters of a liter of tea; later, they received a quart of soup when their shift ended around 7 or 8pm, and, if available at some point during the day, 240 grams of bread. These details were documented and presented in the case against Krupp and other industrialists supporting the Third Reich. The prosecution’s Chief of Counsel, Telford Taylor explained that such criminal liability “was not primarily charged on the basis of whatever government connections they may have had, but by reason of their responsibilities as directors of

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239 Bernard Fall, “CV,” Series 1.01, Box F-1, BBF, JFKL.
240 “NMT – Case No. 10, “Krupp Case” closing statement, June 24, 1948. Telford Taylor Papers, Butler Library, Columbia University, Series 5, Subseries 2, Box 39, Folder 2, p. 14-18. 240 grams of bread is equivalent to seven to eight slices of 2018 commercial bread loaves in the United States but receipt of bread at the camps was inconsistent. In court proceedings against Krupp, eyewitnesses reported Russian workers catching mice and cooking them after skinning them with bits of glass and metal; see also Eugene Davidson, *The Trial of the Germans: An account of the twenty-two defendants before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), 509.
large, industrial concerns where ‘slave’ labor was extensively utilized under inhumane conditions.”\textsuperscript{242} Not only were the conditions in which they worked abysmal, the sheer number of individuals forced to labor was overwhelming: by July 1942, 5,124,000 individuals taken from occupied countries worked in Germany and, by the end of the war, total estimates of slave laborers in Germany ranged from seven to ten million people.\textsuperscript{243}

Not surprisingly, Krupp and other Nazi leaders contested evidence pertaining to slave labor at multiple points during both Nuremberg Tribunals. Like Krupp, Fritz Sauckel, the General Plenipotentiary for Labor Deployment, claimed that Russian slave labor was not illegal because the Soviet Union never signed the Hague Convention of 1907.\textsuperscript{244} In the case of Soviet citizens, Fall discovered multiple violations of war relating to Russian victims that were used to counter the defendants’ arguments. In one case, Fall urgently telegraphed the prosecution team after discovering a written and signed admission by Peter Nohles, a Gestapo officer near Essen, held at the time as a defendant at Nuremberg during the Krupp Trial. Fall’s telegram read:

\begin{verbatim}
URGENT     HAVE FOUND AT ESSEN PSO WRITTEN AND SIGNED ADMISSION BY NOHLES CMA PRESENTLY AT NUREMBERG CMA THAT HE ORDERED THIRTY FIVE RUSSIAN WORKERS IN ESSEN TO BE SHOT BY GESTAPO AND SD IN A PARK IN THE TOWN STOP THAT THE RUSSIANS DID NOT HAVE TRIAL STOP AMONG DEADS (sic) WERE WOMEN STOP HANDS OF MURDERED WERE TIED BEHIND THEIR BACKS WITH TELEPHONE WIRE AND THEY WERE KILLED BY PISTOL SHOTS IN THE NECK AT THE EDGE OF A BOMB CRATER STOP I BORROWED THE ORIGINALS FROM BRITISH PUBLIC SAFETY IF INTERESTED CMA PALLENBERG WILL BRING DOWN ORIGINALS ON WEDNESDAY STOP IN MEANTIME I WILL TRY TO FIND OUT IF RUSSIAN
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{244} Ibid., 508.
Fall’s telegram provided supporting evidence for an affidavit and 71 pages of testimony left by Nohles later located by the prosecution after his suicide July 14, 1945. Nohles’s documents corroborated other collected evidence describing conditions as directed by the Krupp corporation and, additionally, that the operations and conditions of its labor camps were under the supervision of the Gestapo. It was not clear why Nohles left this detailed evidence, but it provided significant substance to charges against Krupp. In addition to Nohles’ admission, Fall’s telegram documented common action taken towards slave laborers in Krupp’s factories as the war wound down in 1945. Significant numbers of workers were shot, in circumstances like those described in Fall’s telegram, or they were relocated to death camps where their murders hid evidence of slave labor. Fall explained the conspiratorial nature and extent of such action, writing, “The Germans took elaborate precautions to keep their extermination operations a secret precisely because they knew that they were criminal.”

Fall’s Staff Evidence Analysis often dealt with determining what happened to individuals working for Krupp as the Allies bombed factories and moved closer to Essen. For example, Fall recorded an interview with a former worker at Camp Humboldtstrasse, Essen after an air raid struck their camp. Fall’s notes explained that the laborer “mentions that the destroyed camp was occupied by 520 Jewesses and that, after destruction of the barracks and of the kitchen (sic), the

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245 Bernard Fall, Series 2.3, W-01, BBF, JFKL.
248 Bernard Fall, “The Guerrilla Craze,” Undated, Series 1.5, Box P-1, BBF, JFKL.
inmates were transferred to another camp, but they were still working for Krupp. The worker mentions no casualties caused by the raid.”

Fall also gathered additional related information from German civilians and from other former Krupp workers. One of the most remarkable of these witnesses included one of the “520 Jewesses,” a Ruthenian [Carpathian Russian] woman from Uzhhorod, named Elizabeth Roth. Fall’s work with this young woman and the similarities of their stories is compelling.

In 1947, Fall went to Essen with Roth to collect bricks [as evidence] that she, her sister Ernestine and fellow workers used to repair Krupp’s buildings damaged by Allied bombing. Roth and the “Hungarian Jewesses” to which her group was referred, were often put to work after air-raids “moving rubble and carrying building material for the reconstruction of the plant. Their principle task was the carrying of bricks and iron roofing sheets.” Roth’s story was central to an article Fall would write in 1951 that condemned the actions of Alfried Krupp and his treatment of workers. The Staff Evidence Analysis Fall completed on this trip was focused on technical details, but their trip together to Krupp’s factories to collect evidence also provided an opportunity for Fall to know intimately this woman’s loss and suffering. Elizabeth Roth’s experiences paralleled Fall’s, and this connection provided a specific, human face of the suffering inflicted by Nazi industrial policies. Fall learned of Roth’s story directly from her, but also through her testimony against Krupp during his trial.

As a seventeen-year-old in 1939, Roth’s city of Uzhhorod was invaded by forces of the Hungarian Army. She and her sister were expelled from school because they were Jewish and her

249 Bernard Fall, Series 2.3, Box W-01, BBF, JFKL.
250 Bernard Fall, “Document, No. NIK-13428,” Series, 2.3, Box W-01, BBF, JFKL.
253 Ibid.
family suffered occupation until May 1944 when all six members of the Roth family were deported to Auschwitz. Within moments of arrival on May 19, 1944, her family was separated and one of Roth’s sisters, her younger brother, and her parents were sent to the gas chambers. Elizabeth and Ernestine were selected as potential workers and subsequently sent to Gelsenberg-Benzin where the sisters joined over two thousand other women held for labor conscription. Fall certainly learned more of Auschwitz, to which his mother had been sent, from Roth’s account since her experience of Auschwitz, along with her transfer to Gelsenberg-Benzin, provided the prosecution first-hand testimony in its case against Krupp. From Gelsenberg-Benzin, Elizabeth was relocated, along with the other women, to Humboldtstrasse in Essen to work as Kruppianer [Krupp’s workers].

Roth’s testimony to H. Russell Thayer of the American prosecution is chilling in its descriptions of these women’s living and working conditions. Elizabeth was assigned to work at a steel-hardening oven while Ernestine mixed concrete to make bricks. During the winter of 1944, Ernestine had to transport these bricks and other materials without gloves, using steel wheelbarrows. Many of these women workers did not have shoes, let alone adequate clothing. Even other German workers were shocked at the conditions under which the sisters worked, along with their fellow five-hundred slave laborers, and the treatment they endured was exacerbated by the winter cold. In one account, an elderly builder of tank turrets and World War I veteran, Peter Gutersohn, was horrified and “really ashamed to be a German when I saw what had been done to

257 Ibid., 18.
these young women.” Gutersohn believed that the Nazis would eventually kill all of them because, “the work for which these women were used had never been done by any of the German women employed at our plant.” As Fall learned, the women were mistreated brutally, in part, because their guards were SS and not mere plant guards. William Manchester, who also met later with Roth recounted the brutality of the SS. A Lagerfuhrer named Oskar Rieck was singled out in Roth’s recounting for his brutality because he specialized in attempting to whip workers in the eyes at eight feet with a dogwhip. This was not just a gratuitous case of violence but, rather, exemplified the needless cruelty Fall learned of at the Tribunal. This inhumanity would deepen Fall’s outrage over atrocities inflicted upon civilians and intensify his denunciations of those perpetrating such actions when he encountered them. The fervor with which Fall castigated unnecessary violence throughout his career, but especially in his analysis conducted later in Indochina, grew out of this experience in World War II and especially at Nuremberg. Fall’s drive to document facts and cases of unjustifiable violence, which Nazis and the Krupps endeavored to hide, was only intensified by his discovery of efforts to deny what he knew and could document as true.

Roth’s testimony also shed light on why Krupp’s guards were SS. Was it a matter of muddying the waters in a bureaucratic or administrative sense? Possibly, since, on the point of SS brutality at Krupp’s factories, the prosecution learned that Krupp attempted to deny responsibility for the workers’ treatment because the guards were on SS payrolls and not the Krupp Corporation’s. The SS guards were either Allgemeine SS [a subgroup responsible for policing and internal security] or Sicherheitsdienst [SD] factions which, Fall knew and as Roth testified, often

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259 Ibid., 555.
260 Ibid., 554-555.
murdered workers. Thus, the guards were SS to shield the Krupp corporation from potential allegations of slave labor, but primarily because Krupp’s foreign workers were to be deported to hide evidence of their labor and much of the task of deportation fell within SS mandate. Since the first Tribunal’s trial of Ernst Kalenbrunner, SS Obergruppenfuhrer [Director of Reich Security Office] ended in a death sentence, SS guilt was already extensively documented and established. It appears certain Krupp sought to absolve himself of guilt by association with the SS and Gestapo by obscuring who provided security at his plants.

To establish the SS-Krupp connection, Fall’s research targeted one other of the twelve defendants in the Krupp case, Friedrich von Buelow. Von Buelow directed counter intelligence and liaison with the Gestapo to coordinate slave labor from prisoner of war and concentration camps in the manufacture of arms. Buelow, the court records and judgment demonstrated, sadistically trained special labor allocation officers “to enumerate especially difficult and dirty work for which these foreigners (workers) may be used in groups of 50-60.” Additionally, Von Buelow coordinated the Krupp firm’s “furnishing of German, female workers who would be sworn in to the SS and given 3 weeks’ training at the women’s concentration camp at Ravensbrueck and then assigned as guards for these concentration camps.” What mattered was the SS connection to Krupp as Krupp’s bureaucratic obstructions and manipulations to avoid guilt became clearer with evidence. It is clear that this sort of work, the careful collection and sifting of direct evidence,
shaped Fall’s general approach to analyzing complex social and political events. This would later be the hallmark of his analysis of the wars in Indochina.

Statements provided by the German worker Peter Guterhsohn also mattered to Fall’s research because he had to document the accuracy of the testimony, if feasible. Locating such forthcoming workers, however, proved difficult. In March 1945, as the Allied invasion approached Essen, attempts to re-deport the women workers back to Auschwitz, thus removing evidence of their labor at Krupp’s factories, took place. In an affidavit made during his term of imprisonment, Alfried Krupp conceded that these women workers “very disagreeably affected him” and that he decided “to get rid of them as soon as possible.”265 While this statement was made after the trial closed, it validated Fall’s research and the prosecution’s argument against Krupp concerning slave labor. Krupp’s defense attempted to manipulate such relocations as concern for workers’ safety, but these statements obscured the truth that the relocations consisted of transport to other work camps, including Buchenwald, but also extermination camps such as Auschwitz. In a rare case of fortune for Elizabeth Roth, her scheduled deportation was delayed due to disruption of train movement caused by an air-raid. A few days later, on March 11, 1945, during another Allied air raid on Essen, Elizabeth, her sister and a small group of four other women escaped their camp at Humboldtstrasse through a break in the wire and gained temporary refuge with a small number of sympathetic Germans.266 The remaining five hundred and fourteen women physically unable to escape, or unwilling to because of fear during the bombing raid, were eventually deported on March 17 to Buchenwald and executed.267 After their escape, aided

266 Ibid., 585-586.
267 Ibid., 585.
incredibly by the extensive destruction and distraction created by the Allied air-raid, Roth and the small group survived the remaining months of the war.\textsuperscript{268}

When Essen was taken over by the Allies, Elizabeth and Ernestine Roth found a Czech Displaced Person [DP] officer who directed them to a collection point in Essen. Eventually, the sisters were sought for testimony in the Tribunal against Krupp, at which point Roth and Fall met.\textsuperscript{269} Fall’s meeting and interaction with Elizabeth Roth was important to the Krupp trial because evidence Roth presented contributed to charges of spoliation. Meeting Roth was also important to Fall because, not only did it serve as important evidence in his first published article about the Krupp trial, but because meeting her was one instance through which he could see how her story connected to the broader goals of the Nuremberg Tribunal’s prosecution of Krupp. The prosecution believed the issue of slave labor was central to their case, so Elizabeth’s story was a valuable component of the prosecution’s overall effort.\textsuperscript{270} Remarkably, Fall, also took a deposition from Alfried Krupp and Fall would recount key points in Krupp’s statement in an article published later in 1951. Several months after he was arrested at his home, the Villa Hugel outside Essen, Fall’s report on the deposition noted, “Subject states that while he did not believe in a German victory in 1943, he expressed in an appeal to Krupp workers the hope in a coming retaliation for the Allied air raids on the Ruhr. Subject states that he could not do otherwise than to follow the German leaders. States that several common points existed between Nazi ideology

\textsuperscript{268} Bernard Fall, Series 2.03, Box W-01, BBF, JFKL.
\textsuperscript{269} Bernard Fall, Document No. NIK 13428,” Series 2.03, Box W-01, BBF, JFKL.
\textsuperscript{270} Ibid. See also, “NMT – Case No. 10, “Krupp Case” closing statement, June 24, 1948. Telford Taylor Papers, Butler Library, Columbia University, Series 5, Subseries 2, Box 39, Folder 2, p. 17-18.
and Krupp’s tradition.” Taking Krupp’s affidavit, because it served as evidence that eventually led to Krupp’s guilty verdict, offered Fall at least the opportunity for a modicum of satisfaction.271

The judgment of Krupp took place on July 31, 1948.272 The sentences included one acquittal and eleven prison terms with Alfried Krupp receiving a twelve-year prison sentence on counts 2 and 3, spoliation and slave labor, of the indictment.273 If the bureaucratic struggle that had placed Alfried Krupp in the second trial, instead of the first set of trials, had not occurred, Krupp’s judgment would have been significantly more severe. Instead of standing on the docket with Herman Göring and other Nazi leadership in the first slate of the Nuremberg Trials, Krupp’s sentence stemmed from the ruling that, although complicit with Nazi ideology, that the industrialists did not directly conspire with Hitler’s overall strategy.274 The extent to which exploitation of slave labor occurred, the central issue concerning Fall since it pertained to his research on Krupp, was undisputed. “Karl Otto Saur,” the State Secretary in the Reich’s Ministry for armament production, “swore under oath that Alfried’s personal intervention with Hitler was directly responsible for Krupp’s use of Auschwitz Jews in the Berthawerk [Krupp’s factories].”275

Remarkably, it seemed to Fall, the atrocity of slave labor, despite the extent of its immorality, failed to influence the sentences’ severity. As Telford Taylor noted, “…Alfried Krupp was a very lucky man, for, had he been named (to the first trial), he would almost certainly have been convicted and given a very stiff sentence by the International Military Tribunal.”276

273 Ibid., 656-657.
Bureaucracy and politics saved Krupp. As William Manchester observed at the time of his verdict, “Krupp was convinced that his future would be determined by statemen, not jurists,” because, towards the end of the trial proceedings, Krupp was aware that the “Four Power alliance was disintegrating at a meeting between Molotov and George Marshall in London.”

How did the Nuremberg Trials inform Fall’s understanding of justice and war? As a member of the United States prosecution team investigating the Krupp case, how did Fall perceive the United States’ responsibilities as a supervisory power administering ‘justice’ and, potentially, as a nation subjected to such justice as well? What became known as the “Nuremberg Legacy” was a transformation of the application of justice pertaining to warfare and, according to Telford Taylor, a statement “that the laws of war are superior to domestic law, and that individuals may be held accountable to them.”

Similarly, according to the United Nations’ History of the Commission, “the very essence of the [Nuremberg] Charter [of 1945] is that individuals have international duties which transcend the national obligations of obedience imposed by the individual state. He who violates the laws of war cannot obtain immunity while acting in pursuance of the authority of the state if the state in authorizing action moves outside its competence under international law.”

This was a philosophical and material development affecting the rule of law over national sovereignty, a topic that continues to complicate contemporary compliance with the International Criminal Court’s claim of universal jurisdiction. With their ascent to power, the Nazis’ actions

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280 A central debate over international jurisdiction concerns the subject of sovereignty for citizens of member states as signatories to International Law-related mandates. Erga Omnes is linked to international jurisdiction and suggests that norms such as war crimes, torture, genocide and others apply to the international community while jus cogens are international law commitments required by states. See Lyal S. Sunga, “Individual Responsibility in
corrupted law, as the Tribunal prosecution perceived it, towards a socially constructed concept of fascist-oriented positivism. National Socialist war, according to Michael Geyer, “was war for the sake of social reconstruction through the destruction of conquered peoples.” Through a nihilist dogma, they reduced law to an “act of will-to-the identification of right with might…(where) the doctrine of absolute sovereignty of the state gave rise to exaggerated nationalism in which the natural law was superseded by positive law.” The importance of this would certainly have been evident to an observer and analyst as perceptive as Fall.

During the Nuremburg Military Tribunals, the Nazis’ defense attempted to demonstrate that their positivist approach to law prevented the subjection of their state to higher laws due to the purported sovereignty of their actions. This was also significant to Fall because the Nuremberg Tribunal, at which the Allies sought to defeat this positivist approach, revealed the criminal and fraudulent character of the Nazis’ laws, and additionally sought to restore natural law as an internationally agreed-upon norm regulating war between nations. As Michael Geyer described German objectives during World War II, “the war was fought to reorder the world rather than preserve or adjust existing structures of international relations” and to “establish a new national and international order through subjugation and extermination.”

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283 The Tokyo Tribunals significantly complicated the Allies’ legal and moral position vis-à-vis the use of atomic weapons against Hiroshima and Nagasaki, see Norbert Ehrenfreund, The Nuremberg Legacy-How the Nazi War Crimes Trials Changed the Course of History (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 113-121.
observed that Nazi Germany’s colonization of Eastern Europe tore “down the whole noble façade of nineteenth century international law.”

To combat this dismantling, the judgments of Nuremberg sought to reestablish and develop stronger, institutionally-backed norms to prevent and punish future crimes related to war. The Genocide Convention [1948], Universal Declaration of Human Rights [1948], and the Nuremberg Principles [1950] constitute the vital legacy of the trials. Fall contributed to and witnessed this legal rebalancing and return to natural law, particularly as it related to international relations after World War II. This was critical for his later scholarship, grounding his work in normative values that Nuremberg attempted to reestablish but also that it sought to impose and reinforce in potential future conflicts. Most critically, these ‘values’ centered on supra legal oversight of state sovereignty based in the type of law Nazism attempted to destroy and that the Nazis claimed limited its actions as a sovereign, fascist nation. Fall’s attendance at the Nuremberg Tribunals, and the examples provided by prosecutors, Robert H. Jackson and Telford Taylor, clearly inculcated a sense of justice predicated on the Nuremberg Principles that, in turn, depended on unchanging moral principles that historically, at least since the enlightenment, were conceived as natural law.

II – “’Say I slew them not’”

288 William Shakespeare, Richard III, Act 1, Scene 2.
After the War Crimes Commission concluded at Nuremberg, Fall continued undergraduate study at the Sorbonne and then, returning to Germany, worked for the International Tracing Service [ITS] in Munich from November 1949 through March 1950.\textsuperscript{289} The tracing service was, according to Fall’s CV, a “U.N. agency” created to re-connect children orphaned or lost during the war with families.\textsuperscript{290} Originally planned by the Allies while the war was in progress, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration [UNRRA] and British Red Cross guided the program until it was officially established on January 1, 1948 as the International Tracing Service.\textsuperscript{291} Fall contributed to the organization as a “Child Search Officer, ITS” and his region, known as “Area #7,” included Munich and its surroundings.\textsuperscript{292} ITS and Fall’s focus consisted of helping others recover the very relationships taken away from him. This position also made use of and surely extended Fall’s capabilities as a researcher, contributing to his later scholarly career and informing his approach to significant field research in Indochina. This was also a presumably difficult and rewarding job personally, demonstrating his drive to mitigate the damage Nazi Germany caused. In March 1950, Fall left the position due to a reduction in staff.\textsuperscript{293}

While Fall was in Munich, he also studied at the Ludwig Maximilian University for a semester and concurrently registered for the US Army Overseas European Program administered by the University of Maryland.\textsuperscript{294} Based in Heidelberg, the Overseas European Program was initiated with centers in Berlin, Frankfurt, Munich, Nuremberg, and Wiesbaden on October 31,

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\item \textsuperscript{289} Bernard Fall, “CV,” Series 1.01, Box F-1, BBF, JFKL.
\item \textsuperscript{290} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{291} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{292} Bernard Fall, Series 2.03, Box W-02, BBF, JFKL.
\item \textsuperscript{293} Bernard Fall, Series 2.03, Box W-01, BBF, JFKL. The International Commission took over responsibility for the International Tracing Service in 1955 with financial support from the Federal Republic of Germany. It maintains an archive and serves as a center for documenting Nationalist Socialist persecution. For more on ITS, see https://www.its-aroelsen.org/en/about-its/)
\item \textsuperscript{294} Bernard Fall, “CV,” Series 1.01, Box F-1, BBF, JFKL.
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1949 and it grew to forty-two centers with an enrollment of 1,851 individuals, including Fall, by October 1950. The program facilitated the education of GIs serving in occupied Germany and mirrored a similar program undertaken in the Pacific by the University of California. Fall enrolled in “History of American Civilization,” taught by Dr. Verne E. Chatelain in the autumn of 1949 and then took “Government and Politics 105: Course in American Foreign Relations,” taught by Dr. Martin Moser in the spring of 1950. Fall’s detailed, hand-written notes demonstrate excellent command of English and he meticulously typed his notes for Chatelain’s course: fourteen lectures in all. Fall prided himself on his mastery of languages, a skill that certainly afforded him opportunities and he noted his linguistic capability in his CV: “Accentless English (American), French, and German. Some Spanish and Russian. French Army staff interpreter diplomas in both English and German. Write all three languages with equal facility.”

During this period of transition while taking the army provided courses, Fall supported himself by working as an assistant district manager of Stars & Stripes. The job included delivering materials between offices and writing briefs in the newspaper. One of Fall’s pieces pointed out the availability of up to date legal doctrine among readers working in Nuremberg. In one of these, Fall wrote “For those who wish to further their knowledge of courts martial procedure, an ‘Indexed Digest to the Uniformed Code of Military Justice’ will be of great help.” Unsurprisingly, the digests were not a hot item and with the post-war effort winding down, Fall turned to his studies and completed his undergraduate work in Europe at a fortuitous time. A scholarship opportunity, provided by the development of the Fulbright Program, began in 1950. Fall sought to build upon

295 Bernard Fall, Series 1.10, Box AM-01, BBF, JFKL. Fall’s papers include original pamphlets on the Overseas European Program.
296 Bernard Fall, Series 2.03, Box W-01, BBF, JFKL.
297 Bernard Fall, “CV,” Series 1.01, Box F-1, BBF, JFKL.
298 Bernard Fall, Series 2.03, Box W-01, BBF, JFKL.
his considerable experiential learning and, demonstrating further ambition, a trait that appeared to multiply with every opportunity seized, Fall applied for a Fulbright-Smith-Mundt Fellowship for study in the United States in 1950. Through funds gained selling surplus war property, Senator J. William Fulbright’s bill creating the scholarship was brought before the United States Congress in 1945. Its purpose was “the promotion of international good will through the exchange of students in the fields of education, culture, and science.” Fulbright, a life-long champion of the exchange program that bore his name, later elaborated on the program’s purpose, writing in 1965 that “important opportunities for encouraging habits of practical cooperation can also be found through international trade, business arrangements, and the settlement of financial claims – to say nothing of cultural and education exchanges, which to my mind are probably the most rewarding of all international cooperation.”

On August 1, 1946, President Harry S. Truman signed the bill establishing the Fulbright Program. It soon embodied development of international partnerships through international education exchange. At the time, it was a remarkably new means to foster the sharing of ideas and, for Bernard Fall, it was an unprecedented opportunity to consolidate his recent achievements and find a new start in the United States. As his future wife, Dorothy Fall reflected years later, Bernard’s diary for December 18, 1950 marked the happy occasion, “HURRAH, my application for fellowship has been accepted!!” The process that began with Fall’s preparation in American-English, his war-time service and his employment assisting the United States during the

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299 On the origins of Fulbright Program funding, see “an amendment to the Surplus Property Act of 1944” in “Senate Floor-The Fulbright Program: A History,” JWF Papers, Series 71, Box 32, Folder 3.
300 Fulbright Student Program, United States Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. https://us.fulbrightonline.org/about/history, accessed May 1, 2018.
302 Ibid., 207.
Nuremberg Trials came full-circle with his move to upstate New York. In the autumn of 1951, Fall began the Master of Arts program in Political Science at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Administration at Syracuse University.304

On January 31, 1951, Radio Frankfurt interrupted its broadcast to announce the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany’s official statement on war criminal amnesties.”305 The commissioner, John J. McCloy, made the decision as the United States’ representative in Germany after the Allies had concluded their military governance of the country under General Lucius Clay. With Konrad Adenauer’s election as chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, growing Cold War tension in Europe, and especially with the outbreak of war on the Korean Peninsula on June 24, 1950, policies affecting denazification had changed. As a result, Alfried Krupp and the Krupp Corporation’s board of directors were released from prison after receiving clemency that commuted their sentences to time served. Equally outrageous was the fact that Krupp regained possession of all Krupp Corporation assets. His personal fortune, worth over five hundred million dollars and partially gained through slave labor, was also restored.306 In response, Fall contended “Although the ‘general confiscation of property is repugnant to American concepts of justice…’ to quote Mr. McCloy, it is nevertheless an accepted feature of American jurisprudence. Any pernicious use of private property on U.S. territory (firearms, etc.) may result in confiscation thereof. Likewise, Krupp misused that enormous empires of his for purposes that are beyond the law, both local and international.”307

304 Bernard Fall, Series 1.05, Box P-02, BBF, JFKL.
307 Ibid., 39.
Fall learned of Krupp’s release on February 2, 1951, a few days after the radio announcement. His first article, “The Case of Alfried Krupp,” condemned commissioner John J. McCloy’s decision and was published that summer.\textsuperscript{308} Fall argued that commuting Krupp’s sentence was “politically as sound as making a major cash contribution to the Soviet propaganda war chest,” and that that the “only real beneficiaries from the move would be the Communists on either side of the Iron Curtain who will be able to tell their listeners: ‘Remember? We told you so…’”\textsuperscript{309} McCloy’s decision stemmed from geopolitical calculations and a new-found reliance on German manufacturing as tension increased with the Soviet Union. Rearming Germany was the last issue facing the postwar Alliance and until the outbreak of the Korean War McCloy had, in fact, opposed German rearmament.\textsuperscript{310}

Fall’s anger over the release of Krupp was not due to his political alignment or belief in the Morgenthau Plan that called for the deindustrialization of Germany after the war. Fall’s enmity centered on the fact that Krupp’s release was unjustified because the Korean War did not change the fact that he was a war criminal: offering clemency to Krupp undermined the Nuremberg Principles and the work of the War Crimes Commission to prosecute Nazis like Krupp. Fall wrote, “Without batting an eyelash, the Krupp works used the poor wretches from the concentration camps for the heaviest jobs that were to be found. The whole town of Essen saw every day the rag-clad column of five hundred Czech concentration camp inmates, all girls from 15 to 20, march to their assigned places of work at Krupp’s factories: twelve hours without food and without

\textsuperscript{308} Ibid., 39.
\textsuperscript{309} Ibid.
protective clothing in the armor plates rolling mill.”

Fall rhetorically added, “And what, Herr Krupp, happened to those girls?” Fall knew: Elizabeth and Ernestine Roth were two of the five hundred women that formed this “rag-clad” column in Essen every day. Fall might have as well asked what happened to the justice, he worked so hard to support in the prosecution and sentencing of Krupp? How could the United States discard the Nuremberg Principles for the sake of a convicted Nazi-criminal who epitomized a slave overseer and robber baron in one person?

Fall was not a member of the post-war lobbying society, “Prevent World War III” who published his first article, but he shared its frustrations. The group included Lewis Mumford, William Shirer, Eleanor Roosevelt, Alfred Einstein, Eugene Rostow and Henry Morgenthau who advocated strong implementation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff [JCS] Directive 1067. This policy, based on the Morgenthau Plan, was designed to reduce Germany’s territory and hobble its economy. Instead of wanting to punish Germany harshly, rather, Fall recognized the importance of Germany’s place in an economically vital Europe benefiting from the European Economic Recovery Plan initiated in late 1947. While Fall’s specialty did not include economic policy, he understood negative consequences arising from the Morgenthau Plan that sought to cripple Germany even though it was never directly implemented. For its part, the post-war policy regulating the German economy, JCS 1067, was only slightly less strict than the Morgenthau Plan and it was replaced, as a reprieve for the German population, by a more lenient policy, JCS 1779, that framed the Marshall Plan in July 1947.

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314 Ibid., 106.
Fall did not criticize these more moderate policies supporting the German economy. Instead, his outrage centered on the politics of denazification generally and Krupp’s release specifically. The problem of denazification remained contentious after Nuremberg, to the point that reporters complained about lack of access to Telford Taylor’s final report on the trials meant to inform readers of Nazi war crimes. While the report was eventually released by the Government Printing Office on August 15, 1949, Charles Van Devander, a journalist who later served as Press Secretary and Executive to New York Governor Averell Harriman, complained that the report was intentionally “buried.”

Other journalists, notably Thomas L. Stokes who won the 1939 Pulitzer Prize for journalism and wrote as a columnist for United Features Syndicate, criticized the United States government for “our complete abandonment of plans to break up the giant Nazi cartels.” Motivation to investigate such complaints, however, appeared to dissipate with pressing Cold War concerns. The question Van Devander, Stokes and certainly Fall pondered was: why could the United States not sufficiently resolve administering justice of war criminals while still competently addressing present problems? Fall’s contention was the United States had the capacity to address the problem of West Berlin and other major problems, and still maintain the integrity of the Nuremberg principles. In fact, maintaining the Nuremberg Legacy, Fall believed, would provide greater legitimacy for US policies’ elsewhere and lend moral support to its authority in larger geopolitical considerations.

John J. McCloy, who commuted Krupp’s sentence, came to his position as High Commissioner of Germany with significant experience. As the former assistant secretary of war

between 1941-1945 and former president of the World Bank between 1947-1949, he became High Commissioner in the spring of 1949, replacing General Lucius Clay of the US Army who held the position and was retiring from service. McCloy’s decision-making centered on implementing economically advantageous policies in Germany because an economically productive Germany was fundamental to European stability, particularly as political conflict with the Soviet Union and the outbreak of war on the Korean peninsula coalesced into the Cold War. Fall’s anger with the decision centered on the failure to find other competent individuals, familiar with industrial production, who might lead German industry. In Fall’s view, it was not a matter of pinning national war guilt onto Alfried Krupp and his directors: the Nuremberg Trials already proved those facts. Fall appeared to ask: were former Nazi collaborators and war criminals the only ones capable of leading the German manufacturing required to pull Germany out of economic peril? Why were war criminals the only ones capable of rearming Germany? Fall was incredulous that Alfried Krupp and his directors were the only ones skilled enough to restart and lead German industry. Rearing Germany was a major issue in Europe, yet, was releasing Krupp to facilitate it the only option? Most critically, perhaps, while Fall understood the logic of a revitalized Germany, he viewed the release of Krupp and his associates as a betrayal of Nuremberg and a fracturing of the very values that gave a revitalized Europe a meaning worth the cost of World War II. To Fall, this demonstrated a turn away from the Nuremberg Legacy and belied the diplomatic

318 Ibid., 516-517.
319 An important case that undermined the legitimacy of Tribunal trial (#1) against Nazi medical doctors concerned the United States’ postwar action in the Pacific. During the war, Japanese scientists conducted biological warfare experiments on human beings and, after the war, these scientists were granted immunity against war crime prosecution in exchange for the results of their experiments. See Sheldon H. Harris, Factories of Death: Japanese Biological Warfare, 1932-1945 and the American Cover Up (New York: Routledge, 1994).
and economic success embodied by the Marshall Plan. Additionally, as it mattered to Fall’s budding scholarship, this event inculcated a formidable amount of realism into his intellectual life.

To understand Fall’s criticism, the political circumstances involved in Krupp’s clemency are significant. After Krupp’s guilty verdict, Krupp wrote a letter to General Lucius Clay, the acting military governor of the sector in which Krupp was held at Landsberg Prison. Krupp’s letter formally served as an appeal and a review panel assessed Krupp’s claims, refuted them and reconfirmed Krupp’s verdict on April 1, 1949. Clay possessed profound enmity for Nazis and advocated a “guilt by membership” principle during the Tribunals that, according to Telford Taylor, extended “far beyond anything that had been or ever was accepted at Nuremberg.” If Krupp sought clemency, Clay was not the one to ask. With the election of Konrad Adenauer as Chancellor, Clay retired. To replace him, Telford Taylor advocated for Charles La Follette, a strong advocate of denazification, currently serving as military governor in Wuerttemberg-Baden, to replace Clay. Instead, with the personal recommendation of Dean Acheson, President Truman appointed John McCloy to the position of High Commissioner for Germany in April 1949.

Krupp and his attorneys almost certainly knew about geopolitical issues that the Korean War presented to the United States and its bearing upon the question of rearming Germany. William Manchester remarked on the circumstances of Krupp’s release in 1964 writing, “the complex interweaving of Ruhr politics, NATO requirements and shifting military fortunes eight-

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time zones away combined in a plural theme which, though unnoticed at the time, seems startling clear in retrospect.”

In this complex geopolitical context, Krupp and his lawyers sent another appeal to the High Commissioner, which, with the antipathetic Lucius Clay gone, landed on McCloy’s desk. The task of considering such appeals was one of the responsibilities that came with the job, although Krupp was also undoubtedly aware of McCloy’s economic-focused mandates regarding Germany. The timing of McCloy’s appointment as commissioner was therefore serendipitous for Krupp: McCloy was less concerned with punishing former Nazis than “making Germany strong enough to resist the Soviets.” McCloy was receptive to Krupp’s appeal for clemency amid rapidly changing geopolitical reasons, including the outbreak of war in Korea and fear of communist expansion in Europe, in ways that General Lucius Clay was not. As historian Adam Tooze explained, Clay’s hardline position towards the German people was a consequence, in Clay’s view, “of a war they caused.” Even with the changing geopolitical landscape, it is likely that Clay would have looked for someone other than a Nazi war criminal like Krupp to restart the Germany armaments industry. This would have been an outcome acceptable to Fall. McCloy was not Clay, however, so he appointed another board to review petitions for clemency in March 1950, barely a year after the April 1949 reconfirmation of Krupp’s verdict under Clay’s leadership.

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325 Ibid., 517.
327 It is worth pointing out that World War II did not technically even end until July 1951. According to Mary Dudziak, “[President Harry S.] Truman didn’t call for an end to this state of war until July 1951, but also stressed that this would not affect the occupation of Germany.” See Mary L. Dudziak, *War-Time: An Idea, Its History, and Its Consequences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 38.
The board advocated that McCloy release Krupp. In his statement, McCloy acknowledged that “Employment was illegal in the case of the civilians and contrary to the Hague Convention in the case of the prisoners of war.” However, McCloy believed, despite massive evidence provided by the tribunal against Krupp, that “slave labor was allocated by governmental authorities and the conditions under which the labor was confined were directed entirely by the concentration camp commanders in the case of civilians and by the army in case of the war prisoners.”

McCloy, apparently, was unaware of or dismissed evidence that the German Army High Command investigated complaints of Krupp’s workers’ treatment by the Gestapo within his camps and factories. The criticism of Krupp’s mistreatment of laborers, described by the German officer Colonel Breyer in evidence against Krupp, was not heeded. It was not some ambiguous high command or authority that placed ‘concentration camp commanders’ or ‘the army’ in Krupp’s factories and camps to oversee its operations, it was Krupp.

As long as production quotas were met, Krupp did not think twice about the individuals meeting them. The treatment of workers was the fault of specific individuals, but also the freehand given to those overseeing the camps and factories and that control belonged to Krupp. This attempt to distance himself from the crime, since he might not have personally mistreated workers, did not absolve him of responsibility, though this was Krupp’s claim. McCloy, in Fall’s view, ignored the fact that Krupp directly colluded with the Gestapo and SS for oversight of his facilities. And Krupp certainly obscured his guilt through a complexly-layered bureaucracy. McCloy’s statement continued, “The judgment does indicate that several of the defendants were involved with certain

329 Ibid., 12.
332 Ibid., 1385, Document NIK 12356.
of the illegalities, but it is extremely difficult to allocate individual guilt among the respective
defendants.”333 This view was the direct opposite of the “guilt by membership” principle General
Lucius Clay had advocated before McCloy replaced him. As a result, McCloy determined that
Krupp and his directors’ offenses were no greater than other firms, so he adjusted the Krupp terms
to conform to “sentences in similar cases.”334

The restitution of Krupp’s fortune also stood out to the clemency board as an issue because
Krupp was the only defendant to have property confiscated. While McCloy restored Krupp’s
fortune “to introduce a certain uniformity in the sentences,” he did not explain why such uniformity
mattered.335 Most likely, “McCloy was bothered by the arbitrary confiscation of the Krupp
property; it offended his strong Wall Street lawyer’s belief in property rights.”336 Fall found the
confiscation neither arbitrary nor inappropriate. It appeared to Fall that McCloy simply ignored
the fact that Krupp actively sought slave labor, unlike other firms, gained his fortune on the backs
of slave laborers, and that even the German High Command had complained about Krupp’s
treatment of its workers.337 The facts, which Fall personally gathered, appeared not to matter.
Fall’s castigation of the reversal demonstrated an exasperation with the degeneration of the
Nuremberg Legacy and with what he viewed as an unwise, politically-motivated decision.
Krupp’s release provided one of the first indications, at least to Fall, that American principles –
and international principles of justice determined at Nuremberg – failed to override political
expediency. In his terse article, Fall recounted Krupp’s support for Nazism, illegal manufacturing,

333 “Office of the U.S. High Commission for Germany Statement, January 31, 1951.” Telford Taylor Papers, Butler
334 Ibid., 14.
335 Ibid., 14.
336 Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made (New York:
337 “NMT – Case No. 10, “Krupp Case” closing statement, June 24, 1948. Telford Taylor Papers, Butler Library,
Columbia University, Series 5, Subseries 2, Box 39, Folder 2.
and his use of slave labor with evidence personally collected for the military tribunal, but to no avail.

“Nevertheless,” on the subject of restoring Krupp’s property and fortune, Fall wrote, “the findings of the U.S. High Commission were ‘…that confiscation in this case constitutes discrimination against the defendant unjustified by any considerations attaching peculiarly to him....’” Fall’s rebuttal cited the Nuremberg Trial’s record and explained that McCloy’s decision, if it were politically motivated by a growing Cold War, was problematic on this count as well. Allies, especially France, Fall knew, were not happy about the rebirth of the German arms industry in the Ruhr. Even as late as 1951, fears of a militant future Germany had not subsided. These fears would have significant consequences in the relations between the United States and France as they pertained to collective defense and French participation in a proposed European Defense Community [EDC] in Europe. Fall appeared to understand this and explained, “The return of Krupp into the Ruhr spells labor trouble in this vital area, and also troubles with the Western European allies of the U.S., since they feel that they have a direct interest in the matter but have been bypassed by the completely uni-lateral decision of the U.S. High Commissioner.”

Due to France’s difficult financial situation after World War II, and its expensive involvement in Indochina and other colonies, France “could not block the rearmament of West Germany,” yet,

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339 For a detailed account of the complex political history of the European Defense Community, NATO, and US-French relations pertaining to German Rearmament and origins of US support for French operations in Indochina, see Frank Costigliola, France and the United States: The Cold War Alliance Since World War II (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 90-117.
according to Frank Costigliola, the “issues of German rearmament and Indochinese war [later] fused in a global crisis” by 1954.\textsuperscript{341}

The “troubles with Western European allies of the U.S.” to which Fall referred in 1951 affected, therefore, not just relations pertaining to the United States and Europe but US support for France’s war in Indochina. US Ambassador to France, Douglas Dillon warned that “Military defeat in Vietnam could trigger ‘a neutralist government in France that would recreate the wartime Franco-USSR alliance in order to prevent German rearmament’ and ‘an angry Congress might pull our troops from Europe destroying NATO.’”\textsuperscript{342} The “troubles” Fall perceived emerging from German rearmament, particularly when led by Nazis like Krupp, triggered his realization that rearmament involved France in ways that had consequences for relations between the United States and France. The dilemma came down to a progression of “if - then” scenarios. In a view that John J. McCloy clearly supported, disregarding the Nuremberg Legacy had to occur to support the rearmament of Germany and to lock West Germany into the Western Alliance. German rearmament, however, contributed to France’s demands that the United States ensure its security against potential renewed German aggression. And this entailed that the United States consider French demands, including continued financial and diplomatic support for operations in Indochina, as a condition for France’s acceptance of a potential European Defense Community led by the United States. These were incipient issues at the time of Fall’s 1951 article. Yet, the fact that Fall called attention to French concerns over German rearmament, especially considering the consequences this issue would lead to in terms of US-French relations pertaining to Indochina, a

\textsuperscript{342} Ibid., 91.
subject to which he would devote the rest of his life, is either deeply ironic, a demonstration of remarkable prescience, or indicative of foreboding and growing realism.

As to Krupp’s personal guilt, in a pithy dig characteristic of Fall’s style, he wrote, “Documented examples of Krupp’s criminal activities abound. If a man’s signature on a document means that he has at least held the piece of paper in his hands, the record of the Krupp trial show beyond a reasonable doubt that through Krupp’s hands passed requests for the looting of machinery from foreign countries, order for the ‘integration’ of foreign factories into the Krupp Empire, as well as requests for considerable amounts of slave manpower.”

This echoed a point made in the Tribunal’s closing statement that explained the importance of SS connections to obtain labor and that “the criminal record was not compiled under duress or fear; it is the record of voluntary acts of these who stand accused.” To this, Fall added details regarding Elizabeth and Ernestine Roth’s testimony that indicted “Alfred Krupp’s order to begin anti-tank shell fuse production in the infamous Auschwitz death camp, in order to make the utmost of the cheap manpower available there.”

Others shared Fall’s outrage over McCloy’s decision. Articles in the *New York Times*, London’s *News Chronicler*, *Daily Express*, and *Sunday Express* were antagonized by the decision. McCloy appeared to not understand Krupp’s guilt as deeply as Fall or Telford Taylor, or, he just did not care and construed German rearmament of such importance that it necessitated forgetting of the past to move on. As historian William Manchester noted, the truth “seems to be

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that no one involved in the clemency decision had taken a really close look at the record.”

Fall recognized that geo-political concerns weighed heavily in the decision for clemency, but criticism of Krupp’s release, minus the brewing global crisis formed by German rearmament and the war in Indochina, was fading by 1951. Events were overtaking the fallout from World War II and the “Society for the Prevention of World War III,” along with its arguments, had already lost significant influence by the late 1940s, due to numerous positive reports on German recovery. The Marshall Plan, as a source for recovery, truly represented a sea-change because “its successful implementation shifted the mainstream debate away from the wartime concern with emasculating Germany’s industry.”

What Fall could not accept was why denazification, and the release of specific war criminals, remained so critical to Germany’s economic recovery. Despite changing attitudes towards Germany and as “the media shifted its gaze from Nazi crimes to German squalor,” Fall remain fixated, not surprisingly, on Nazi crimes, and certainly those committed by Krupp. Fall believed not only that his anger over the decision was rational, but that the early release of Alfried Krupp stained Nuremberg’s reputation as a foundation for justice concerning war crimes.

“Lex Krupp,” the financial agreement between Hitler and the Krupps, proved “the whole Krupp empire was concentrated in Alfried Krupp’s hands” and that “Krupp is more than just a mere armament plant; it is the very symbol of the old ‘steel baron’ nobility of the brand of a Stinnes, a Mannesmann and a Thyssen, of those men who ‘made’ German governments and openly

347 Ibid., 682.
349 Ibid., 4.
plotted against the Weimar Republic. The same men that ‘paid Hitler.’”\textsuperscript{351} Fall added that “Western German industrial production has made an amazing recovery through the Marshall Plan without the personal help of war criminals like Krupp, et. al, and, therefore, stands no appreciable gain at this state of the game from their reinstatement.”\textsuperscript{352}

Senator J. William Fulbright, the founder of the exchange program that brought Fall to the United States, posed a question in late 1945 that anticipated problems Fall brought up in “The Case of Alfred Krupp” in 1951. The United States’ postwar foreign policy, Fulbright claimed, offered a choice between “either armed might and imperialism on the one hand or rules of law enforceable by the United Nations on the other.”\textsuperscript{353} Fulbright saw the United States, in the aftermath of World War II, at a crossroads at which either the United States’ legacy of colonialism reaching back to the Spanish American War might be extended into the future, or the United States could choose a path that would demand the subsuming of its sovereignty under UN oversight of the rule of law. Historian Samuel Moyn also described this complex turning point in America’s relationship to international law writing:

> “the American state has always opposed a criminal prohibition on aggression, but for two opposite reasons. Before December 1941, it was because it could not tolerate a collective security system that might require global intervention. Thereafter, it was because it would not tolerate a collective security system that imposed risks of criminal indictment on global intervention…Nuremberg mattered not primarily for the breakthrough to punishment of atrocity, but because it marked a passing moment in between eras when, for inverse reasons, the United States would not include, let alone prioritize, criminal punishment for warmaking as a task for international law.”\textsuperscript{354}

\textsuperscript{352} Ibid., 40
\textsuperscript{353} J. William Fulbright, “'What About Russia?’, NBC address, Friday, November 23, 1945,” J. William Fulbright Papers, University of Arkansas Special Collections, Fayetteville, Arkansas, Series 72, Box 4, Folder 1, 6.
The release of Krupp was an indication that the United States was in the process of turning away from the Nuremberg Principles and rule of law authorized under international jurisdiction pertaining to potential punishment for future intervention. Krupp’s release was an indication of “the passing moment,” as Moyn describes it, when the United States would not enable itself to be condemned or punished for potential future warmaking as a criminal act. At least, as a criminal act enforceable under international law. The United States had, instead, chosen another path which, as Fulbright described it, “was the course of armed might and imperialism.” Moyn concisely described this shift in American foreign policy after World War II, writing “Nuremberg’s true significance is thus not simply as an aggression trial but that it took place in a passing window of plausibility that opened then shut.” The “passing window of plausibility,” in which greater enforcement of international law under UN oversight was to be determined was the possibility Fulbright likely anticipated in 1945 and the door Bernard Fall saw slamming shut in 1951. Krupp’s release, as Fall perceived it, was this moment. Aside from several outspoken critics including Thomas Stokes, Charles DeVander, Bernard Fall, Eleanore Roosevelt and many others, this shift might not have been felt in the United States and Western Europe, but it would be felt in other countries in the Post World War II era.

Krupp’s release certainly was a moment in Fall’s intellectual development in which realism encroached upon whatever diminishing idealism he might have still possessed. Fall was disappointed in McCloy’s decision to reconstruct Germany in a way that depended upon the managerial skills of convicted war criminals. The release of Krupp betrayed to Fall the United

356 Ibid., 26.
357 In addition to Indochina, examples of these countries range from Guatemala [1954], Iran [1955], the Congo [1960-61], Chile [1973] and Iraq [2003].
States’ incapacity, or unwillingness, to construct foreign policy in alignment with the principles of international law supposedly reestablished and guaranteed at Nuremberg. This experience provided a foundation on which Fall would base later criticism of US foreign policy in Vietnam when it, in his view, did not comport with values the United States promoted, or should have promoted. Fall’s idealistic belief in this value-based conception of the United States - values that were verifiably demonstrated by the United States’ effort in World War II and in the economic recovery Marshall Plan aid provided - was evolving. Fall was abandoning naïve belief that the United States would live up to its ideals and responsibilities. He was realistic about that, but still idealistic that the values and responsibilities, themselves, and why it was important that the United States do better in fulfilling them. He was certainly becoming more adamant in seeing it as his own responsibility to demand that the United States do so.

Despite Fall’s frustration, his research documenting Krupp’s actions remained important. Even though he was released, Fall could be satisfied that Krupp’s guilt was permanent and Fall clearly agreed with Associate Justice Robert H. Jackson’s summation for the prosecution, made July 26, 1946 because it spoke volumes on the inviolable fact of the trial’s judgment. Jackson close his summation, referencing Shakespeare’s Richard III, “It is against such a background that these defendants now ask this Tribunal to say that they are not guilty of planning, executing, or conspiring to commit this long list of crimes and wrongs. They stand before the record of this Trial as bloodstained Gloucester stood by the body of his slain king. He begged of the widow, as they beg of you: ‘Say I slew them not.’ And the Queen replied, ‘Then say they were not slain.
But dead they are…’ If you were to say of these men that they are not guilty, it would be as true to say that there has been no war, there are no slain, there has been no crime.”

III - The Keystone of the Arch

While Fall’s 1951 article was a succinct denunciation of the release of Krupp, his 1952 master’s thesis at Syracuse University was a 266-page dissection of Nazi Germany’s dismantling of the post-World War I order constructed at Versailles. The extent to which Fall devoted study of rearmament during the interwar years indicated his drive to understand how power functioned politically. This study, moreover, demonstrated that his academic work sensitized him, conditioning the way he viewed social and political factors. He viewed other conflicts as complex-socio-political landscapes but without universalizing them out of only his lived experience. Fall integrated a mix of empathy and sympathy into his work and this thesis was one of the first sources to demonstrate this characteristic in his work. The blend of empathy, sympathy and academic rigor, through which he constructed his analysis, was clearly based in personal experience and drive, but also resulted from the integration of his experience with who he was as an intelligent, sensitive, outspoken, angry, and almost certainly still grieving young individual over what happened to his parents, his faith, and to Europe. There is an underlying current of sadness, but also humor, imagination and pugnacity in Fall’s scholarship and this is evident from his earliest

writings beginning with his Krupp article but also his Syracuse thesis. As an academic, Fall accounted for geopolitics in this long study of the German inter-war era and he combined it with other levels of war-planning involving the armaments industry and the German military to see a far more complex picture. Fall, thus, enabled himself to see the forest for the trees and the first sustained evidence of this was his 1952 thesis. For this reason, Fall’s study deserves consideration because it demonstrated how he pulled from experiences as a Maquis and as a research analyst at Nuremberg, assessed what utility they might provide to and in his analysis, and then applied those relevant elements from his experience back into argument-based academic analysis. This was a process he would perfect and evidence of this intuitive effort existed in his 1952 thesis.

Fall’s frustration with High Commissioner John McCloy’s unilateral decision regarding Krupp clearly drove Fall’s subject choice yet Fall also appeared driven to understand better the political processes that contributed to the rise of Nazism. World War II was not the only subject he studied. Among other issues, Fall wrote about contemporary political conflict between Britain and Egypt climaxing in the Suez Crisis. This demonstrated an interest in geopolitics, perhaps with a growing interest in colonial issues as decolonization gained momentum, but these were ancillary subjects to Fall’s primary focus on German Rearmament and Nazism. Fall adopted a pragmatic approach to his master’s thesis, and he utilized his research and writing on the inter-war years from his service as a member of the War Crimes Commission. The outcome, a thesis entitled “The Keystone of the Arch: A Study of German Illegal Rearmament, 1919-1936” recounted the Nazi Party’s ascent, its subversion of the Weimar Republic and the role of militarists and

360 Bernard Fall, “The Anglo-Egyptian Controversy,” Summer Session 1952, “Papers and Reports by Dr. Fall, Series 1.05, Box P-01, BBF, JFKL.
industrialists in supporting the rearmament of Germany in the interwar period. It was the final analysis Fall conducted on Europe before directing his focus upon Southeast Asia.

Fall’s study of German rearmament was significant because it filled a gap in literature on the subject at the time. He remarked that, “No major work has come to this student’s attention which – with the new documentary evidence at hand – satisfactorily explains the decisive role played by the German Armed Forces in shaping the events which ultimately led Republican Germany to its ruin.” 361  His focus on the military’s role in this subversive process was breaking new ground. Fall argued that his contribution “to the field of political science should lie in the fact that it shows the ways and means used by the military establishment of a country to subvert to its own purposes the whole apparatus of constitutional government until it became ‘the state’ itself; in the same manner in which a parasitical growth will gain control of the body which carried it – until it eventually will kill the very carrier which is its source of life.” 362 This type of subversion, in which an organization eventually paralleled an established power to displace and replace it, fascinated Fall. What concerned him was the insufficient attention, as he saw it in 1952, given to the military’s role in this process. He wrote that “It is the German military who may safely be termed the ‘Grave-Diggers’ of the Weimar Republic.” The military “paved the way for Totalitarianism; for the ‘Rule by Decree.’ They held the ‘Keystone to the Arch,’ the necessary military power which could have dispersed Hitler’s private armies (the Sturmabteilung) into the four winds and could have saved the Republic as it had saved itself from left-wing elements in the early post-war years.” 363

361 Bernard Fall, “The Keystone of the Arch: A Study of German Illegal Rearmament 1919-1936, Vol 1-2,” M.A. Thesis, Syracuse University, 1952, “Papers and Reports by Dr. Fall,” Series 1.05, Box P-02), 1, BBF, JFKL.
362 Ibid., 2.
363 Ibid., 2.
Fall identified three stages in Nazi subversion and German rearmament between 1919-1936. The first examined “the years immediately following the German Surrender [of World War I];” the second period analyzed “the period of illegal rearmament”; and in the third, Fall addressed the “period of open violation of the rearmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles.” Fall knew the rise of Nazism was a manipulation of interdependent factors, including the political weakness of the Weimar Republic, dissatisfaction within German society and German industrial capacity. Fall also realized the role of coercion, provided by the SA, in gaining a majority in the Reichstag at the March 1933 elections that led to defeat of communist and socialist competitors. While the Nazi party initially relied on the SA for coercive taskings and manipulated it to elicit support among the German working class, the Nazis subverted SA leadership as a potential threat to its political policies. The Night of the Long Knives, the culminating gutting of SA leadership under Ernest Röhm, was an act in the overall political subversion of Weimar by the Nazis that transfixed Fall. The reason for this was because Fall saw the Night of the Long Knives as the political action, through assassination, that caused the German Army’s “Generals to climb onto the Nazi bandwagon. No doubt they hoped later to take over direction themselves. That exactly the reverse happened is one of the ironies of history.” Eliminating the SA leadership, Fall knew, helped Hitler consolidate support of the German military because of its antipathy towards Ernest Röhm and the SA, which it viewed as a potential competitor. It was the type of historical lesson from which Fall drew a great deal. And it was the type of phenomenon that provided insight into the development, manipulation and eventual discarding of alternative or parallel organizations that had originally assisted the Nazis to gain power over competitors.

364 Ibid., 2.
365 Ibid., 111.
366 Ibid., 111.
Fall’s capacity for analyzing the incremental subversion of the Weimar Republic is a striking feature in his early scholarship. Subversion of Weimar required, Fall noted, a hard-core cadre, supported by enormous sums of financial assistance provided by German industrialists led by the Krupp Corporation, for political guidance. The focus of Nazi leadership centered on deploying ideologues to penetrate existing organizations in order to challenge and eliminate weaker factions. This process created a divide and conquer form of organizational integration Fall regarded as infiltration. Fall recognized the unique context and circumstances leading to Nazi consolidation of power and his identification of political processes, including subversion and infiltration, provided important foundations for his thought on warfare. War, Fall was learning, incorporated far greater interdependence between socio-political-military-economic components than what he experienced through guerrilla warfare with the Maquis, or with conventional operations with the French Army during the liberation of Europe. The complexity and primacy of political factors appeared to dominate his thinking, even at this early stage in his scholarship.

Fall recounted that Hitler’s government became a legal dictatorship through subterfuge masked as democratic processes. An important series of events, particularly in 1933, initiated this chain of events. The Reichstag Fire Decree, issued on February 28, 1933, gave the Nazi Party legal power to dismantle civil protections, eliminate internal competitors, such as leaders of SA, as well as external political competitors including Social Democrats (SPD) and the German Communist Party (KPD). The meeting at which Krupp and other industrialists provided financial support to the Nazi Party occurred at Herman Göring’s residence in days prior the Reichstag Fire. Due to his role as president of the Reichstag, Göring’s home was connected to the Reichstag by a

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367Fall originally used the term “Noyautage.” Bernard Fall, “The Guerrilla Craze,” Undated, Series 1.5, Box P-1, BBF, JFKL.
tunnel through which Sturmabteilung arsonists maneuvered to burn the Reichstag the following week.\textsuperscript{368} Fall, of course, knew of Gustav Krupp’s critical financial support. It included over a million Reichsmarks disbursed on February 20, 1933 to facilitate Nazi operations until the last election of the Weimar Republic held March 5, 1933, almost two months after Hitler was appointed Chancellor.\textsuperscript{369}

Fall recounted these steps to demonstrate how the Nazis consolidated political control over the Weimar Republic by manipulating article 48 of the Weimar Constitution.\textsuperscript{370} The Nazis retained the Constitution, in fact, as the “legal constitutional basis” for the Third Reich to validate or legitimize its promises of territorial expansion among the German electorate who supported Nazi-led imperialism in Europe.\textsuperscript{371} This goal would “secure” Germany and enable it to fulfill its aspirations as the Nazis envisioned them. As historian Michael Geyer put it, “At last, German society was to be autonomous, free from the vagaries of the market, and secure behind its extended imperial borders. The National Socialist answer to the challenge of mass participation in politics and war and their response to the economic and social crisis of the interwar years consisted in a populist and militant form of hegemony. The resulting ideological strategy fused with the operational opportunism of the German military.”\textsuperscript{372} For the Third Reich, state-making and war-making were related but, in Fall’s view, similar to Geyer’s, the German military formed the keystone that connected them to make war in Europe a reality.

\textsuperscript{369} Ibid., 363-364.
\textsuperscript{370} Bernard Fall, “The Keystone of the Arch: A Study of German Illegal Rearmament 1919-1936, Vol 1-2,” M.A. Thesis, Syracuse University, 1952, “Papers and Reports by Dr. Fall,” Series 1.05, Box P-02), 231-247, BBF, JFKL.
\textsuperscript{371} Mark Mazower, Hitler’s \textit{Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe} (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 43.
Under the authority of President von Hindenburg and Chancellor Hitler, the Reichstag Fire Decree, painted as an “emergency presidential degree,” manipulated Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution to eliminate legal protection of civil rights in Germany. The Enabling Act of 1933 followed closely on March 24, 1933.\textsuperscript{373} It abolished remaining civil liberties in Germany and allocated state power to the German Cabinet, led by Chancellor Hitler, thus enabling passage of laws without involving the Reichstag. The “Enabling Act,” renewed in 1937 and again in 1941, provided Hitler constitutional authority, according to the Weimar Republic’s constitution, to enact law and policy by decree.\textsuperscript{374} With this authority, Nazi Germany entered what Fall regarded as the “period of open violation of the rearmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles.”\textsuperscript{375} Rearmament, the Reichswehr and National Socialist leadership were interdependent and bulldozed a way through this third period of open violation. Fall recognized that Nazi leadership required control over the German army through its general staff, an organization banned by the Treaty of Versailles, and the general staff depended on rearmament as a condition for its capacity to wage war.

Nazi policy and military strategy, developed to achieve territorial expansion, required prodigious and rapid rearmament so production accelerated and intensified, thus achieving the general staff’s condition to plan for aggression. Documenting this enterprise was the task to which Fall had committed himself in 1947 and 1948 as an analyst for the War Crimes Commission. Fall’s focus on rearmament, as the core driver for Nazi capacity, relied upon his knowledge of the Krupp corporation and was an integration of the “industrialists” and “militarists” cases at Nuremberg.


\textsuperscript{374} Ibid, 83-84, 187.

\textsuperscript{375} Bernard Fall, “The Keystone of the Arch: A Study of German Illegal Rearmament 1919-1936, Vol 1-2,” M.A. Thesis, Syracuse University, 1952, “Papers and Reports by Dr. Fall,” Series 1.05, Box P-02), 231-247, BBF, JFKL.
which he knew well. Fall’s effort to document German rearmament during the interwar years was a historical project, but it also was about determining potential manipulation of German rearmament during the early Cold War years. Fall’s knowledge of the German arms industry, after all, was a reasonable source for trepidation and even outrage. Fall, expressing fear over Germany’s future military capabilities, added “The next few years shall decide not only if history is repeating itself, but whether some of the same men who have seen the first attempt at German Governmental Democracy into its grave in 1933 shall again be in positions of responsibility within the emerging German armed forces.”

Fall’s thesis was the distillation of his education and experience into an insightful study. The study was thorough, even dense, and in his own words, “perfectly esoteric and something that no one has heard from since.” Yet, it indicated that Fall was compelled to comprehend how power functioned politically and this functionality, this process between power and politics, was a phenomenon he would begin to identify in other contexts, particularly in his imminent study of warfare in Indochina. Fall’s thesis is also important because it marked the end of Fall’s writing on World War II and his turn to subsequent study of Southeast Asia. Fall’s concluding statements in the thesis centered on the World War I Allies’ irresolution because they forced Germany to sign, in 1919, “a treaty whose application these powers were unwilling to enforce.” He added “Allied action on behalf of the Treaty is one long series of lamentable capitulations. In comparison, a complete abrogation of the Treaty by unified Allied action would have been far less harmful to postwar relations than the whittling down of it, paragraph by paragraph, until it was but a ridiculous

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376 Ibid., 233.
377 Ibid., 234.
379 Bernard Fall, “The Keystone of the Arch: A Study of German Illegal Rearmament 1919-1936, Vol 1-2,” M.A. Thesis, Syracuse University, 1952, “Papers and Reports by Dr. Fall,” Series 1.05, Box P-02), 253, BBF, JFKL.
and meaningless sham of the original.” Finally, Fall observed that, “in International Politics, to paraphrase Talleyrand, there are acts that are sometimes worse than crimes: mistakes.” This insight was critical to Fall’s later scholarship because mistakes led to war. Crimes, as brutal and horrendous as he knew they could be, only made war worse.

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380 Ibid., 253.
381 Ibid., 254.
382 The Holocaust and other atrocities would have not been possible without World War II. See more about the Wannsee Conference, at which the “Final Solution” was planned, in “The fate of the Jews,” in John Keegan, The Second World War (New York: Viking Press, 1989), 288-289.
Chapter Three – “First Reflections on a War”

I – Washington D.C., 1952

Bernard Fall was averse to a summer break while completing his M.A. at Syracuse University in 1952 so he enrolled in a class at the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University. Fall rationalized the choice, writing “I had more time on my hands than I thought I would have and decided to do some work in a different field…..they offered an Asian concentration and for the first time there was a part of a course devoted to Indo-China and I took that.” Fall’s decision determined the direction of his career and Indochina dominated his subsequent scholarship. This period also marked a turning point in the study of warfare because conflict in Indochina was a war of decolonization that provided unfamiliar challenges after World War II. The convergence of Fall’s experience, his decision, and changes in warfare after World War II positioned Fall as the foremost author describing Revolutionary Warfare in Indochina in English in the 1950s and 1960s.

The timing of Fall’s decision to study Indochina was significant. The rupture of European power in the Indo-Pacific region early in World War II initiated the phenomenon of decolonization and encouraged anti-colonial movements that had ranged between a simmer and a boil for decades prior to the war. The ongoing and pervasive disruption of western power through World War II thus provided an opening and basis for subsequent post-war conflicts where Japanese occupation

383 Bernard Fall, “CV,” Series 1.01, Box F-1, BBF, JFKL.
had displaced European countries’ control over colonies. Communist-led anti-colonialist movements in places such as Indochina were incompletely understood in America after World War II and Indochina was largely unknown in the United States among the civilian population. Citizens in France generally had greater comprehension of Southeast Asia because of France’s long-held colonies and protectorates, and because of its economic stakes in the region. These long-term interests began in 1887 when France formed French Indochina out of the colony of Cochinchina and the protectorates of Annam, Tonkin and Cambodia, and it was further extended when Laos was added as a protectorate after the Franco-Siamese War of 1893.385

Historians John T. McAlister and Paul Mus claimed that Americans’ influence among Vietnamese, especially among villagers, was negligible until 1954, when the Cold War and the importance of containing communism and people’s revolutions associated with Marxism dynamically grew apparent.386 Nonetheless, Americans viewed conflict in Southeast Asia in increasingly alarmist terms because of the establishment of the communist People’s Republic of China on October 1, 1949.387 This event was geopolitically significant, yet Communism, as Fall saw it, “has not added a thing that participants in other doctrinal wars did not know just as well...but communism did develop a more adaptable doctrine. The merit of communism has been to recognize precisely the usefulness of the social, economic, and political doctrines in the field for the purpose of diminishing as much as possible the element of risk inherent in the military effort.”388 Fall’s recognition of the communists’ emphasis upon integration of social, economic and political doctrines was a critical turning point in the development of his understanding of

warfare after World War II. Fall’s decision to focus on Indochina in 1952, becoming one of the first writers to describe the region and events there in English, proved timely. It was a moment in which Fall’s wartime knowledge of guerrilla tactics in the Maquis, his formal education and his research skills as an analyst at Nuremberg converged with his natural intelligence and the opportunity to study and write about a form of warfare of serious geopolitical interest. The extension of communism into Vietnam after World War II, especially after establishment of the People’s Republic of China, changed France’s conflict with the Viet Minh into a war with greater strategic importance. According to his friend Philippe Devillers, “The problem of Vietnam appeared to Fall, already, as the most important and the most serious of the dangers of the era.”

The catalyst for Fall’s decision to study Indochina was a visiting professor at SAIS named Dr. Amry Vandenbosch, affectionately known as “Dr. Van.” Fall’s work with Vandenbosch during the summer of 1952 was a matter of luck because, aside from the one year spent at SAIS, Vandenbosch otherwise spent his entire academic career at the University of Kentucky in Lexington where he taught political science from 1933-1958 and then directed the Patterson School from 1959-65. It is possible that Fall would have eventually determined Indochina was the right subject for him and he might have met other instructors who could help him, but Vandenbosch was a good match. Additionally, Fall’s study of Indochina in 1952 was fortuitous because Fall could travel to Indochina and embed with French troops due to his veteran status in the French army. Had he waited, he might not have studied Indochina or had the same opportunity to do so because of French defeat in 1954. Fall was also fortunate to work with Vandenbosch because of the experience and expertise this University of Kentucky professor brought to the

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389 Philippe Devillers, France-Asia, No. 188 (Winter 1966-67), 149. “Le probleme du Vietnam apparaissait à Fall, déjà, comme le plus important et le plus lourd de dangers de l’époque.”
390 “Obituary for Dr. Amry Vandenbosch,” The Advocate-Messenger, Danville, Kentucky, Tuesday, October 23, 1990.
classroom. In the class, “Colonialism and Nationalism in Southeast Asia,” Fall learned from Vandenbosch’s experiences in the US military, as well as from Vandenbosch’s diverse education and his diplomatic service for the US State Department between 1943 and 1946.\footnote{Bernard Fall, “Academic Material,” Series 1.10, Box AM-1; see also Dorothy Fall, Bernard Fall: Memories of a Soldier-Scholar (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2007), 56, BBF, JFKL.}

In Vandenbosch, Fall found a mentor who wove practical knowledge, such as field research and personal experience with war and politics, into academic study. According to Vincent Davis, a friend of Fall’s, Vandenbosch was “never without well-peppered and sometimes well-salted views on a wide range of public issues both domestic and international.”\footnote{Amry Vandenbosch Obituary, Political Science and Politics, Vol. 24, Issue 2, June 1991, p. 256. \url{https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/political-science-and-politics/article/amry-vandenbosch/71D0496E5FA4E77A2C3176DE1485095A}, accessed September 20, 2018.} Davis, who knew Vandenbosch from time spent with him in Lexington, and later led the Patterson School at the University of Kentucky, added in 1991 that Dr. Van “could quickly smile during and after loud exchanges of views, often proposing a beer and a game of pool as the denouement for a vociferous shouting match.”\footnote{Ibid.} Vandenbosch’s verve and knowledge likely grew out of the diverse experiences that shaped his life.

As a French-speaking intelligence officer on General John Pershing’s staff of the Allied Expeditionary Force during World War I, Vandenbosch was assigned to serve as Pershing’s translator. After the war, Vandenbosch returned to his home in Michigan, resumed undergraduate studies at the University of Chicago and later completed his Ph.D. in political science at the University of Chicago in 1926.\footnote{“Obituary for Dr. Amry Vandenbosch,” The Advocate-Messenger, Danville, Kentucky, Tuesday, October 23, 1990.} Coincidentally, Vandenbosch was a peer of Harold Lasswell, an interdisciplinary and innovative scholar working in the fields of political science, sociology and psychology. Lasswell worked especially on the politics of violence and propaganda in autocracies.
and, in 1941, produced an influential study of totalitarianism. Lasswell’s expertise began with his 1927 dissertation “on propaganda in the 1914-1918 war [which] was a systematic effort to place World War I propaganda experience in the theory of politics.” It is likely that Vandenbosch introduced Lasswell’s work to Fall during their time together at SAIS and Lasswell clearly influenced Fall’s thought and writing on political subversion. Themes Lasswell assessed in 1941, particularly those related to subversion of political administrations, often appeared in Fall’s work and Fall would use the title of an important Lasswell article for a chapter in a later publication. Methodologically, Lasswell’s interdisciplinary approach, which included sociology, political science and economics, the latter being Lasswell’s major, grew out of the intellectually progressive and creative environment of the University of Chicago. This environment encouraged Lasswell to pull together his analysis of interwar political troubles, first in his 1936 political-theory formula, “Politics is the study of who gets what, when, and how,” and later into his 1941 article, “The Garrison State.” This latter work focused upon “the supremacy of the specialist on violence, and the dictatorial, governmentalized, centralized, and integrated, nature of authority.” Fall’s experience with such violence and authority in action in Nazi-controlled Europe predisposed his receptivity to arguments such as Lasswell’s.

399 Ibid., 455.
The intellectual connection between Fall and Vandenbosch also likely stemmed from Vandenbosch’s war-time experiences combined with academic achievement. In addition to his education and World War I service on Pershing’s staff, Vandenbosch served in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in the Southwest Pacific in 1941-1942 and then conducted diplomatic work for the US Department of State between 1943-1946. Working for the State Department, Vandenbosch served with the US delegation to the San Francisco Conference in 1944-1945 at which the United Nations Charter was drafted and approved. This connected with Fall’s personal experience since the UN charter led to the establishment of the International Court of Justice on June 26, 1945. Later, on August 8, 1945, the International Court of Justice created and legally grounded the authority of the Charter of the International Military Tribunal, known also as the Nuremberg and London Charter. The Nuremberg Charter was a document with which Fall was intimately familiar since he had contributed significant research in support of its effective prosecution for the War Crimes Commission. On this point, Fall and Vandenbosch’s lives intersected. The Nuremberg Charter, and the subsequent trials prosecuted under the United Nations’ International Court of Justice’s authority, connected them through shared experiences as did their mutual concern for liberal principles protected by rule of law in international relations and in times of war.

Vandenbosch’s work for the State Department also consisted of membership on the “Subcommittee on Territorial Problems,” a group tasked by President Roosevelt in November

401 “Obituary for Dr. Amry Vandenbosch,” The Advocate-Messenger, Danville, Kentucky, Tuesday, October 23, 1990.
1943 to advance plans for an international trusteeship for Indochina. The US-led international trusteeship concept was based on a premise that foundered on insurmountable obstacles. The premise was that the United States might fulfill the promise of Point Five of Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points, an ambiguous endorsement of self-determination among colonized peoples. Point Three of the Atlantic Charter, pronounced in August 1941 to clarify war aims between the United States and Great Britain, revived this promise to extend self-determination to Europe’s colonies and served as a source of inspiration for colonial subjects seeking independence. When the Charter failed to lead to self-determination in the colonies it appeared as a false promise to colonial peoples looking to the United States as a champion that might ensure their freedom. Even so, Franklin Roosevelt, explained in a memorandum to Secretary of War Henry Stettinius, “I have made no agreement, definite or otherwise, with the British, French, or Dutch to retain their Far Eastern Colonial possessions.”

Colonial powers resisted the Subcommittee and FDR’s concept and prevented pragmatic implementation of a trusteeship for Indochina. Vandenbosch and his fellow State Department planning team recognized that France was unwilling to support self-determination since this would undermine its exploitation of Indochinese resources, especially rubber as increasing demands

406 “Memorandum, November 22, 1944, FDR to Stettinius, Jr.,” Indochina Folder, 1-44, page 27/57, Indochina File, Box 39, President’s Secretary File (PSF), 1933-1945, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
surged because of growing bicycle and automobile sales during the twentieth-century.\textsuperscript{407} Private concerns, often led by joint-stock companies and plantation owners, often undermined even French government attempts to centralize control of their operations, except when it benefited operations and their bottom line. Planters’ economic and political interests, additionally, drove ongoing development of valuable agricultural production practices in science through much of the early twentieth-century.\textsuperscript{408} Planters, therefore, had much to lose. Agricultural successes, in places such as the Mekong Delta and through extensive rubber forestation elsewhere in Southern and Central Vietnam, provided tangible evidence and reasons for protecting their interests. And supporting self-determination among the Indochinese populations was not one of them.

Agricultural advancements associated with equipment, drainage and canal building had changed the political economy of Indochina by World War II in ways that a trusteeship would likely find difficult to control or re-direct in America’s interest.\textsuperscript{409} Despite declarations of the importance of liberty and its protection as the rationale for American involvement in World War II in the Pacific, economic interests and protecting access to markets and shipping against aggressive imperial powers mattered greatly. “Liberty” did not equate with self-determination as much as it did with ensuring economic imperatives. A planter might argue that France had “built” Indochina: its colonialism could hardly compare with Imperial Japan’s destructive attempt to dominate the entire Indo-Pacific. If French colonialism and Japanese Imperial aggression could be differentiated with such clarity, how could the United States credibly undermine planters’ and

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\textsuperscript{408} For a detailed analysis of the development of rubber as a science that altered the political-environmental landscape of Indochina, see Michitake Aso, “The Scientist, the Governor, and the Planter: The Political Economy of Agricultural Knowledge in Indochina During the Creation of a ‘Science of Rubber,’ 1900-1940, \textit{East Asian Science, Technology and Society: An International Journal}, DOI 10.1007/s12280-009-9092-7.

\textsuperscript{409} For these developments in the Mekong Delta, see David Biggs, \textit{Quagmire: Nation-Building and Nature in the Mekong Delta} (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010).
France’s economic interest in Indochina? After all, the United States had long supported France’s empire, at least indirectly, through purchasing a majority of Michelin-produced tires using Indochinese-sourced latex before World War II.\(^{410}\) Nonetheless, FDR was disgusted with France’s exploitation of the Indochinese people, despite American need for tires, so French arguments that its “civilizing mission” was diametrically opposed to the aggression of the Rising Sun did not get far in the White House, even with the decline of Japanese control in Southeast Asia as World War II ended.\(^{411}\) Despite this, guiding French planters, and other French concerns interested in returning to Indochina towards the idealistic ends that Roosevelt’s trusteeship plan envisioned would remain an unmanageable challenge no matter what FDR thought or said.

France avoided a trusteeship because it valued Indochina for more than just economic reasons. Strict economic rationales were an expensive choice and precarious reason for business in Indochina because of the colony and protectorate’s distance from metropolitan France. Empire was expensive to maintain so national pride, nostalgia for a diminishing empire and recovery from the humiliation of defeat and occupation by the Germans and displacement in Indochina by the Japanese mattered a great deal. As historian Mark Mazower explained, re-colonizing Indochina grew out of a crisis of credibility, “the humiliation [the French] had all suffered at the hands of the Germans or Japanese only increased their determination to demonstrate their power.”\(^{412}\) These


were substantive concerns so potential concessions to a “Trusteeship” for Indochina would have implications in numerous and different ways. France might retain a place as a world power, but empire improved the viability of this standing among French leaders such as Charles De Gaulle, even though empire antagonized FDR and, more importantly, vast numbers of Vietnamese, Laotians and Cambodians. Etienne de Durand, a scholar of Security Studies and International Relations, writes that France’s “wars were taking place after the 1940 trauma and in a decolonization context: it was therefore very difficult for them to accept another defeat or to acknowledge the fact that the locals had legitimate grievances.”

In terms of France’s failure to gain widespread support through granting local self-determination, let alone embracing FDR’s trusteeship, Durand added “It is then no wonder that [the French] failed to articulate a political strategy or message able to attract the local people.”

There were other problems with the “Trusteeship” construct that Vandenbosch and his colleagues encountered. The idea relied upon assumptions that it could discredit long-held racist and paternalistic policies, shaped by the idea of a civilizing mission, that claimed that individuals in Indochina did not possess the capability or means to govern themselves. The potential opportunity to undermine preconceptions of racial-driven ineptitude was perhaps one goal Roosevelt sought to achieve by establishing a trusteeship for Indochina. The motive of disrupting commercial exploitation of local populations may have been another motivation, although it would remain relatively hypocritical as long as American dependence on Indochinese-produced goods continued. In any case, other than FDR and like-minded proponents advocating a trusteeship,

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414 Ibid., 2.
individuals in positions of power in the United States and France did not appear to account adequately for Vietnamese agency.

Vandenbosch’s past support for a trusteeship for Indochina no doubt influenced his course at SAIS that Bernard Fall took in the summer of 1952. However, the opportunity to implement the idealism of Franklin Roosevelt, a potential champion for self-determination among colonies such as Indochina, appeared to die with the President in April 1945. Vandenbosch, still, had shared Franklin Roosevelt’s antipathy for French colonialism and this was significant for Fall because he was learning about the region from a man with a progressive outlook regarding Southeast Asia. Fall regarded Vandenbosch as “one of my good professors at the time” and it is almost certain that Fall’s study with Dr. Van contributed to an alloy of liberal values and tempered realism that Fall was developing during the early 1950s.415 It is also possible that Fall’s course at SAIS provided him with a different view of the Viet Minh and an objectivity not typically shared by French military officers in Vietnam.

It was in this context that Fall submitted his first paper to Vandenbosch in 1952 entitled “Political Development in Indo-China,” along with a thirteen-page essay for the class’s final exam.416 Fall was frustrated by a lack of accessible sources for the assignments and had to rely on the Information Division of the French Embassy in Washington for periodicals, reports, books, maps and photographs.417 The paper’s detailed commentary demonstrated an understanding that Vietnam, due to its long and contentious history with China, was independent of and often at odds with its large neighbor. Additionally, Fall displayed an interest in the Vietnamese government in the north, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) led by the Indochinese Communist Party.

416 Bernard Fall, “Academic Materials,” Series 1.10 Academic Material, Box AM-1, BBF, JFKL.
(ICP) but rechristened the Worker’s Party (*Lao Dong* after 1945), that guided its policies through the Viet Minh political front. His work identified competition between nationalist and communist factions within Vietnam, and how, in contrast to the French-sponsored State of Vietnam founded in 1949, the DRV possessed capacity not only for self-government, but also for integrating elements of nationalism with communism to achieve political legitimacy. Comparison of the two different Vietnamese administrations in North and South, and the competition between them, therefore, was the focus of Fall’s earliest analysis on Indochina.\(^{418}\) The combination of communism and nationalism Fall identified is also important considering that Fall held anti-communist views but did not dogmatically critique this ideological mix, at least early on. Fall’s anti-communism was primarily more anti-authoritarian than a rigid antipathy directed against socialist ideology. He, however, never laid down a specific theoretical explanation for his anti-communist views. He was, in any case, not suspected of harboring sympathies and his war-record against fascism during the Second World War, along with his critique of the Viet Minh, contributed to his perceived stance as an anti-communist. What was unique about him at the time, however, was that he was best conceived as an anti-communist liberal, an amalgamation of political and social views that were perhaps unusual, especially considering Fall was, for all intents and purposes, a military man in the 1950s.

In contrast to the focus on Indochina in his paper, Fall’s final exam was regionally oriented. Fall recounted problems created by colonization in each country affected by it in Southeast Asia and assessed the potential implications of colonization for the Asian mainland.\(^{419}\) In one of the exam’s questions, Vandenbosch asked for analysis of the viability of an independent “Southeast

\(^{418}\) Bernard Fall, “Academic Materials,” Series 1.10 Academic Material, Box AM-1, BBF, JFKL.

\(^{419}\) Ibid.
Asian Federation.” Fall argued that such a federation was “most unlikely due to geographic obstacles and the diversity of experience with colonialism taking place in the region.”

It is unclear whether Vandenbosch created the question in anticipation of future political alignments that a federation in Southeast Asia might create, or whether he just wanted his students to engage with the diversity of history and political outlooks in the region. Most likely, Vandenbosch wanted his students to address the compatibility, or lack thereof, among the varied political views existing across factions and colonies undergoing wars of decolonization. What is clear is that Fall regarded regional diversity as an obstacle that likely precluded a federation, regardless of political orientation. This included his belief that a potential communist-bloc federation was not likely and such a view would have countered domino-theory thinking that was brewing in Washington. Fall was also skeptical about the viability of federation in the context of an alliance with the West. The later establishment of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954 proved that Fall was only partly wrong in his prediction since SEATO only incorporated two Southeast Asian partners, the Philippines and Thailand. The challenges a potential Southeast Asia Federation faced in 1952, moreover, were in line with problems Fall foresaw because, after its formation, SEATO faced charges of “being a new form of Western colonialism” despite its intended function in a strategy of containment originally advocated by George Kennan.

The class with Vandebosch was a critical turning point in Fall’s life and work. Vandenbosch, it is clear, knew something of Fall’s views on politics because Fall certainly reflected these in his course assignments. Additionally, Vandenbosch perceived that Fall was uniquely positioned to study Indochina as a French citizen and as a French veteran of the Maquis.

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420 Ibid.
FFI and French army. On this basis, Dr. Van suggested to Fall, “You know, Bernard, you with your French background - you ought to get specialized in that area – you know, nobody knows much about it.” Fall took Professor Amry Vandenbosch’s career advice to heart. In taking the next step towards conducting field research the following year, Fall reflected, “I found the area rather interesting…the French no longer owned it as a colony, but French troops were fighting there… this was actually getting to be a pretty nasty war except nobody knew anything about it.”

Fall explained, “And this is how by pure accident, one sunny day in Washington D.C., of all places, in 1952 I got interested in Viet-Nam…..” Fall must also have recognized that study of Asia was a nascent professional field for academics, rife with partisan politics due to the establishment of the People’s Republic of China only a few years before in late 1949. Conservatives condemned liberal views and policies towards China and blamed their proponents for losing the country to communism and then used those policies “as a justification for the investigations and recriminations which followed in the early 1950s as part of the general atmosphere of ‘McCarthyism.’”

Vandenbosch’s claim that “few knew much about [Indochina]” was partly true but less so with China. The United States’ interest in China was commensurate with surges in conflict as demonstrated by interest after the Second Sino-Japanese War began in 1937 while an earlier surge occurred “during the winter of 1921-22 when China was the focus of greater international attention than at any time since the Siege of the Legations by the Boxers.”

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423 Ibid., 23.
424 Ibid., 23.
426 Ibid., 116. For scholarship on US-China relations prior to World War II, see Barbara W. Tuchman, Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-1945 (New York: Grove Press, 1985). For Tuchman’s analysis on this period of US-Chinese interactions, see especially pages 83-89 for her discussion of the “Washington Conference.” The conference was an “Anglo-American effort to stabilize a safe balance of naval power in the Pacific without the expenditure of a naval race.” Chinese delegates sought changes in trade and tariff autonomy and treaty revisions of
Fall, however, would illuminate a regional area that was somewhat opaque but that was becoming a politically embittered site because of frustration with anti-colonial wars of liberation and fears of communist expansion.

As Fall transitioned his focus to Southeast Asia, his first trip to Vietnam in 1953 was self-financed. It was a considerable expense for Fall and he made consistent reference to the cost. Fall claimed that the investment provided him independence to provide objective analysis without institutional constraints. At least, that was how he explained his view in a later interview. It is also probably true that it was difficult to find external financial support for academic research conducted in a war-zone, or, that Fall had not yet made contacts that might have provided funding. In any case, Fall’s self-reliance and connections with French military authorities who could provide lodging, food and transportation allowed him to travel to places in Indochina few independent scholars could.

Through his first trip to Indochina, Fall’s new intellectual interests began to coalesce. His experience and education in an extensive range of subjects at several institutions, prepared him for research in an area that was relatively unknown at the time among scholars in the United States. Fall was soon on his way to Indochina with a “new short-wave radio and precious Leica camera” packed into a military duffel bag along with a letter of recommendation from the French Embassy in Washington D.C. to the political advisor of the Vietnam National Government to build upon his already established contacts and friends in the French military. Perhaps Dr. Vandenbosch was right to claim that few knew much about Indochina in 1952. In a letter written to Fall’s fiancé

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what were known as the Treaty Ports between China and Great Britain going back to the Opium Wars from 1839-42 and 1856-1860. For history of the Treaty Ports, such Tuchman, page 28-29.

Dorothy Winer during his first visit to Vietnam in 1953, Fall concisely described his task: “From the general point of view, this place is a hotbed and a more likely spot to start a general war than ten Koreas. Any knowledge we get out of it soon might help a few bigger people than you and I keep things on an even keel, and I happen to be one of the guys trained to present such knowledge intelligibly.”

II – Vietnam, May 1953

“It looks just like one big garden, with all the little villages very neatly surrounded by trees and shrubbery, and French military roads showing their regular tracings against the erratic boundaries of the fields. As we lowered through the overcast for the landing, you began to see the scars and the marks of the watchtowers, gun emplacements.”

This is how Bernard Fall described Vietnam as he descended upon Hanoi in mid-May 1953. Fall quickly learned that French fortifications, despite their dire appearance, possessed “architectural periods” based “on the local terrain, the availability of building materials, the enemy’s combat potential, and the state of the art of military engineering.” In 1950-1951, General de Lattre de Tassigny, the commander of French troops in Indochina, had brought two new approaches to his military command. The first “included the installation of béton armé [reinforced concrete] as a defensive barrier forming the

430 Ibid., 76.
431 Ibid., 61; For Fall’s detailed description of French fortifications in Indochina, see Bernard B. Fall, Street Without Joy: The French Debacle in Indochina (Guilford, Connecticut: Stackpole Books, 1961), 175-179.
432 Ibid., 175; See also, Henry Ainley, In Order to Die (London: Burke Publishing Company, 1955), 27.
de Lattre Line and the second was ordering the implementation of *vietnamisation* [Vietnamization], a program to upgrade and expand Vietnamese militias for pairing with French units “for training and joint operations.”\(^\text{433}\) The latter of these two developments, Vietnamization, formed an important precedent for subsequent operations in which Vietnamese troops assumed greater command over the war effort.

The initial development of the de Lattre Line, into which Foreign Legionnaires and Vietnamese auxiliaries “poured 51 million cubic yards of concrete into the 2,200 pillboxes” served as an indication of the nature of French warfare in Vietnam and its attempt to “seal off the 7,500 square miles and eight million inhabitants of the Red River delta from the Communist areas,” but “all to no avail.”\(^\text{434}\) As Fall noted in 1953, “Battles involving near a whole Vietminh division were fought last year well within the fortified line and conservative intelligence estimates place the number of Vietminh troops operating within the (Red River) Delta at around 30,000 men.”\(^\text{435}\) The fortifications reflected Vietnamese adaptation to them because “even those standardized bunkers had their architecture and yearly style changes, as the enemy’s attack patterns altered, or his weaponry improved.”\(^\text{436}\) In late May, while on a tour of northern provinces with Vietnamese officials, Fall described the contrast between the land and fortifications.

“The countryside has a charm of its own: the rice which is nearly ripe, the little fields full of water with their little dikes around them, the buffaloes wallowing in the mud to get the flies off their back, the farmers (call them Viet-Minh after working hours) with their cone-shaped hats — and then, a new element that looks as strange here as an armoured knight


riding down Fifth Avenue, the French forts. Built along strictly functional lines, high square towers of concrete pillboxes, they have an air of early-gothic castles and give the whole place an eerie-out-of-this-worldliness.”

François Sully, an individual Bernard Fall befriended in 1957 in Indochina, also commented on the development of this defensive infrastructure, writing “On the French side, barbed wire, sandbags, and fortifications were the visual evidence of a Maginot line mentality, a poor substitute for aggressive patrolling and alertness….I learned that the amount of barbed wire used by an army is a good indication of its lack of fighting spirit.”

In addition to Sully’s point and Vandensbosch’s instruction, Fall had a personal connection among those fighting for France in Vietnam. Remy Malot, a friend from the French Maquis in Haut-Savoie during World War II wrote to Fall, “We are fighting against the Vietnamese regulars, perfectly equipped and armed à l’américaine, that is, with American arms captured in Korea, supported by the Chinese Communists. We didn’t come out of it unscathed and in the final analysis….I believe that Indochina will only be pacified after a third world war…..or she will be completely lost for us.” Conducting research that year, Fall confirmed Malot’s point noting that “Human losses have been heavy – 43,000 dead, 40 percent of these casualties were regular French officers and noncommissioned officers who are sorely needed for the infrastructure of the new French North Atlantic Treaty divisions.” Overall, the situation was bleak for France and its soldiers, particularly among the many Africans questioning their service for France’s empire, but also for French civilians still living in Indochina. In Fall’s first article on Indochina, published

437 Dorothy Fall, Bernard Fall: Memories of a Soldier-Scholar (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2007), 64.
in the October 1953 issue of *Military Review*, Fall explained “as a French civilian over here put it: ‘How do you think it feels to fight alone for 7 years a war that is militarily hopeless, politically a dead-end street, and economically ruinous?’”  

Fall began his efforts to understand Indochina using his previous study, information from friends, and these initial impressions of the war in Southeast Asia. He cast a wide-net during his nine-months of field research and gathered as much material on the ongoing war as possible. Military documents, interviews, maps, photographs, economic and agricultural reports, studies of religions, and newspapers provided Fall with the information he had been hard pressed to find in the United States. Fall prioritized collecting materials on the political formation of the Viet Minh and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north, but he also gathered extensive information on the fledging Vietnamese administration in the south, supported by France and known as the Associated State of Vietnam (SVN) formed in 1949.

Using military transportation, Fall traveled extensively, and he visited important sites such as Tay Ninh where he met with religious leaders including the Cao Dai Ho Phap [Pope] Pham Cong Tac. Fall did this, as he acknowledged in the preface to his study published the following year, with the help of the French High Commissioner, Guy Merlo, and State of Vietnam leaders, such as Dr. Le Van Hoach, the Vietnamese Minister of Information who was an adherent of the syncretic Cao Dai religion. As a French citizen and former member of the French Army, Fall also had the advantage of a French passport and friends such as Malot and Sully. In addition, Fall

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sought out numerous, other Vietnamese administrators. These included Governor of North Vietnam, Nguyen Huu Tri; President of the T’ai Federation, H.E. Deo Van Long; and Vu Quoc Thong, a professor of administrative law at the University of Hanoi who later became the Minister of Social Action and Health in the Republic of Vietnam after its founding in 1955. Fall also managed to meet and interview Nguyen Van Tam, the Prime Minister of the State of Vietnam in late August 1953.

Nguyen Van Tam exemplified the complex dimensions of civil conflict in Vietnam. Fall’s first meeting with Tam also demonstrated that Fall did not know everything about his subject, even though he was quickly gaining increased understanding of the long-standing animosity between communists and nationalists. In a letter that month, Fall wrote that Tam was “a ‘dear’” but Fall only had partial knowledge of the nationalist leader’s life.

He’s a nice, old but very active man with a crew cut whose own family is a nice example of the tragedy that goes on here. 2 of his 3 sons were killed (chopped to bits in a scientific slow way) by the Viet-Minh. His last son is the V-Nam Commander-in-Chief. But, the husband of his oldest daughter ironically is surgeon-general for the Viet-Minh. This Prime Minister, too, spent years in a Jap concentration camp. But you should see him! He’s outspoken for Vnam independence and certainly no French puppet, though he’s realist enough to know that V.N. can’t stand alone yet."

Fall, because he was only beginning to learn about the personalities and complex history of the region, did not provide details about why Tam’s sons died in such an atrocious manner. Nguyen Van Tam, according to an obituary in the New York Times published after his death in 1990, had held several ministerial posts since 1946 before becoming Prime Minister under Bao Dai and was “nick-named the Tiger of Cai Lay for eliminating Communist resistance groups” in

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My Tho and Tien Giang Provinces in South Vietnam. Tam, himself, had been arrested and tortured by the Viet Minh for his loyalty to France, and his two sons were gruesomely murdered as revenge for Tam’s ruthless approach to the Viet Minh. Fall also referred to Nguyen Van Tam’s living son correctly as the Commander in Chief of the State of Vietnam’s military. It is possible that Fall knew that this son, Nguyen Van Hinh, had served in the French Air Force during the Battle of France in June 1940 before joining Charles de Gaulle’s Free French Forces in North Africa after Operation Torch. But Fall would only learn more of Nguyen Van Hinh after Hinh, like his father, became a vociferous opponent of Ngo Dinh Diem in 1955.

Men like Nguyen Van Tam were important to Fall’s education. Tam’s life embodied the complicated and violent environment of decolonization in Vietnam that was metastasizing through the Cold War. In contrast, Fall’s previous experience of war from World War II was not necessarily Manichean, but Nazism represented an unambiguous enemy for the Allies in Fall’s view. The problems of collaboration associated with Vichy France’s support for the Third Reich greatly complicated Fall’s understanding of war, but sides were more clearly delineated in World War II than in post-war conflicts over decolonization. Conflict in Indochina was multi-dimensional in ways that appeared to challenge Fall’s concept and understanding of war. The complexity of Vietnamese society, its history, its conflicts over decolonization, and its people, kindled a passion that drove Fall to understand this new kind of warfare. This entailed understanding Indochina in all its complexity, especially its diverse peoples. Fall’s meeting with

Nguyen Van Tam, and many others, stimulated Fall’s drive to understand why war was taking place and how it was conducted.

Fall learned that Nguyen Van Tam sought a separate and independent Vietnam but that he had decided to join the anti-communist Associated State of Vietnam under French suzerainty. As a supporter of the SVN, Tam became Director General of the National Police and Security in June 1950 and played an important role in defeating the Viet Minh’s urban war in Saigon Cholon that month.\textsuperscript{448} He later became minister of Public Security in February 1951 and, in recognition of his counter-terror pacification programs, was made an \textit{Officier de la Legion d’honneur} in May by General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny. Nguyen Van Tam would eventually become disillusioned with France’s colonial policies, even within the liberalizing French Union, formed in 1946, later announcing in a radio broadcast that it was “important that we no longer remain in this Union as tenants of a house built without us.”\textsuperscript{449} He emigrated to the United States in 1955 and remained an opponent of Diem, but also a stalwart opponent of Vietnamese Communism for the rest of his life, writing “One does not come to terms with the Indochinese Communist Party. One beats it down, or it beats you down.”\textsuperscript{450}

Fall’s understanding of Tam’s antipathy for the Viet Minh, but also for the French Union and Diem’s administration, served as a type of indicator: to understand war in Indochina, Fall had to gain a comprehensive understanding of how political legitimacy in Indochina functioned. This task would consume the next fourteen years of Fall’s life.

Fall’s interactions with various figures and institutions provided him with unique access to documentation on the two Vietnamese governments, and they enabled his participation in


\textsuperscript{449} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{450} Ibid.
operations during the months of his field research between May and November 1953. Congressman James Grant O’Hara later remarked that Fall possessed “in his pocket,” access in Vietnam that “permitted the inspection, appreciation, and the ability to question and examine each act, and the ability to bring out the nuance of actions until the moment he assembled the fragments and threads into this fabric we call history.”

Fall’s earliest publication on Southeast Asia, “Indochina: The Seven Year Dilemma,” was published while he was still conducting field research. It provided a detailed analysis of what the French called, le Viet-Minh. The French, Fall knew, insisted on using this term instead of references to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, or the North Vietnamese, because regarding them as such might confer legitimacy to their administrative apparatus.

Fall’s first article on Indochina also indicated that French options were narrowing as the French metropole’s disenchantment with the “dirty war” (la guerre sale) increased, French army morale dwindled, and Viet Minh capacity gained traction in northern Vietnam. These factors contributed to the development of an aggressive military offensive, developed by France’s General Henri Navarre, to pursue the Viet Minh into open terrain in northwestern Vietnam and eastern Laos in late 1953 and early 1954. The reason for the Navarre Plan, Fall knew, was to achieve a knock-out blow through a set-piece military victory, but it stemmed equally from dissatisfaction with the war in France and a sense that time was running out.

Fall’s sources relayed disenchantment and his experiences during the year undermined his optimism in a French victory. Sources also came from Viet Minh publications and Fall’s access to DRV documents captured by the French military included the principal Viet Minh newspaper,
Cu’u Quoc, published to propagate the Viet Minh’s revolution against French control. Even more remarkable, Fall had access to the Vietnam National Gazette (Viet Nam Dan Quoc Cong Bao), considered an official journal of the DRV in which government decrees and edicts were published. According to Lauriston Sharpe, the director of the Southeast Asia Program at Cornell University, who oversaw Fall’s published work in 1954, “no complete set of this journal is known to exist in a location accessible to Western students,” but all of these “sources of information were open to Mr. Fall during his stay in Vietnam.”

These “sources of information” formed the basis for Fall’s first book, The Viet-Minh Regime, published in 1954. Despite the incorporation of extensive and difficult to obtain documentation, this early analysis on the Viet Minh and its administration has seldom been cited elsewhere. In one case, a scholar claimed that his 2013 publication was “the first study in English or French about the formation of the DRV state, the lively newspaper culture, and the 1945-46 activities of Viet Minh groups and other organizations.” It is may be true that Fall’s analysis did not provide the level of detail found in this 2013 work, or in other histories of the Viet Minh, but Fall was writing as a contemporary scholar assessing the Viet Minh state with the goal of helping others understand its formation at a time when his study might have made a positive difference in the development of policy towards Vietnam. Nonetheless, his account of the Viet Minh’s history was remarkably detailed and it more accurately deserves its place as the first study of the formation of the DRV state in English, even if it is shorter than work completed 59 years

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454 Ibid., viii.
455 Ibid., viii.
later with the aid of far more source material than that available to Fall.\textsuperscript{457} Not only was Fall’s scholarship omitted as a useful primary source in this 2013 work, Fall was only mentioned in passing: “In early 1954, Bernard Fall produced an admirable description of the DRV’s structure and modus operandi at that moment, but offered readers little as to origins.”\textsuperscript{458} Fall was not a historian, but rather a scholar in International Relations. Moreover, he was writing about events as they were in development. More informed awareness of Fall’s analyses -- such as simply reading his 1954 work and contrasting it with later historians’ analyses -- clearly demonstrates his sophisticated account of the Viet Minh and Democratic Republic of Vietnam’s formation.

Fall considered the Viet Min and their administration as important to world affairs and his study was relevant as applied history. The value of Fall’s analysis on the Viet Minh was not lost on his contemporaries. In 1967, historian Joseph Buttinger regarded Fall’s book as “The most comprehensive study of the evolution, military organization, and government of North Vietnam.”\textsuperscript{459} Such a statement, in any case, is certainly far from the claim that Fall’s work on the DRV offered “little as to its origins.” Moreover, what Buttinger did not mention in his description of \textit{The Viet-Minh Regime} was that it was only the first volume of Fall’s three-volume, 1,107 page doctoral dissertation registered with the Library of Congress in 1955.\textsuperscript{460} The publication of the first volume of Fall’s work, \textit{The Viet-Minh Regime} preceded Fall’s dissertation defense and was over 180 pages in length.\textsuperscript{461} This scholarship, according to Lauriston Sharp, positioned Fall as

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\textsuperscript{460} “Fall Ph.D. Dissertation Abstract,” Series 1.05, Box P-2, BBF, JFKL.
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“among the first to identify and organize such data into a systematic account of the structure and functioning of the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.”\textsuperscript{462} On top of Fall’s work itself, Sharp’s comment, along with Buttinger’s, demonstrates why Fall’s earliest scholarship deserves careful re-evaluation, instead of mere passing references.

In the early 1950s, it is understandable that public knowledge and debate concerning Indochina after World War II was meagre at best in the United States. Serious analysis of policy formulation related to Indochina, outside of policy-makers directed involved with the region, did not appear to penetrate academic scholarship in the United States in the post-war era with few exceptions.\textsuperscript{463} Fall’s teacher at SAIS, Vandenbosch was correct to say of Indochina that “nobody knows much about it.”\textsuperscript{464} But Fall had access, experience, and a drive to explain France’s diminishing role in the region, the origins of the Viet Minh, and its administration’s competition for legitimacy among a diverse and politically divided society in Vietnam. What Fall learned and thought about the region was rendered with an urgency nearing a mission-like zeal after 1953.

The division of Vietnam at the sixteenth parallel, as a result of the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, was a starting point in Fall’s analysis. With the defeat of Imperial Japan, Chinese Nationalist Forces occupied the north while British troops occupied the southern zone. In October 1945, the first French elements arrived in Saigon led by General Leclerc, and in support of British troops under command of Major General Douglas Gracey, whose forces “began to reconquer and

\textsuperscript{462} Ibid., vii.
\textsuperscript{463} See Ellen J. Hammer, \textit{The Struggle for Indochina} (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1954). In a critical review of Hammer’s work in September 1954, Fall commented, “This reviewer seriously missed a more comprehensive documentation of the Indo-China problem as seen from a larger point of view than mere Franco-Viet relations,” “Book Reviews by Fall,” \textit{Asian Student}, September 21, 1954, Series 1.08, Box BR-1, BBF, JFKL.
pacify the region south of the 16th parallel.”

According to terms agreed to at Potsdam, Chinese troops would leave northern Vietnam and French troops would be allowed to accompany British troops in the Southeast Asia Command arriving in Saigon in September 1945. In what was viewed as a compromise solution to ensure Chinese Nationalist forces did not remain in Vietnam, due to Vietnamese concerns over Chinese encroachment, DRV leader Ho Chi Minh settled for the return of French troops through the March 6 Accords. The agreement stipulated that “the French recognized the ‘Republic of Vietnam’ as a ‘free state’ within the Indochinese Federation and French Union.” In exchange, “the Vietnamese agreed to welcome the return of twenty-five thousand French troops for five years to relieve departing Chinese forces.”

Subsequent negotiations at Dalat and at Fontainebleau, which focused primarily on South Vietnam, failed and building antagonism between Vietnamese and French troops set conditions for conflict which ensued between the Viet Minh and France in December 1946.

Fall’s trip to Indochina, therefore, came towards the end of a complicated war of decolonization, with roots in World War II and post-war agreements. Fall’s research, furthermore, was conducted while war was still on so his ideas on warfare during this time were protean and an accurate reflection, in 1953, of an undecided war. His intellectual reckoning of warfare was thus a work in progress and, while it was a great scholastic opportunity, it was also an arduous and dangerous subject to study first-hand. His writing, as a result, oscillated between documenting the history of World War II and its aftermath and chronicling current events in 1953 and 1954. The division of Vietnam in 1945, agreed to at Potsdam without French participation, was one

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intellectual book-end, though Fall did delve further back to the formation of the Indochinese Communist Party and the Viet Minh’s origins as an anticolonial front. The other book-end was the status of conflict in 1953, though Fall was mindful to account for the multi-leveled war within Indochina as a conflict also implicated in the broader geo-political contest of the Cold War.

The French supported State of Vietnam (SVN), formed in 1949 under the leadership of Emperor Bao Dai, was still in the process of attempting to achieve a representative government. Fall concluded in August 1954, however, that “National representative government is entirely non-existent despite local and regional elections.” The problem was two-fold: elections had not been held for four years after the government had been declared, and, when elections were held, they took place during the rice-planting season in January when few peasants had time to participate. These issues, Fall determined, prevented a legitimate and representative government from forming and provided opportunities for the Viet Minh to compete with the State of Vietnam.

Other problems existed as well. Months before reaching these conclusions on the State of Vietnam, but shortly after landing in May 1953, Fall checked in with a French briefing officer and asked about the situation in the Red River Delta. He was told, “Well, we hold pretty much of it: there is the French fortified line around the Delta which we call the Marshal de Lattre Line – about 2200 bunkers forming 900 forts. We are going to deny the communists access to the 8 million people in the Delta and the 3 million tons of rice it produces.” Fall questioned if the communists held anything within the Delta to which the officer, referring to a map of the region, replied “Yes, they hold those five black blotches.” Within days, Fall began documenting this competition in

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468 Ibid., 26.
470 Ibid.
control within the Red River Delta. (See Appendix II – Map 1: “Vietminh Guerrilla Infiltration Behind French Lines – [Situation May 1953]).

I used a working hypothesis: I went to the Vietnamese tax collection office in Hanoi to look at the village tax rolls. They immediately indicated that the bulk of the Delta was no longer paying taxes. As a cross-check on my theory I used the village teachers. The school teachers in Viet-Nam were centrally assigned by the Government. Hence where there were school teachers the Government could be assumed to have control. Where there was none, there was no Government control. The resulting difference between military ‘control’ and what the Communists controlled administratively was 70% of the delta inside the French battlelines.\footnote{Ibid., 217.}

Fall concluded, the “military situation was complete fiction and had absolutely no bearing on the real situation inside the Delta… the area was solidly Communist infiltrated and, of course, collapsed overnight.” He explained, “That is revolutionary warfare.”\footnote{Ibid., 218.} The space between reality on the ground and what French military officials believed was wide. In his reflections, this was a striking moment that demonstrated the power of warfare that relied on competitive control over society instead of a preponderance of power found in military strength. It was, moreover, an important point in Fall’s thought because of parallels between what he experienced in the Maquis during the Second World War and what he observed in such a different context as Indochina years after World War II was over. He recognized that the Viet Minh’s social control of society could be documented, but primarily through indicators that eluded French officers used to determining control though military metrics, such as the number of defensive positions held by bunkers and forts, or through counting the number of attacks initiated against the Viet Minh or endured by them. He would devote his ten months of research in Indochina to determining how and why this perceived reality and the truth on the ground were so different.

\footnote{Ibid., 217.}
\footnote{Ibid., 218.}
Chapter Four – “Seven Years of War in Indochina”

Despite its military weaknesses, the Viet Minh’s application of communist doctrine to war in Vietnam and its organizational structure enabled victory over France. The victory of the People’s Republic of China over Nationalist Chinese forces in late 1949, moreover, changed previous material imbalances in the Viet Minh’s favor. Bernard Fall showed that the combination of flexibility and increased resources accentuated and built upon the subversive nature of earlier forms of warfare that did much to weaken French and State of Vietnam authority before Chinese assistance propelled the Viet Minh’s cause. This chapter examines Fall’s analysis of these events by considering developments in Indochina during the Second World War that led to the formation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. It also considers how the return of French forces after World War II led to conflict in late 1946 between the Viet Minh, France, and, after 1949, the French-supported Associated State of Vietnam. In Indochina, when the Second World War ended, the First Indochina war followed closely and lasted over seven years.

The first section of this chapter contextualizes Fall’s study of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) by considering developments in Indochina during World War II that led to the formation of the Viet Minh and their government, the DRV. As a result of the Second World War, in contrast, France’s position in the world had suffered so regaining its colony and protectorates in Indochina was important. France’s return precipitated the First Indochina War with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, led by the Viet Minh, and it later led to the creation of a competing Vietnamese government, the French supported State of Vietnam. Many factors contributed to the war including US financial assistance through the Marshall Plan that freed up French resources for the conduct of war in its colony and protectorates. Fall also wrote about
French Communism and its relation to war in Indochina. The potential of communist subversion in France, let alone Indochina, motivated politicians to pursue an anti-communist agenda abroad and at home. Section two focuses on Fall’s analysis and description of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), while section three examines Fall’s assessment of the Associated State of Vietnam (SVN) established in 1949. The chapter concludes with Fall’s perspective on the DRV’s victory during the First Indochina War and how this set the stage for the development of another competition between the North Vietnamese Regime and the Republic of Vietnam, led by Ngo Dinh Diem, after the First Indochina War ended.

1953 was the most important year in Fall’s scholarship because it marked the career path he would follow the next fourteen years. It was also the year during which he gathered the research for not only *The Viet-Minh Regime* and other material for his dissertation, but also the notes on which he would base his most well-known work, *Street Without Joy*. Fall was mindful of geopolitical factors behind France’s recolonization of Indochina and how the United States was implicated in France’s return after 1946 because of its commitment to reconstructing France through aid provided by the Marshall Plan. In the era of the early Cold War, anti-communism created a political paranoia and, as Fall showed, the threat of French communism in France created demands for US support that equaled, and even exceeded French demands to support anti-communist war against the Viet Minh. Fall’s trip to Vietnam in 1953 was also notable because he observed the war between France and the Viet Minh first-hand as the Cold War began to take on greater significance. Fall was among the only scholars studying events in Vietnam and writing about them in English. This made his earliest studies of unique, but also valuable because of the rich detail of the Viet Minh and its government that Fall provided. Moreover, in North Vietnam, Fall studied land reform initiatives in 1953 that contributed to mass mobilization in pursuit of the
Viet Minh’s war aims. Land reform, Fall argued, was critical to the revolution against French colonialism because it mobilized Vietnamese for total war that the Viet Minh commanded and directed against France’s colonial empire in Indochina. To explain conflict in Indochina sufficiently, Fall had to provide context, so he recounted the First Indochina War’s basis in events earlier in World War II. When that war ended, seven years of war in Indochina began.

I - The Road to the First Indochina War

Bernard Fall arrived in Indochina during the seventh year of a war that divided Vietnamese society and embittered the French public and soured its relationship with the French military. Helpfully, Fall’s connections among Vietnamese and French authorities provided him with access, food, lodging and military transportation during the months he used to study the First Indochina War which, in his eyes, “was one of colonial reconquest.” In addition to Fall’s analysis of the DRV and the French-sponsored Associated State of Vietnam (SVN), he also assessed land reform initiatives, undertaken by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam for mass mobilization of Vietnamese society against French conventional operations in 1953, and he analyzed the development of sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia before war broke out between France and the DRV in late 1946. Fall also conducted extensive research on French politics at the time because the expansion of communism was not just about Indochina. Rather, expansion of communism in France after World War II also figured into French motivations to retain its colonies so it was

important, in the view of French officials, to prevent colonial infiltration by a communist party that also sought to undermine of French sovereignty in Europe.

Fall’s scholarship on these subjects demonstrated range and depth. Yet, aside from several articles published in 1953 and 1954 on French communists in Indochina and the government of the State of Vietnam, the main focus of Fall’s analysis was the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV).\(^{476}\) The result was Fall’s *The Viet-Minh Regime*, published in 1954, which provided a comprehensive examination of the DRV administration and the serious challenges it faced along several fronts over the course of almost a decade. Fall began his study by examining the historical circumstances that led to the formation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. At a May 1941 congress in Chingshi, Kwangsi Province, China, the Vietnam Revolutionary Youth League, elements of the Nationalist Party, (Viet-Nam Quoc Dan Dang), and various National Salvation organizations (Cu-u Quoc) “banded together to create the League for the Independence of Vietnam [Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi], known as the ‘Viet-Minh.’”\(^{477}\) The group met in China because Japan had conquered the port of Haiphong and towns and cities bordering China earlier in September 1940. French-held cities such as Lang Son, Dong Dang, and others, were lost to Japanese forces seeking control of supply routes from Haiphong to Yunnan province through which Chinese Nationalists received American aid.\(^{478}\) As Fall wrote, this led the United States to “freeze all Japanese assets in the United States and place an embargo on petroleum exports to Japan.”\(^{479}\) The French government was forced to abandon its colonial troops in Indochina during the autumn of 1940 as Japanese troops entered Indochina because France itself was overrun by

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\(^{477}\) Ibid., 1.


German forces by June that year. According to Fall, the French “had their own miniature Pearl Harbor a full fifteen months before the United States, and the only outside attention the event attracted was a tongue-in-cheek editorial in an American newspaper entitled: ‘Who Wants to Die for Dear Old Dong-Dang?’ The answer, apparently, was obvious.”

After Japan invaded and gained control of French Indochina, it kept a weak French colonial bureaucracy in place to assist in the administration of the region. Fall recounted that “on July 29, 1941, Japan further occupied naval and air bases at Saigon and Tourane [Danang], and shortly after Pearl Harbor, Indochina was in fact as much a Japanese-occupied territory as any of the other southeast Asian countries which were overrun by the Japanese forces,” except “the French still maintained their internal administration and lightly-armed military forces.” The Viet Minh, resisting calls to support Japanese aims, resisted Japan’s occupation and saw an opportunity in France’s weakened position. Moreover, France’s displacement provided the Viet Minh with an opportunity to support Allied objectives in Southeast Asia, and it cooperated with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) through providing tactical intelligence and, in return, the Viet Minh gained limited material assistance from the United States. Fall described this, writing “The elimination of the French brought about a complete breakdown of Allied intelligence which, hitherto, had mainly relied upon its French contacts and the factor favored the activities of these groups…As it happens, it was the Communist groups under the Moscow-trained leader Ho Chi Minh which possessed not only the necessary strength but also the adequate purposeful leadership.

480 Ibid., 122; also, see Bernard B. Fall, Street Without Joy: The French Debacle in Indochina (Guilford, Connecticut: Stackpole Books, 1961), 24.
481 Ibid., 23.
482 See Dixee R. Bartholomew-Feis, The O.S.S. and Ho Chi Minh: Unexpected Allies in the War against Japan (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006); Charles Fenn, At the Dragon’s Gate: With the OSS in the Far East (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2004).
necessary to exploit the situation to the fullest.”  
The Viet Minh’s longer-term strategic plan was eliminating French colonialism. In the meantime, they focused on consolidating power and, after World War II ended the need for unity against Japanese forces, undermining non-Viet Minh competitors, especially Vietnamese Nationalists.

During the Second World War, Chinese Nationalists, the Kuomintang, worked to support a “Vietnamese government-in-exile on the model of such governments as existed in Europe during that time.”  The Kuomintang empowered it chosen leader, Nguyen Hai Than, while Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi Minh), “along with several other Vietnamese political leaders, was jailed by the Kuomintang for nearly eighteen months in the hope that this would bring about a more harmonious cooperation, but to little avail.”  Fall added “Nguyen Ai Quoc was to remain in jail until early 1943, at which date [Chinese Kuomintang General] Chang Fa-kwei recognized the failure of [Viet Minh rivals] the Dong Minh Hoi league over the Viet-Minh league and for the time being gave Nguyen Ai Quoc, the man who was now introduced to Chungking as Ho Chi Minh, a practically free rein in the reorganization of the Vietnamese nationalist revolutionaries.”

After Ho Chi Minh’s release, “another congress was held at Liu-chou [China] between March 25-28, 1944 and a Provisional Republican Government” was formed. “The program of the newborn government was brief: (a) liquidation of both the French and the Japanese grip on Vietnam; and (b) independence for Vietnam with the help of the Kuomintang.”  Fall described the Viet Minh’s considerable efforts in 1943 and 1944 during which time it consolidated its

485 Ibid., 1.
486 Ibid., 1-2.
487 Ibid., 2.
strength with support of the OSS and through Kuomintang material aid and training. Moreover, “It cannot be denied that the Viet-Minh showed an amount of political foresight which the other Vietnamese parties were far from sharing. The Viet-Minh mounted extensive recruiting campaigns and acquired a reputation of ubiquity throughout the back areas of North Vietnam. They won many recruits particularly among the Vietnamese soldiers of disbanded French colonial forces, who became the hard core of the Viet-Minh’s nascent army and who are today [1954, at the time of Fall’s writing] the elite of the military cadres of the DRV.”

Fall singled out the Viet Minh’s top leadership, writing “while the old nationalist party leaders preferred the comparative safety and comfort of Yunnan and Kwangsi, Ho Chi Minh was the only cabinet member of the Provisional Government who volunteered to enter Vietnam in 1944 ‘in order to intensify the struggle.’ Joining up with the partisan groups of Vo Nguyen Giap, a young Communist history professor who had held out in the various North Vietnam mountain areas since 1942, Ho soon controlled the vital Thai Nguyen area which, until the Geneva cease fire of 1954, remained a major Viet-Minh stronghold.”

Despite the Japanese occupation of Indochina, the Viet Minh continued to build its strength in rural North Vietnam until March 9, 1945. In a coup, the Japanese removed the French colonial administration and imprisoned French civilians and soldiers in order to remove the potential internal threat they represented as the Island Campaign in the Pacific progressed. The action eliminated the French administration and its security forces were disarmed and incarcerated in camps that “achieved a notoriety in the Far East comparable to that of Dachau and Buchenwald in Europe.” The power vacuum created by the March 9 coup pervaded local levels throughout the

488 Ibid., 2.
489 Ibid., 2.
490 Ibid., 24.
protectorates of Tonkin, Annam, and the colony of Cochinchina in South Vietnam. This change in the political situation enabled the Viet Minh, founded earlier in the war in 1941, to coalesce further as an anti-Japanese organization, build its political and military strength even more, and co-opt, eliminate, or coerce competitors to join its ranks. To reduce the appearance of its ideology, nationalism was emphasized.

With the defeat of Japan in August 1945, “Ho Chi Minh’s guerrillas became the ‘Vietnam Liberation Army,’” and “A shadow government, called the ‘Vietnam People’s Liberation Committee’ was set up during the following days.” The ground work for this event had been ongoing for much of the Second World War. In the closing days of the war and through the “August Revolution,” the Viet Minh emerged as the leaders of Vietnamese independence and final steps towards the Viet Minh-led government under Ho Chi Minh were underway. On August 25th “the “Emperor of Annam abdicated and handed over his powers to Ho Chi Minh and on the same day, a ‘Provisional Executive Committee for South Vietnam,’ including seven communists among its nine members, took control of Saigon.” This step further consolidated the August Revolution between August 14 and August 30 until “a new Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was formed in Hanoi on August 29, 1945,” led by Ho Chi Minh. Finally, Fall explained, “One last step remained to complete the impressive list of bloodless political successes: the declaration of independence [of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV)]. It followed hardly one week after Ho Chi Minh had consolidated his internal position, on September

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492 Ibid., 24.
2, 1945, and was carefully designed to appeal sentimentally to the anti-colonialist leanings of the United States, from which Ho expected to receive most of the help he needed.”

Fall’s analysis of these events, along with his dissection of the subsequent DRV constitution and its organizational structure, form the basis for his meticulous study of the Viet Minh and their government. Through the dynamic events of World War II in Indochina, Fall emphasized how war with Japan created a demand for unity among the Vietnamese which the Viet Minh turned to its purposes. Moreover, the war provided a rationale for the Viet Minh to accommodate competitors in its official pronouncements, particularly the rival nationalist Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (VNQDD). The defeat of Japan in August 1945, however, removed the Viet Minh’s incentive for compromise with other groups. Meanwhile, agreements made at the Potsdam conference in 1945 supported Chinese, British, and French oversight of Japan’s withdrawal and enabled France to return to Indochina in greater force later that year.

After proclaiming their government’s independence on September 2, 1945, the Viet Minh worked to build strength as the resolution of the war was being decided at Potsdam. The Viet Minh eliminated a series of taxes including individual income tax and professional taxes. These, Fall wrote, “were obviously popular but put the fledging government into a disastrous financial situation.” These measures were soon repealed and other income generating approaches were taken including, Fall wrote, “the famous ‘Gold Week’ during the second week of September 1945 when the population was asked to contribute gold so that arms could be purchased abroad.”

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494 Ibid., 5.
497 Ibid., 6.
even larger problem Ho Chi Minh faced, however, centered on decisions determined at the Potsdam Conference. It was decided by the “Big Three” (the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States) that Chinese forces would return to Vietnam to oversee the withdrawal of Japanese troops and this reduced “the Viet-Minh’s sphere of authority to Hanoi and the southern part of North Vietnam.”

In November 1945 “a decision by the Central Executive Committee of the [Indochinese Communist] Party stated that: ‘so as not to harm National Unity, the members of the Communist Party of Indochina have decided to dissolve the Party.’” In Fall’s view, “This measure was seemingly designed to have the double effect of reassuring the Chinese, Southeast Asians, and the West as to the primarily nationalist aims of Ho Chi Minh, and of considerably broadening the base of internal popular support upon which the Viet-Minh had to depend for the time being.” It was a move, Fall knew moreover, to dissuade Chinese troops from staying in Vietnam under the pretext of an anti-communist agenda. Fall recognized that the potential of Chinese encroachment into Vietnam was a greater fear for the Viet Minh than even the potential return of France. Despite this political move, Chinese troops remained in North Vietnam for the time being while British troops occupied the southern half of the country. Fall’s focus in *The Viet-Minh Regime* centered on the Viet Minh’s efforts during these larger geopolitical changes and he only briefly mentions the return of French forces which came about through the support of British authority in the south. Instead of analyzing these broader developments, Fall provided extensive detail on subjects ranging from the “Statutes of the Lao Dong Worker’s Party,” which later replaced the Indochinese Communist

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498 Ibid., 6.
499 Ibid., 6. The ICP was eventually re-established and re-named the Worker’s Party of Vietnam in February 1951 (Lao Dong - Đảng lao động Việt Nam).
500 Ibid., 6. For Fall’s comments on the formation of the Worker’s Party of Vietnam, (Lao Dong), see also “The Republic at War,” pages 24-38.
Party in 1951, to a minutia-filled analysis of the Lao Dong Party’s organization. He assumed, it appears, that his readers understood the larger contours of post-World War II developments in Indochina. The fact that Fall published his work through the Institute of Pacific Affairs and Cornell University’s Southeast Asia studies department indicates that he composed it with a specialist reading audience in mind. This helps explain why *The Viet-Minh Regime* was never commercially published and it remains a complex and difficult to find book. It is rarely cited and, previously, has never been assessed in detail by contemporary historians of Indochina and scholars assessing the wars that occurred there.

At the conclusion of World War II, with Chinese Nationalist forces and French troops stationed in Indochina, Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh were faced with a decision. Due to Viet Minh weakness confronting reestablished French military power, a compromise was developed between the Viet Minh and France on March 6, 1946, and it permitted French troops to remain in Indochina and replace Chinese forces who then returned to China. The March Accords, also known as the Ho-Sainteny agreement, was a concession by Ho Chi Minh because of his greater concern that Chinese nationalist forces would remain in Vietnam. It helped that Chinese Nationalist leaders were preoccupied with war against Chinese communists, led by Mao Tse-Tung and Generals Chen, Geng, Wei Guoqing, and Chu Teh, and conflict in China added to Nationalist motivation for withdrawal from Vietnam. Fall recognized that the March Accords were a precarious compromise for the Viet Minh, but that they were made to accomplish the longer-range goal of consolidating a tenable DRV administration for the long-term. The accords, along with the July 1946 Fontainebleu Conference, however, failed to resolve continued animosity between

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Vietnamese and French authorities. Later, on November 26, 1946, conflict broke out between
the Viet Minh and French forces in Haiphong and, after a Viet Minh attack on French installations
in Hanoi the next month, the First Indochina War began on December 19th.

In 1953 and 1954, the complex history and political dynamics of the DRV and the State of
Vietnam were Fall’s focus. Since he did not examine the broader contours of the First Indochina
War at length in his first book, it is helpful to describe briefly key events of that war. After war
broke out, the French focused their efforts against the Viet Minh in the north and only provided an
economy of force in the South. Moreover, as the historian Shawn McHale has demonstrated, the
diversity of Southern and Central Vietnam was extreme and “in the South, the Viet Minh faced
legions of local competitors.” In the later 1940s, France maintained corridors between cities,
such as Hanoi and Haiphong, but the Viet Minh maintained a hold on rural areas, particularly in
the north. After Chinese victory over the Kuomintang in late 1949, the Viet Minh gained much
needed resources from the Chinese communists and defeated French garrisons in Cao Bang, Dong
Khe, and Lang Son in 1950. In the years leading to Dien Bien Phu in April and May 1954, Viet
Minh forces led by Vo Nguyen Giap continued to build strength and launched attacks against
French garrisons in the north, exemplified particularly at Nghia Lo which resulted in France
undertaking a massive operation, Operation Lorraine, in late 1952 to relieve pressure against its
outposts. Not long after French disaster resulting from the failure of Operation Lorraine, the

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in Indochina Since 1940,” April 1, 1954. “Part I, Summary of Events in Indochina Since 1940,” page 2, Subseries
A. Briefing Book, Box 24, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, Kansas.
504 See Bernard Fall, “U.S. Policies in Indochina 1940-1960,” in Bernard B. Fall, Last Reflections on a War (New
505 For a full accounting of the First Indochina War, see Fredrik Logevall, Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire
506 Shawn McHale, “Understanding the Fanatic Mind? The Viet Minh and Race Hatred in the First Indochina War
Navarre Plan, named after General Henri Navarre who became the supreme commander of French Forces in Indochina, initiated even more aggressive operations against the Viet Minh in 1953 with the goal of drawing the Viet Minh into open conventional battle. This led to the placement of French Forces at Dien Bien Phu in November 1953, precipitating the battle in this valley where France would be defeated in early 1954. The Geneva Conference of May and June 1954 sought to negotiate a settlement and establish peace in the war-torn country.

The First Indochina War, therefore, contributed to important geo-political changes for France, but also in the broader Cold War. Fall addressed less commonly analyzed topics, such as the relationship between French communism and Vietnamese communism and the dilemma France faced by returning to Indochina after World War II. The reason Fall addressed this topic was because he sought to analyze the political nature of the communist’ war to free Vietnam from colonialism. As a result, he analysed political developments to a greater degree than simply accounting for Viet Minh military operations or a traditional military history of the First Indochina War. Fall was clearly more interested in the undergirding politics of war and why war was happening and how it was unfolding politically. Military operations were merely symptoms of a greater socio-political phenomenon in Indochina. War’s political nature was difficult to assess in action but Fall was determined to make sense of it as it became clearer through the hard work of study and time. One of the more important examples of Fall’s interest in the political nature of war was his assessment of politics in France that complicated debates over the future of Indochina. Fall explained in “The French Communists and Indochina,” an article published in the April 1955 issue of Foreign Affairs, that the divisive political French landscape exacerbated military
The French Communist Party (PCF) had supported the retention of French control in Indochina after 1945, but its motivation was to ensure that French colonial possessions in Asia and Africa transferred to a unified Soviet bloc at the same time, potentially, as the rest of France. French political strife was indicated by the formation of twenty governments during the Fourth Republic over a span of twelve years between 1945 and 1958. These governments’ precarious financial and political environment qualified France’s return to Indochina, but the goal of reclaiming French empire prevailed. Troops were dispatched to Indochina and war with the Viet Minh was then inevitable.

The decision to return to Indochina, however, was contested among French politicians with differing ideology. According to Fall, “The quasi-colonialist enthusiasm of the French Communist parliamentarians,” was evident “in the Constituent Assembly of 1946.” Eduoard Herriot, a leader of the Radical Party (PRV) and three-time Prime Minister in the Third Republic, “insisted upon tight French control of outlying French imperial bases in Africa and Indochina.” Fall cautioned his readers that, “We must remember, however, that for Viet-Nam to break away from French influence would have been a step backward in view of the apparently imminent integration of France herself into the Communist orbit; and this would have been so even if the Ho Chi Minh regime had been 100 per cent Communist. It would have been comparable to what Tito did later in Yugoslavia, for it would have separated the Vietnamese and French Communist parties and set

510 Ibid., 23.
them on divergent paths.”511 Thus, French communists were interested in retaining French colonies, not so that France would regain its pre-World War II imperial status, but, instead, so that France could join the communist world unified with its intact colonial holdings.

French scholar Paul Mus expressed concerns similar to Fall’s. Mus explained, “I remember how, upon our arrival in Saigon in 1945, General Leclerc met the local group of French Marxists and asked them about the feelings of the French Communists in Indochina toward the ‘Annamite’ Communists. We were answered: ‘There are no French and Vietnamese Communists. There is one Communist Party, and here we happen to be in Indochina.’”512 The problem of decolonization was entwined with the problem of communism after World War II, and as it pertained to Fall’s study of the two administrations of Vietnam, “a new division of Viet-Nam began to take shape: the French, and the Vietnamese regime under their control, held all the cities and towns; the Viet-Minh held the villages and the jungle.”513

The goal, held among US policy makers and important sections of the French political class, to prevent France from becoming a member of the communist-bloc explains the importance of post-World War II aid to France through the Marshall Plan.514 It also explains why non-communist and anti-communist political elements in France demanded control of French colonies and continued US assistance after 1952 when Marshall Plan aid subsided: preventing communist infiltration in the colonies was a means to prevent communist infiltration of France. The threat French communism posed and its connections to broader geopolitical considerations of the Cold War explains why Fall’s analysis of French Communists in Indochina appeared in such an eminent

511 Ibid., 23.
publication as *Foreign Affairs*. It was also a boost to Fall’s academic standing since Council of Foreign Relations Committee members, such as John Foster Dulles and Henry Kissinger, who worked on the Council during the academic year of Fall’s publication in 1955-1956, added to the publication’s gravitas.\(^{515}\) As it turned out, Kissinger’s article, “Military Policy and Defense of the ‘Grey Area’” appeared alongside Fall’s article in the April 1955 issue of *Foreign Affairs*.\(^{516}\) The publication of Fall’s work by the Council of Foreign Relations’ editorial board certainly indicates that Fall and his analysis were valued. Moreover, Fall likely perceived acceptance among part of the political establishment at the time as a step in the right professional direction.

Fall’s article “The French Communists and Indochina” was important because it assessed how western fear of communist control of Indochina was historically linked to French claims of potential communist subversion in Europe. Fall wrote that this was a fear of “‘Tripartism’ and communist hopes of being able to get control of France and her overseas possession in one swift sweep.”\(^{517}\) The United States initially supported France’s colonial operations, Fall believed, because that support was necessary to protect continental France from the threat posed by French communists. Fall understood that French communists saw Indochina and France as unified, an understanding Paul Mus also arrived at from his meeting with French communists in Indochina in 1945. Communist control of France would guarantee communist control of Indochina, but this was unlikely by 1947. Instead of the ‘one swift sweep’ Fall pointed out as conceivable earlier, by August 1947, “The old tactic of ‘Communism in one country’ came again to the fore, and now the

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\(^{515}\) William P. Bundy, “*Foreign Affairs*, History,” [https://www.foreignaffairs.com/history](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/history), (accessed December 12, 2018.)


country in question was Viet-Nam and not France."\textsuperscript{518} Previously, French communists had viewed control of Indochina as building strength towards eventual communist control of France. The eastern bloc’s absorption of Czechoslovakia in 1948, for example, was the type of victory that French communists had hoped for but failed to achieve for France. Among anti-communists, this was a problem and the question of “Who lost Czechoslovakia?” laid a foundation in the United States for the far greater accusatory power of “Who lost China?” the following year.\textsuperscript{519}

The idea that French colonies in Indochina served as potential bridges to communist infiltration in Europe created a vicious cycle that extended beyond 1947. Fall, observing this development, wrote that “the Indochina issue became rapidly involved in the broadening rift between the Soviet Union and the West following the creation of the Marshall Plan and the beginning of American military aid to Greece under the Truman ‘containment policy.’”\textsuperscript{520} This linking of conflicts is possibly what Franklin D. Roosevelt had contemplated and sought to avoid when he directed Amry Vandenbosch and the US State Department to develop plans for a trusteeship for Indochina. Clearly, Roosevelt despised the way the French handled their colonies in Indochina, but it is almost certain that he viewed France’s reclaiming of colonies as potential leverage for continued US support towards a secure and peaceful Europe after the war. US financial support for rebuilding war-torn France, however, would become a significant factor enabling France to return to Indochina. Fall described this support, writing “France spent twice as much on the Indo-China war as it has received under the Marshall Plan for its own rehabilitation, and America has furnished much more military and economic aid – calculated on a per capita basis

\textsuperscript{518} Ibid., 28.
– than it ever gave to Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalists.”

In effect, the United States supported France’s recolonization in Indochina in order to maintain influence over France. This would ensure France’s commitment, in a supportive role, among western powers led by the United States in the early years of the Cold War. Fall’s article focused primarily on internal politics in France, but his larger purpose was to explain how the United States became tied to France’s future in Southeast Asia because it was committed to France’s rehabilitation in Europe.

The United States’ support for France’s renewed colonial enterprise in Indochina, through Marshall Plan aid that enabled France to rebuild its domestic economy while it directed other funds to operations there, was a problem in Fall’s view but he recounted it objectively as a historian. His analysis in the article centered on explaining the larger political processes that brought the First Indochina War about and how the Marshall Plan, war in Korea, and fear of communism all contributed to the political background for his primary focus of Indochina. Still, Fall appeared stunned by the fact that more aid was provided to France for its operations in Indochina than amounts provided by the United States to rebuild continental France. Historian Irwin Wall has made much the same point as Fall, writing “In France, skillful politicians proved adept at manipulating American aid to their own uses and to the furtherance of their own policies. In fact….in France the Americans became accomplices, indeed mainstays, of French colonial ambitions in Indochina and paradoxically, Algeria.” The United States, in line with FDR’s hopes, had encouraged France to provide greater self-determination in Indochina in the late 1940s and early 1950s but to no avail and, in fact, “American officials felt confined by the transatlantic

522 For detailed accounting of financial assistance to France and French allocations in support of operations in Indochina, see “Appendix 1 – Marshall Plan Aid to France.”
ties they had fostered.”

Fall believed that these links, long accomplished through the Marshall Plan by the time he wrote about them in 1954, were critical for France’s operations in Indochina, even though he regretted their effects in the region.

Problems resulting from ‘transatlantic’ and ‘transpacific’ ties between the United States and France ensued as a result of financial assistance to France and communist success in Indochina. Historian Richard Hunt commented on discord between France and the United States and how divisions contributed to a growing political aversion to France’s experience in Indochina among US decision-makers: “The occasionally contentious Franco-America relationship that emerged helps explain why [later] the US military in Saigon and Washington was little influenced by French methods and experience,” even though “American officials felt they remained largely ignorant of French plans and programs for Indochina.”

The United States, as Hunt indicates, was not willing to learn from France’s experiences. Fall, in contrast, was willing to learn and had been studying the French experience of warfare in Indochina first-hand during most of 1953. Meanwhile, in the United States, the “Second Red Scare” promoted narrow-minded views that demanded support for France as an essential action to prevent global communist subversion. According to historian George Herring, these dynamics took place while a “Cold War culture of near hysterical fear, paranoid suspiciousness, and stifling conformity began to take shape.”

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525 Evidence supporting Fall’s figures was reported in Allan B. Cole, (Ed.), Conflict in Indo-China and International Repercussion: A Documentary History, 1945-1955 (Ithaca: The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University and the Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University Press, 1956), 259.
Fall was an anti-communist but he did not buy into communist fear-mongering created by American politicians who used fear to increase their domestic standing. Fall believed, instead, that the United States overemphasized the importance of Indochina within the broader Cold War during this era. Fall explained this in 1954, writing “We need have no illusions about Ho’s regime; it is of course Communist-dominated. But so are North Korea and Red China, with whom the United States sat at the conference table for two years; and so is the U.S.S.R. and its satellites, with whom the United States, and France, maintain normal diplomatic relations.”

Since these statements were accurate, Fall seemed to be asking, why did Indochina matter so much? And what were the best solutions for problems there? He concluded with significant understatement, “A farsighted policy in Indochina based on well-administered aid might do more to stem the Communist tide in Southeast Asia than the sending of a few technicians or of a few additional planeloads of napalm.”

Fall was not alone in thinking this way. In a May 28, 1954 letter to Texas Senator, Lyndon B. Johnson, Austin resident, Mr. J. A. Dennis shared a view similar to Fall, writing "Communism, though a very real threat, cannot be stopped by bullets or H-bombs, but must be met by winning the minds of men by showing them something better in deeds, not words."

If a citizen in Texas could see this, what made Fall’s observations different? Individuals like Mr. Dennis and Fall did not differ, for example, on the substance of Mr. Dennis’ statement. Rather, differences essentially centered on the level of detail supporting Fall’s conclusions. His analyses focused on the longer-term political processes the Viet Minh employed to achieve their goals at Dien Bien Phu, whereas many Americans more likely just saw the

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529 Ibid, 195.
530 “J.A. Dennis Letter to Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, May 28, 1954” Case and Project Files, Box 1195, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJP), Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, Texas (LBJL).
manifestation of those goals as the battle was reported in the international press. Fall would recognize that developing policies to counter the Viet Minh were complicated because providing Vietnamese with “something better in deeds” was the challenge. In Fall’s view, the real question at that point was whether farsighted policy was even possible and whether wisely planned financial assistance might be provided without crippling Vietnam’s predominately agricultural-based economy.

In 1953 and 1954, Fall viewed France’s return to Vietnam in a negative light, especially as he learned more about the history of Indochina and gained greater understanding of Vietnamese communism under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh. Fall was learning that Ho Chi Minh sought Vietnamese independence first and foremost and had joined with the Communist International movement long before the Cold War. Ho Chi Minh, he realized, had few practical options, or other avenues of support in his quest for Vietnamese independence. Fall explained, “It would be quite inaccurate to say, as have some Western scholars, that Ho has let his Communist allegiances override his Vietnamese patriotism. The contrary, in fact, is true…throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Ho makes anticolonialism such a central issue of all his public statements at Communist Party congresses, to the almost total exclusion of any other consideration, particularly those of Soviet diplomatic requirements, that one can well wonder where he would have stood politically had any strong nationalist Vietnamese party existed in Viet-Nam, or had any French political party other than the Communist Party espoused a deliberate policy of eventual independence for the colonies.”

This statement was important because it showed that Fall believed, even in 1966

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when he edited Ho’s writings as the Vietnam War continued to escalate, that Ho Chi Minh’s primary motive had initially been anti-colonialism.

Communism became a vehicle to achieve national liberation. Though, “throughout his whole life, Ho has never quite reconciled within himself the at times conflict demands of over-all Communist strategy and his own love for his country.”\textsuperscript{532} Ho Chi Minh chose to follow Communism largely because of the anti-imperialism it exemplified through the Russian Revolution, long before the ideological baggage of the cold war existed. Vietnamese known to have alleged connections with the Russian Revolution, for example, were important figures in establishing this connection. Ton Duc Thang, one of Ho Chi Minh’s closest peers and his second-in-command, was directly encouraged by top leaders to emphasize his past association with the Russian Revolution as a model for Vietnamese to emulate.\textsuperscript{533} Ton Duc Thang, in fact, might have even been chosen for a top leadership position because of his reputation as an alleged mutineer in the Black Sea Mutiny in support of the Russian Revolution in 1919. Fall was well-aware of the debate surrounding the authenticity of Thang’s participation in the mutiny but it was clear to him that Ton Duc Thang served as an important element in cultivating ties between the Russian and Vietnamese Revolutions.\textsuperscript{534} This was history that was important to explain, but it was also difficult to contextualize for western audiences understandably unable to think of communism as something different than that associated with Stalin’s brutal legacy.

Fall knew that Ho’s communism was undeniable. The Vietnamese leader was committed to the extent that even Nikita Khrushchev thought of Ho Chi Minh as “an apostle of the revolution”

\textsuperscript{532} Ibid., ix.
\textsuperscript{533} See Christoph Giebel, \textit{Imagined Ancestries of Vietnamese Communism: Ton Duc Thang and the Politics of History and Memory} (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006).
\textsuperscript{534} Bernard B. Fall, \textit{The Two-Vietnams: A Political and Military Analysis} (New York: Praeger, 1963), 91.
and “one of communism’s saints.” Nonetheless, debates concerning Ho Chi Minh’s political ideology persist along with perceptions of “missed opportunities” at Versailles, or during World War II when the Viet Minh cooperated with the OSS against Japan in Indochina. The reason these debates continue and have utility are because Ho Chi Minh was complex, had multi-faceted motivations, and he lived and thought over an exceedingly dynamic trajectory of history. Fall’s contribution to these debates center on the fact that he recognized Ho Chi Minh’s complexity at a time when others, particularly in the west, were more interested in type-casting Viet Minh leaders as mere opposition figures that fit their preconceived mold of vicious dictators.

Fall was well-aware of Ho Chi Minh’s history, and he recognized that the cooperation between the United States and the Viet Minh during the Second World War reflected Ho’s unorthodox approach to politics. For that matter, Fall was also clearly aware of Ho Chi Minh’s experiences in Harlem during the 1920s and his essays on racial prejudice in the United States. The idea that Ho Chi Minh saw America’s civil inconsistencies as a problem may have been unsettling for many Americans, but Ho’s honesty regarding what he saw was a virtue with which Fall could identify. Fall did not agree with Ho Chi Minh’s communist ideology, but he did admire Ho Chi Minh’s candor and willingness to also criticize Viet Minh leadership and policy when necessary. Fall pointed out Ho’s honesty over the disaster of land reform and, in one case, from August 1956 explained how the leader “went on the radio to admit that ‘the leadership of the Party’s Central Committee and of the Government is sometime lacking in concreteness…All this

536 For historical analysis on Ho Chi Minh’s complexity and experiences, see David Marr, Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); Dixee R. Bartholomew-Feis, The O.S.S. and Ho Chi Minh: Unexpected Allies in the War against Japan (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006); Charles Fenn, At the Dragon’s Gate: With the OSS in the Far East (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2004); William J. Duiker, Ho Chi Minh: A Life (New York: Hatchette Books, 2000).
has caused us to commit errors and meet with shortcomings in carrying out land reform.”

Why did Fall point this kind of thing out? The Viet Minh, after all, brutalized their own people and he was undeniably aware that thousands of Vietnamese were executed by the Viet Minh. Moreover, the Viet Minh imprisoned political opponents in labor camps – of which Fall had a unique understanding from his research at Nuremberg. Viable criticism of Fall may be made that he would succumb to the cult of Ho Chi Minh in some respects. However, he was also careful to distinguish Ho Chi Minh’s leadership from that of Stalin and Mao Tse-Tung, who showed little, if any, cognitive dissonance over policy publicly. Fall realized that skeptics viewed Ho Chi Minh’s public persona as a “24-hour act” but Fall would counter those arguments at length and in discussion with journalists and other academics.

The key point Fall wanted readers to recognize was the conflicted position between Nationalism and Communism through which Ho Chi Minh operated. Fall was able to recognize Ho Chi Minh’s complexity and he wanted his readers to recognize it as well. The undeniable fact, regardless whether Ho was a tyrant in the mold of Mao or Stalin, was that Ho Chi Minh was perceived among the Vietnamese, in Fall’s view, as the George Washington of his country. Fall’s contribution to better understanding Ho Chi Minh was clarifying Ho’s preeminence among Vietnamese to American readers who were commonly given a Manichean, if not entirely pejorative view of Ho’s leadership, let alone that of the Viet Minh. Fall complicated the picture of communism in Vietnam for Americans to reflect Vietnamese communism’s complexity, especially as expressed in the views of Ho Chi Minh and others. Pointing out the fact that Ho Chi

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539 Fall addressed this directly in an interview with Walter Cronkite in 1965. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V76LDCW86f0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V76LDCW86f0)
Minh encountered dilemmas in the way Vietnamese communism unfolded in Vietnam, and that Ho Chi Minh criticized the way the Viet Minh treated other Vietnamese was difficult to explain to readers. “Dictators” American readers might have known of in the mid-1950s, were not typically known for nuance or being critical of their own governments’ actions. Fall, it is almost certain, wanted readers to understand that Vietnamese independence was truly Ho Chi Minh’s goal. But he wanted them to know that the means to achieve that goal were deeply conflicted after the global Cold War muddled the dynamics of anti-colonialism and communism among Vietnamese hard-liners.

Ho Chi Minh’s ideological position was complicated and Fall wanted that to be known, whereas it was almost undeniably preferable for western politicians to portray Ho Chi Minh more simply as red through and through. Fall was not the only one pointing out the complexity of Ho Chi Minh’s position. Historian David Marr explained, “By his own admission, Ho Chi Minh was attracted to the Communist Third International in 1920 not by ideas such as the historical dialectic, surplus value, or modes of production, but by Lenin’s attack on imperialist oppression and support for revolutionary movements of national liberation. Both then and thereafter, the first question Ho Chi Minh would address to foreign comrades was, ‘If you do not condemn colonialism, if you do not side with the colonial people, what kind of revolution are you waging?’”

Fall knew of Ho’s sentiment, moreover, because of his familiarity with “Ho’s most important work, French Colonialism on Trial, originally written in French, [which] is in reality a series of highly emotional pamphlets denouncing the various abuses of the French colonial system.” The reality is that Fall was an anti-communist, but he was also an anti-colonialist as well so sympathized with Ho

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Chi Minh. Not only did he see Ho Chi Minh’s point on revolution, he wanted for others to learn of it as well. In this, he most likely failed at the time. Overcoming a general cold war mentality was perhaps too much to accomplish in broad swaths of the American reading public. An “us vs. them” mindset, after all, was predicated on brushing nuances away and relied upon formulaically lumping Ho Chi Minh’s anti-colonialism and communism together into a common categorical dustbin clearly labeled “red enemy.” If Fall’s goal was contextualizing the larger reality of Ho Chi Minh, it would be a goal that would have to wait for other historians to explain more fully after cold war demagoguery receded into the past.

Nonetheless, Fall’s writing on Ho Chi Minh’s history, politics, and character provide copious evidence of Ho’s sophistication. Even if Fall attempted to explain this to U.S. policy-makers, Fall was learning, they would not, or politically or intellectually could not, account for the political gradations found in leaders like Ho Chi Minh. Fall would also learn that other Vietnamese leaders in Ho Chi Minh’s own Lao Dong party did not necessarily appreciate the nuances in Ho’s thought. Le Duan, for one, was not the kind of leader who would openly criticize the Democratic Republic of Vietnam’s policies on North Vietnamese radio. For most political leaders, communist and democratic, it was far easier to paint any debate in black and white terms. After all, subtlety and complexity were the enemy of clarity on which entrenched political decision-making depended. Fall fought against this in a losing battle. In some ways, Fall would learn, Ho Chi Minh would too as hardliners, such as Le Duan and Le Duc Tho sought to replace him eventually. The real and bigger problem Fall was encountering was this: how could he explain these types of things to American audiences raised to fear “the Red Menace” across generations? He was working across the grain in more than several ways.
Fall personally knew of additional problems with colonialism and France’s operations in Indochina. The French military’s frustrations with its government caused significant civil-military friction and this was a troubling development. French soldiers felt scorn for the numerous governments rotating through the latter stages of the Fourth Republic, and lamented the lack of public support in continental France for what the French public regarded as *la guerre sale* (the dirty war). According to historian Douglas Porch, in the eyes of “soldiers abroad [in France’s colonies], France was a political and spiritual invalid, deprived of unity by self-inflicted divisions that undermined national defense.”

Frustrations these soldiers encountered in Indochina, and their fear of losing France to communism and anger with political leadership, would drive a movement of officer-theorists to develop doctrines of warfare called *la guerre révolutionnaire* (revolutionary warfare). These doctrines, which varied in details among different authors, were constructed to prevent further loss of French territory in other colonies after French defeat in Indochina. Their work would soon critically shape the way Fall understood and wrote about the Viet Minh in Indochina.

**II - The Democratic Republic of Vietnam**

After the First Indochina War, the Viet Minh and the DRV underwent significant transformation. “This reorganization – mostly dealing in personalities and designed to make use of the Communist leaders who had been evacuated from the southern guerrilla pockets to North

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Vietnam – took place in the fall of 1954.”543 These moves consolidated communist control after the bitter war with France and the Associated State of Vietnam. The DRV’s ability to endure, as political scientist Paul Staniland observed, had been achieved by leaders “forged by decades of shared experiences, stabilized central institutionalization and made possible [by] the increasing mobilization of local society.”544 Numerous factors, thus, contributed to the staying power of the Viet Minh and their government. Among these, land reform was critical because it mobilized Vietnamese supporters to the Viet Minh cause, but it also antagonized many Vietnamese. The phenomenon of land reform was a serious and important indicator to Fall that the Viet Minh cause was far more than an insurgency seeking changes in governmental administration, such as new leadership in the French-supported government or mere changes in French policy toward Indochina and Vietnam. Compromises sought through the March Accords, or at conferences at Dalat and Fontainebleu, were things of the past and change meant far more than eradicating French control. Fall viewed land reform as a collective effort of such magnitude that it more closely resembled revolution than past uprisings in Vietnam or insurgencies against French authority found in other countries such as Madagascar during the Malagasy Uprising in 1947 and 1948. Land reform reach across Vietnamese society comprehensively because, Fall observed, “the institution of agrarian reform, particularly in a nation where 90 per cent of the population lives by agriculture, is bound to have deep repercussions upon the development of the country at large.”545 Yet at the same time, the implementation of land reform by often fanatical cadres revealed serious problems.

The DRV mobilized Vietnamese under its control through land reform, but Chinese ideological influence and supplies, advisors, diplomatic support, and the development of the Vietnamese People’s Army (PAVN) also contributed to mass mobilization in an interdependent manner. Land reform in 1953 was critical to this because, “in a peasant country the most effective way to mobilize the population for social change was land reform,” and mobilizing Vietnamese peasants relieved the “organizational and economic burden on the [Lao Dong] party.”

Land reform also strengthened the DRV and Lao Dong Party through connections with the Chinese Communist Party. Negatively, numerous cases of repression ensued as a result of class struggle and fanaticism targeting non- or anti-Viet Minh, regardless of landowning status. The “DRV’s ‘Mass Mobilization Movement’s’ problems occurred because it was ‘an almost exact copy of similar measures undertaken in Communist China during 1950 to 1952.’” 

Fall observed that the DRV could not directly transplant Chinese policy to Vietnam, at least not yet successfully, and that the DRV had to adjust its implementation of land reform as a result of inaccurate targeting of “kulaks who were feudal landowners, and through expropriation and extermination” of other Vietnamese. To change course, the Lao Dong party issued a “new directive on Mass Mobilization and its New Relations with the Rich Farmers,” over DRV controlled radio networks on September 22, 1953.

Fall was angered by the cruelty, social discord, and refugee problems created by land reform before these directives were implemented. Social unrest crested to the point that, while the entire National Assembly of the DRV had not convened for six years, it assembled specifically to

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548 Ibid., 132. For Fall’s comments on 1953 Land Reform more broadly, see pages 125-135.
pass decrees on agrarian reform on September 22. Mass mobilization mandates issued earlier on April 12, 1953, created to destroy the landowning class of ‘feudal’ landlords, eventually redistributed over 500,000 acres of land by 1956 and 1957 when one-year economic plans created “economic, administrative bases for the later longer-range plans” in the late 1950s.\textsuperscript{549} Amid the bureaucratic and sometime confusing changes, Fall excoriated the Viet Minh for creating special “People’s Agricultural Reform Tribunals” that “delivered verifiable quotas of landlords and rich peasants even in areas where the difference between the largest and the smallest village plots were a quarter-acre.”\textsuperscript{550} Fall estimated that possibly 50,000 individuals were executed in connection with land reform and “that at least twice as many were arrested and sent to forced labor camps.”\textsuperscript{551} These included not only thousands of landlords and other Viet Minh enemies, but included “individuals who in many cases had loyally served in the war against France or had even been members of the Lao-Dong.”\textsuperscript{552} Vietnamese anger against the Viet Minh over land reform reached such severity that rebellion broke out in Nghe An, Ho Chi Minh’s home province.

The ensuing repression against Vietnamese farmers there was draconian and, as Fall observed, “Hanoi responded in exactly the same way as the colonial power had, sending the whole 325\textsuperscript{th} Division to crush the rebels. It did so with typical VPA thoroughness; allegedly, close to 6,000 farmers were deported or executed.”\textsuperscript{553} Fall was additionally appalled that “no U.N. member – neither of the always touchy Bandung bloc so concerned about the fate of its brothers in colonial shackles, nor of the habitually anti-Communist nations - mustered sufficient courage…

\textsuperscript{549} Bernard B. Fall, \textit{The Two-Vietnams: A Political and Military Analysis} (New York: Praeger, 1963), 154.
\textsuperscript{550} Ibid., 155-156.
\textsuperscript{551} Ibid., 155.
\textsuperscript{552} Ibid., 156.
\textsuperscript{553} Ibid., 157.
to present the Nghe An case to the conscience of the world.” This case revealed a hypocrisy, in Fall’s view, that U.N. and Bandung members criticized other polities only when it was in their political interest, not because criticizing repression was the right thing to do. If their moral authority was to remain valid, it would have to be consistent. His calling attention to the insincerity of “Third-World” members for their non-condemnatory stance over Vietnamese farmers’ plight in Nghe An was not a socially conservative contrarian act opposed to economic or racial equality between the global south and the growing superpowers. Rather, Fall was critical of any leader who averted their gaze from Viet Minh aggression against other Vietnamese. Fall’s reference to Bandung members’ apathy demonstrated his enmity towards authoritarianism – of any kind – as well as his unwillingness to turn away from what he perceived as injustice, no matter who perpetuated it.

Fall despised the authoritarianism on display in these land reform efforts, especially since the Viet Minh sought to portray themselves as victims of colonial abuse. Fall condemned this fanatical hypocrisy, writing “the indiscriminate lumping together of practically all land-owning groups down to the middle-class farmers into the category of ‘exploiters’ brought about a dangerous condition in which the regime risked alienating more farmers than it could afford to in time of war, for the poor farmer who knew that he was about to obtain a better piece of farm land, or conversely, the landowner who knew that he was about to lose all of his, hardly did any field work but rather waited for events to develop.” As a result of war and land reform, Fall wrote, “the state of insecurity prevailing in the open country created a movement of large numbers of

554 Ibid., 157. Amry Vandenbosch and Richard Butwell also cited problems these revolts created. See Amry Vandenbosch and Richard A. Butwell, Southeast Asia Among the World Powers (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1957), 135.

homeless refugees towards the urban areas,” and even before 1954 Saigon and Hanoi’s populations increased “five-to-eight-fold in comparison to pre-World War II figures.” These were details Fall knew well because he had been in Vietnam through much of 1953 when refugee flows began. In his study, *The Viet-Minh Regime*, he recounted the administration of land-reform chronologically and described every DRV policy article that made up the “Agrarian Policy of April 20, 1953,” and later published by the Viet Minh on May 20, 1953. In a similar manner, Fall analyzed Viet Minh land reform policies in late November and December 1953, but with broader contextual analysis describing how “land reform patterns of the Asian People’s Republics of North Korea, China, and Viet-Nam” differed from “Soviet practices in the matter.”

Ho Chi Minh recognized the trauma land reform caused in Vietnamese society and on August 17, 1956, he renounced Viet Minh mistakes in the “Rectification of Errors Campaign.” After Ho Chi Minh’s highly public act of contrition, however, the DRV resumed final phases of agricultural land reform that indicated a less than forgiving Chinese influence concerning the peasantry. The Viet Minh’s problem, Fall observed, was its over-direct adoption of Chinese practices, noting “Great emphasis was placed upon Mao Tse-Tung’s report on farm collectivization in Red China [in October 1955], and the Lao-Dong’s party newspaper of November 3, 1955, after lauding the achievements of Red China in the field of collectivization, asked its readers ‘to buy this document at the People’s Bookstores.’” Despite the victimization of the Vietnamese peasantry in 1953, Fall wrote, by late 1955 “the situation was considered

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558 Ibid., 126.
propitious for the beginning of the final liquidation phase of large agricultural ownership and for the start of collectivization.”

Fall may have been disgusted by the harsh measures undertaken in executing land reform but the resumption of efforts in late 1955, an adjusted continuation of the DRV’s agricultural policies from 1953, proved that the DRV would not be deterred from creating an authoritarian state. Fall saw this clearly, writing “the Agrarian Reform Committee in Hanoi launched an appeal to the peasants themselves, that ‘the Committee is resolutely proposing to abolish the regime of appropriation of lands and rice fields by the landowner class. The peasant comrade of the laboring class must favorably respond to the agrarian reform policy of the Party and Government.’”

The DRV and Lao Dong Party devoted considerable, perhaps even excessive attention to land reform. Not only was agricultural land important for its own virtues producing rice, but because so much of the population was rural. Moreover, land reform initiated a critical series of stages towards social revolution against previous colonial land-holding practices. It was social-engineering of a kind that transcended politics, but Fall recognized that reform was one thing, land collectivization was another far more difficult challenge to overcome. The “crux of the problem,” Fall observed, “lies in the apportionment of available land.”

“Retrospectively, it might be said that one of France’s most serious errors of policy was to let the communal lands fall prey to speculators and to dishonest village chiefs despite the warning of experts of the importance of the maintenance or even increase of communal holdings.” This was especially true in South Vietnam, where France’s colony, Cochinchina, had remained under greater French control than its protectorates of Annam and Tonkin farther north. France’s significant economic interests in the

561 Ibid., 133.
562 Ibid., 133.
563 Ibid., 118.
564 Ibid., 118.
south, reflected in its more aggressive security posture protecting commodity production, especially rubber, partly explains why Viet Minh efforts were weaker there, overall, when compared to the Viet Minh’s greater political reach in rural areas of central and northern areas.\textsuperscript{565}

French failure to protect communal land, wherever it existed, was a critical lesson for Fall. Dismissal of advice that advocated greater cultural and historical attention to Vietnamese communal-agricultural life, Fall clearly recognized, had strategic significance in the case of gaining or losing Vietnamese allegiance. Agricultural fields were undeniably the central contested ground on which political legitimacy among Vietnamese mattered the most. That Fall pointed this lesson out in \textit{The Viet-Minh Regime} indicated his awareness that long-held socio-cultural practices among Vietnamese were critical in understanding the nature of political and military conflict in the region, and Fall appeared to recognize this importance intuitively. Although Fall did not grow up in a rural environment, he displayed an empathy with rural people’s concerns. Moreover, he demonstrated how French authorities ignored the issue of land to their detriment, and this had strategic effects because large numbers of Vietnamese would look to the Viet Minh to protect what the French allowed to be spoiled through speculation and theft. Fall knew, however, that the DRV also failed in its handling of land reform in serious ways. The problem of land allocation complicated Viet Minh legitimacy too because the Viet Minh’s fanatical efforts to eliminate non-land holding and innocent Vietnamese had antagonized large numbers of the civilian population.

Distributing land equitably was an arduous task. Even after new distribution-related decrees, recreating the type of communally-shared land before World War II was perhaps

\textsuperscript{565} The diversity of South Vietnam’s society and the Viet Minh’s conflicts with the Hoa Hao contributed to this further. See especially, Bernard B. Fall, “The Political-Religious Sects of Viet-Nam.” \textit{Pacific Affairs} 28, No. 3, September 1955.
impossible. Additionally, tying long-held Vietnamese historical farming and social practices together with the Lao Dong’s Marxist orientation was incongruous: reclaiming collective ownership of tillable land with the ideological baggage of economic theory conceived for industrialized Europe, Fall argued, had massive downsides.\textsuperscript{566} Communalization of land, in the sense that the Lao Dong conducted it 1953, was a process of modernization that failed to produce political, social, or economic stability. But, an exception existed, and this centered on the reduction of rent. Fall wrote that “reduction of high and excessive land rents and other usurious practices were [eventually] realized by the Republican government [DRV].”\textsuperscript{567} This was a best-case scenario for the DRV after it recognized its land reform problems in 1953. Fall seemed bent on providing an even-handed evaluation of what he saw the DRV getting right, at least according to principles of Marxist ideology as he knew them. However, Fall saw more problems than commendable socialist glories. Surprisingly, Fall did not explicitly raise the question of whether land reform was pursued by the DRV to mobilize Vietnamese society for personnel needed to support conventional military operations against French Union forces, or if it instead was implemented to solicit greater popular support among Vietnamese farmers, at least initially before fanatical low-level Can Bo (cadres) undermined this possibility. A tentative answer is that the goals of land reform was an unequal mix of both.

Fall noted that the effectiveness of land reform depended on where it was implemented. Fall viewed land reform as “improving the status of small farmers in the Republican zone” (the DRV held-zone) whereas, in Nationalist-held zones, along with those held by other Viet Minh competitors, “DRV enthusiasm for land reform was created more for its propaganda effects.”\textsuperscript{568}

\textsuperscript{567} Ibid., 118.
\textsuperscript{568} Ibid., 118.
The amount of communally-owned arable land also differed significantly region to region in Vietnam during the 1930s, an interval Fall used as a baseline because of its pre-World War II, pre-Cold War, and pre-divided status between the two competing Vietnamese governments. Communal lands in the north represented about “20 per cent of the total arable area of North Vietnam; 25 per cent in Central Vietnam; and but 3 per cent in South Vietnam.”

Percentage of tilled land by owners in North, Central, and South Vietnam were also significant to consider in this overall context because, in the 1930’s, “owner-tilled land in the north was 98.7% in the north, 90% in central, but only 64.5% of owners tilled-land in the south.”

Fall did not make these numbers up or cite an unreliable source. Instead, these were the kinds of facts culled from the U.S. Department of Agriculture which he integrated with evidence from Vietnamese sources and personal field study.

Predatory speculation and fraud were problems wherever they occurred, but especially in areas where less land was available to farmers. Fall believed it was a problem in the South because smaller amounts of arable land and relatively smaller percentages of tilled land were available when compared to central and north Vietnam. Cases of theft and agricultural malpractice certainly occurred in the north and in central Vietnam but with more arable owner-tilled land, social disruption caused by land-based depredation during France’s control could be somewhat mitigated when compared to predation in the South. In addition to larger amounts of tillable land, greater Viet Minh presence and control in the rural north also enabled increased targeting of land speculators or those defrauding others. This created a Robin-Hood-like reputation for the Viet Minh among Vietnamese farmers, at least until Viet Minh land reform excesses drove Vietnamese farmers...

570 Ibid., 118.
571 Ibid., 118.
farmers against them, as was the case in revolts based in Nghe An province later in 1956.\footnote{Ibid., 121.} The only difference between Robin Hood and the DRV, as Fall pointed out, was that Robin Hood robbed from the rich to give to the poor whereas the “DRV robbed from the rich to make outright gifts of their estates to the State.”\footnote{Ibid., 121.}

Land reform was complex and of such importance to Fall that he devoted two chapters of the \textit{Viet-Minh Regime} to the subject.\footnote{“Part Six: Agrarian Reforms” included Fall’s account of land-related debate in Indochina since the 1920s and his article by article analysis of different DRV land reform edicts and decrees is found between pages 118-138. Also, see “Part Seven: Labor Organization and Legislation,” pages 139-151. Fall provides detail analysis of the Viet-Nam Tong Lien Doan Lao Dong (TLD). Fall writes, “This organization was modeled on the French, Communist-dominated General Confederation of Labor (CGT) and oversaw four major labor federations: The Armaments Workers Union; the Postal Workers Union; the Teachers Union; and that of the ‘Medical Workers.’” See pages 139-140.} He utilized Presidential decrees, Viet Minh newspapers, \textit{Nhan Dan} and \textit{Cu’u Quoc}, and the “Manifesto and Platform of the Vietnam Lao Dong Party” as primary sources for his descriptions and analysis of land reform, as well as State of Vietnam and French documents that recorded reactions to Viet Minh efforts. For these reasons, Fall viewed this movement as a turning point in the DRV’s modernization of Vietnam and as a key factor in the Viet Minh revolution, at least as he saw it in 1953-1956 when his book, \textit{The Viet-Minh Regime} was in production through two editions. However, land reform also instigated a fanaticism and malicious authoritarianism that Fall condemned. Fall analyzed land reform edicts meticulously, and he completed the most detailed analytical account of DRV land reform in English at the time, exceeded in detail only much later.\footnote{For another analysis of land reform, see Edwin E. Moise, \textit{Land Reform in China and North Vietnam: Consolidating the Revolution at the Village Level} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).} The attention Fall gave to land reform demonstrated how seriously he took political, economic, and social affairs in Indochina and his commitment to these issues helped him refine how he understood and analyzed war. The extent of analysis Fall gave to the subject of land, as a socially and politically critical resource, also exceeded the attention he
gave to military developments in the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN). His priorities concentrating upon social matters, over martial ones, therefore exemplified how he viewed political-social dynamics as of far greater importance in the type of modern warfare in development in Indochina. This was a development in his thought and he was beginning to view warfare more holistically than he did before coming to Indochina in 1953.

III - The Associated State of Vietnam

In The Viet-Minh Regime and in articles published in 1954 and 1955, Fall devoted research and analysis to subjects ranging from land reform, the DRV’s formation, and history in Indochina during World War II to the implications of communist influence in France and in Indochina. In addition to these subjects, Fall also gathered research on the primary administrative competition for the DRV, the State of Vietnam (SVN), led by Bao Dai. In “Representative Government in the State of Vietnam,” published in August 1954, Fall recounted how the State of Vietnam remained in disarray, at least electorally, since its formation in 1949. It established a “Provisional National Council” on July 8, 1952 but this represented “a rather regressive step on the path towards national representative government in Vietnam.”576 Fall came to this conclusion in light of strict limitations over national budgetary controls within the council by French administrators, despite outward appearances of French support for expanding Vietnamese executive power and financial decision-making.577 Fall concluded that Bao Dai’s failed leadership and that the Vietnamese Government

led by Prime Minister Buu Loc could not overcome these problems. French support for a genuine Vietnamese administration with actual power, required to control government through decision-making and to form policy, was just not forthcoming. Moreover, since at least 1949 in Fall’s view, obstructing Vietnamese self-determination was self-defeating for France. This was consequential to not only the future of the State of Vietnam, but also for other countries with a stake in the State of Vietnam’s future. Fall described this in 1954, writing:

“IT REMAINS TO BE DEMONSTRATED WHETHER A TIMELY ESTABLISHMENT OF EVEN A LIMITED AMOUNT OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, PARTICULARLY AT NATIONAL LEVEL, WOULD NOT HAVE HELPED GREATLY TO GIVE THE BAO DAI REGIME SOME STRONGER BASIS OF POPULARITY IN THE COUNTRY. AS THE SITUATION STANDS AT THE PRESENT MOMENT [IN AUGUST 1954], NEITHER LARGE-SCALE AMERICAN ECONOMIC AID NOR FRENCH MILITARY EFFORTS HAVE SUCCEEDED IN DOING THIS.”

Fall believed that genuine enfranchisement towards self-determination at the State of Vietnam’s founding in 1949 might have provided legitimacy. Military support, which French authorities opted to prioritize, would not provide this, only authentic Vietnamese leadership could. Fall suggested, in other words, that had France enabled and supported self-determination, the French-supported State of Vietnam might have potentially garnered enough popular Vietnamese support to compete more resolutely against the communist administration of the DRV. As it appeared to Fall in August 1954, this was a missed opportunity that could not be regained, even with “large-scale American economic aid,” or presumably military assistance. External assistance, in fact, would camouflage problems of perceived and real illegitimacy among recipients without popular support among Vietnamese. Fall suggested that future military and financial assistance, without legitimacy of governance in the eyes of a majority of the Vietnamese people, would not only be too late, but it would also be detrimental because it would fail to address the central

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578 Ibid., 125.
problem of achieving a “stronger basis of popularity in the country.” Fall believed that the chance to achieve this only really existed when the State of Vietnam was formed, but “the State of Vietnam hesitated for more than five years before even the beginnings of local democratic government were implemented.”

Once this opportunity passed, Fall believed, it was difficult to conceive how increased military or financial assistance could resuscitate Vietnamese self-determination. It was like a broken social contract or personal breach of trust that could not be reconstructed. Moreover, even if a social trust had been accomplished at its founding, the State of Vietnam would still face a considerable opponent in the DRV. French obstructions preventing self-determination, as Fall knew by 1955, drove former Prime Minister, Nguyen Van Tam, to abandon the SVN and to emigrate to the United States that year. Tam, in many respects, embodied many complicated and conflicting views since he was a French citizen, but one who was deeply antagonized by French policy. Tam’s criticisms of the Associated State of Vietnam were even more striking because of his background. Moreover, his deep hatred for the Viet Minh did not change the fact that he was such a serious advocate for Vietnamese independence. The problem of obstruction of authentic Vietnamese agency was not only a problem in Tam’s view, it was the central issue that Fall’s teacher, Amry Vandenbosch and others in the US State Department’s “Subcommittee for Territorial Problems” had anticipated after World War II when Franklin Roosevelt sought to limit France’s return to Indochina. Fall consolidated understanding of these developments first-hand because he had met Prime Minister Buu Loc’s predecessor, Nguyen Van Tam in August 1953 and, additionally, Fall was familiar with Vandenbosch’s diplomatic efforts to establish a trusteeship for

Indochina. Fall did not know what the future held, but he did understand why self-determination was important to achievement of a truly representative government.

French interference with its Associated State of Vietnam’s capacity to govern was among France’s most significant problems, and enabling authentic self-determination when it was possible was the crux of the matter. Fall knew that France and its Vietnamese government had military arms and financial assistance for operations against the Viet Minh that far exceeded material resources under Viet Minh control, at least until 1950 when the Viet Minh benefited from increased Chinese aid. The DRV also had its own problems, as Fall knew. It was challenged by anti-communist Vietnamese and by war with France, but it had succeeded in gaining administrative control over much of rural North Vietnam. Fall recognized that its communist orientation did not provide democratic representation, but it was authentically Vietnamese-led and, between 1945 and 1950, unfettered by its association with Chinese communism that became more pronounced, particularly as it related to land-reform in 1953. Moreover, in the months following his people’s success in 1950, Mao Tse-Tung was more concerned with eliminating remnant Chinese Nationalists than with attempting to dictate policy to the Viet Minh. According to historian Qiang Zhai, Viet Minh victories in 1950-51 in northern Vietnam, however, were consequential because they would “strengthen China’s border and consolidate the position of the PRC” and for this, Chinese communists viewed the DRV as an important and geographically important ally. In turn, the PRC became the first country to recognize the DRV on January 18, 1950 but it would not be until a June 27, 1950 meeting that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)

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and Chinese Military Advisory Group (CMAG) decided to lend Chinese support to the DRV in accordance with Mao’s Chinese communist “internationalism.”

In the opposition to the communist union between the DRV and PRC, French authorities actively developed a Vietnamese state to compete with the Viet Minh. The proclamation of the State of Vietnam on June 13, 1949 took place during an interval in which it might have emerged as an authentic Vietnamese state had this been the genuine goal of France. As it was, according to US President Eisenhower, France would not accord “independence and the right of self-determination upon the Associated States” until “military victory could be attained” against the Viet Minh. This was a central problem Fall identified: France sought military solutions to create conditions for the legitimacy of governance. This was backwards, in Fall’s view, since political legitimacy was an *a priori* necessity for military progress. Military victories could not change this, short of complete annihilation of the Vietnamese people opposing France and continued reliance on military effort would only lead to persistent conflict that would still fail to achieve a politically legitimate state. Nonetheless, the State of Vietnam did attempt to create a national assembly and representative government but national elections did not take place for over four years. The first national elections were not held until January 25, 1953, and provincial elections were not held until October 25, 1953. It was no wonder, in Fall’s eyes, that the State of Vietnam was evanescent to Vietnamese. Additionally, Fall was incredulous that French authorities believed that military victories could fill a void created by the lack of voting over a span of four years since

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the SVN’s founding in 1949. On top of these overall problems and other French obstructions, Fall identified two other major factors that contributed to electoral ineptitude and political lethargy preventing a representative government from forming. First, three general groups of anti-French Vietnamese factions could not agree among themselves on a way forward. Second, the Viet Minh mounted efforts to defeat electoral processes wherever possible.

Fall concluded that three main groups of Vietnamese in the SVN contributed to preventing the formation of a representative government: “(1) the Government and the hordes of Government jobholders and their families: (2) the largely neutralist bourgeoisie who wished to express their disapproval of the existing state of affairs; and (3) the ‘neutralists by fear’ – that large segment of the population which did not vote for fear of reprisals by the Viet-Minh.”

Fall added, “The press was almost totally indifferent, with the exception of a newspaper, Gian-sang in Hanoi, which backed ‘an ebullient French-trained dentist with American sympathies, Hoang Co Binh,’ [along] with a few other papers in Saigon.” Fall believed that an apathetic press was an accurate indicator of popular mood, especially in an otherwise vibrant print culture. Most telling, it reflected a type of apathy or cynicism generated as a result of failure to create genuine grass-roots legitimacy. Viet Minh targeting of potential Hoang Co Binh supporters and others, moreover, undoubtedly contributed to an aversion toward electoral participation: “Even the candidates were not too eager to have their names on posters or to appear in public, for fear of being branded Viet-gian (traitors) by the Viet-Minh.”

584 Ibid., 123.
585 Ibid., 123.

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There were other problems, too. Fall explained, “when [elections] were finally decided in desperate haste… this gave little time to the weak Vietnamese political parties to rally sufficient following.” He added, “the Government held the elections in the middle of the rice-planting season, when time is a vital commodity and the Vietnamese farmer is less willing than ever to listen to political speeches, no matter how much entertainment they might provide to break the monotony of life in small villages of the Red River Delta.” Fall concluded, “As a village notable told the writer [Fall]: ‘Any government that did not transact its business from a health resort in the mountains should have known that…’”

An important component of the entire matter was the dissembling of French authorities who claimed to support the State of Vietnam but pinned its problems on leaders, such as Bao Dai, ineffective as he certainly was, when French prevention of self-determination served as the underlying cause impeding authentic Vietnamese control.

In early 1954, Fall offered more than criticism of the status quo. He publicly advocated a solution to the First Indochina War in March 1954, writing “Negotiations offer the only solution, and the first step, as [Jawaharal] Nehru has suggested, must be ceasefire…Any solution that accomplishes the effective neutralization of Indo-China would be more desirable than this hopeless stalemate in the jungle swamps.” Fall’s identification of the war as ‘a stalemate’ in March 1954 – before Dien Bien Phu – should have warned, or at least informed, American policy-makers when deciding US policy to support French aim’s in Vietnam. In this type of social-political revolution, war was not simply politics by others means. If political problems stemming from failure to achieve legitimacy in governance were the issue, Fall suggested, then political solutions would be the only effective means of securing a less violent future in Vietnam. Militarization would be a

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588 Ibid., 124. This was a barely veiled swipe at Bao Dai, who often stayed in the mountain resort town of Dalat.
mistake because it would make matters worse and contribute to a cycle of violence that would be difficult to contain, potentially drawing the United States further into Southeast Asia.

Fall’s views on a negotiated settlement and his concern over greater US participation in Indochina were shared by Americans known for independent thinking. In Texas, for example, hundreds of individuals sent letters to US Representatives and Senators urging the same type of view that Fall promoted. In one letter from April 10, Mrs. William R. Chappell of Dallas, Texas wrote Senator Lyndon B. Johnson urging Johnson to negotiate and avoid further US entanglement. "Dear Senator Johnson: France's colonial policy is responsible for the current crisis in Indo-China, and I agree with the position of Senator Kennedy that it would ill behoove the free nations to come to the defense of a backward colonialism. The true enemy is communist imperialism, but the native peoples of Indo-China have evidently felt that the choice between what France offered and what the rebels offered was equally bad." Mrs. William R. Chappell's letter evoked the spirit of hundreds of other letters sent to the Texas Senator opposing United States entry into Indochina in 1954. The ongoing battle at Dien Bien Phu, where French Union Troops endured a siege by Viet Minh troops led by General Vo Nguyen Giap, clearly had the heartland of America's attention. But it had Texans' attention, like Mrs. Chappell, because of the fear that American troops might be deployed to Indochina. This, as much as general consternation with US policy supporting French efforts in Southeast Asia, characterize her letter and others.

Maury Maverick, also of Dallas, seconded Mrs. Chappell's and Bernard Fall’s views, writing to Senator Johnson, "The radio says you have joined [Senate Majority Leader Senator William] Knowland in asking for action against Indo-China with other nations. This is wrong and

590 "Mrs. William R. Chappell to Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, April 10, 1954" Papers of Lyndon B. Johnson, U.S. Senate, 1949-1961, Case and Project Files, Box 1194, LBJP, LBJL.
we should negotiate. There must be some reason to have the Geneva Conference. John Foster Dulles is a thousand times worse than Acheson and he will get all our kids killed off if we just let him." 591 In another letter, Thomas Hudson McKee added "The French exploiters have asked for the revolution of their underlings in that area and it is time (long overdue) for the Republic of France to decree the independence of those people or take a damned good licking from them, which they deserve." Mr. McKee added further clarity: "Our family wants America to keep hands off UNTIL INDEPENDENCE IS GIVEN THESE PEOPLE and Justice is done. I'm a proponent of freedom and independence for exploited people. Are you? This is a case of lousy power politics and it is disgraceful." 592 A letter from Mr. and Mrs. R. G. Nabors of Abernathy, Texas offered a poignant representation of what American mothers and fathers saw at stake and as of the greatest importance to them as parents, "Dear Senator, We are farmers. Not very big farmers. We have a son in Korea. He is about like other boys. Between the cotton patch and Texas Tech he got a degree in chemical engineering. We do not ask favors for him. IF we get mixed up in Indo China We think the chances of him getting back are less. We think the United States might be meddling in Indochina. You do not need to answer this letter. We just thought it might do some good to write you." 593 To his credit, Johnson responded to the Nabors, and to everyone else writing to express concern.

In April 1954, these individuals all called on Senator Lyndon Johnson to reduce and even eliminate the American commitment to support France in Indochina. There was reason for anxiety because, as the looming disaster at Dien Bien Phu became more apparent, the United States

591 "Maury Maverick Letter to Senator Lyndon Johnson, April 7, 1954," Case and Project Files, Box 1194, LBJP, LBJL.
592 "Thomas Hudson McKee Letter to Senator Lyndon Johnson, April 7, 1954," Case and Project Files, Box 1194, LBJP, LBJL.
593 "Mrs. and Mr. R. G. Nabors Letter to Senator Lyndon Johnson, April 7, 1954," Case and Project Files, Box 1194, LBJP, LBJL.
considered deploying even more resources to the conflict. Other factors, especially the recent Korean War, also continued to create alarm because it was barely removed from these other events in the Asia-Pacific region. That war exacted great cost in life for all involved and, while there was a cease fire, the conflict was still unresolved, had drawn China into it, and no peace treaty yet existed. Article IV of the Korea Armistice Agreement, intended to settle the Korean conflict, was scheduled for discussion along with the ongoing war between France and the Viet Minh at the Geneva Conference in April and May 1954. The negotiators at Geneva, thus, had two wars, Korea and Indochina, to resolve so it is not unreasonable that many individuals would see connections between them. Further U.S. involvement in the region faced understandable backlash among American constituents, especially among those who already lost sons and daughters in Korea. Finding a solution for resolving conflict in Indochina, instead of escalating it, was widely shared among Johnson’s constituents in Texas and, most likely, across the United States. The idea that Fall’s analysis, criticism, and suggestions were somehow unusual, or were not widely shared by others, clearly does not stand up in the face of hundreds of letters sent to a single senator from the Lone Star State. Other letters called on Senator Johnson, and certainly others in decision-making positions, to find terms for negotiating a solution in Indochina under the auspices of the United Nations. Bernard Fall, in the first of two articles for The Nation that he published in his career, described the very type of negotiated settlement that might have made his views well-received in any number of Texan homes from El Paso to Corpus Christi.

A negotiated settlement, before Dien Bien Phu progressed further to a decisive point, made a lot of sense to Fall. He added that negotiation was not impractical, writing, “Economic aid to all

of Indo-China, under either United Nations or neutral auspices, might make possible a solution acceptable to both sides. Ho Chi Minh’s interview with the [November 26, 1953 edition of the Swedish journal] *Expressen* made specific references to such aid.\(^{595}\) This was significant because in early 1954, Ho Chi Minh was the most authoritative leader in the DRV. Truong Chinh, a communist hardliner, had been the Lao Dong party secretary but he was removed from his position as a result of disastrous implementation of land reform.\(^{596}\) Ho Chi Minh’s nearest peers in authority, Vo Nguyen Giap and Pham Van Dong, Minister of Defense and Deputy Prime Minister, respectively, were also considered communist hardliners in 1947 but they recognized Ho Chi Minh as the critical DRV leader in 1954.\(^{597}\) Individuals from any camp who might construe Ho’s references to potential aid, not as a condition for possible negotiations but as a propaganda stunt, would be hard pressed to find support for any argument that things turned out better in Indochina by ignoring the diplomatic solution Fall, and others like Nehru, advocated before Dien Bien Phu.

In 1954, therefore, Ho Chi Minh still possessed decision-making power over the DRV’s policy and he had expressed an openness to UN aid before the culminating battle of Dien Bien Phu. However, as historian Lien-Hang T. Nguyen contends, decision-making authority would be slowly ceded to Le Duan in coming years. Nguyen argues that after a September 16, 1960 Politburo statute agreed to at the Third Party Congress of the Politburo, Le Duan ascended to the position of First Secretary with oversite of the DRV secretariat while Ho Chi Minh was reelected

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\(^{597}\) Ibid. On Pham Van Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap’s ‘hardline’ political position, see page 139; On recognition of Ho Chi Minh’s leadership of the DRV, see 352-360.
to chairman of the Central Executive Committee. This mattered because, while the committee chair position was “considered the supreme position of the Party, real power had long resided with the first secretary, who oversaw the daily activities of the top decision-making body of the VWP (Vietnam Workers Party, the Lao Dong), the Politburo. Le Duan would also co-opt the Ministry of Public Security, an important position that affected all DRV citizens and he would prioritize “national democratic revolution’ in the South.” Le Duan had advocated a much harder line than others in the Politburo and would, therefore, direct revolution in South Vietnam to include later support for the formation of the National Liberation Front (NLF) and People’s Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF). Bernard Fall believed that a ceasefire and negotiations were at least a possibility while Ho Chi Minh oversaw DRV decision-making. Once Le Duan gained greater control, granting Nguyen’s convincing argument that Le Duan did indeed drive key decision-making after late 1960, opportunities for negotiation after that point were unrealistic, at least along the lines Bernard Fall suggested in early 1954. As for the future, especially after the Viet Minh victory at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954, Fall wrote in August that year that the outlook for a non-communist administration in Vietnam was even less auspicious.

“The recent replacement of the short-lived Buu Loc regime by a new Vietnamese government under the anti-French, American-backed Catholic leader Ngo Dinh Diem, in the hope that he may be able to inspire wider Vietnamese popular participation cannot be

600 Ibid., 54, 52. The September 15, 1960 congress at which Le Duan stated this, “laid the foundation for the creation of the National Liberation Front.” (52)
601 Fall clearly did not know of these changes in the power structure of the Politburo at the time. This lack of knowledge demonstrates limitation to his analysis in some respects, but such limitations were shared by other western observers, too. This is not surprising since the Politburo’s decision-making were secret. Lien-Hang Nguyen’s account of these bureaucratic changes would have likely been a shock to Bernard Fall who studied the writing and work of Ho Chi Minh in detail and met Ho Chi Minh and Pham Van Dong in July 1962.
considered an adequate solution as long as the basic problem of eventually creating a solid basis for constitutional government has not been solved to the satisfaction of a sizeable section of the Vietnamese population. If the Vietnamese nationalist regime fails in this objective, it is to be feared that even an increased amount of external economic backing may not enable it to survive the comparison with the more efficient Viet Minh regime, with its claims (how-ever misleading) of greater ‘democratic’ support.”602

Fall knew that problems confronting the State of Vietnam and the new Vietnamese government were formidable. Vietnamese factions contributed to the failure of establishing a viable competitor with the DRV because they failed to achieve legitimacy among the Vietnamese people. Ultimately, however, the refusal to provide the State of Vietnam’s administration real authority and sincerely support self-determination at the founding of the State of Vietnam in 1949 was the substantive problem. Had France supported genuine Vietnamese-led self-determination at least one potential half of the solution might have existed. Different Vietnamese factions envisioning an independent Vietnam would have had to provide the other half through an agreement that satisfied at least a majority of non-communist Vietnamese. Addressing these problems later, after years of festering between 1949 and 1953 would be difficult, if not impossible to resolve.

IV - The DRV at the end of the War

Fall’s analysis of the State of Vietnam was extensive, but his study of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was even more detailed. That the Viet Minh and DRV had survived the First Indochina War against France, and that they managed to form a revitalized and reorganized government after the war, were achievements Fall found remarkable. He would devote considerable, and even greater effort to understanding Viet Minh success in the face of France’s militarily superior forces in the coming years. Viet Minh survivability depended, Fall was learning, on the capacity of a socio-political revolution to compensate for the extensive resources of France and the State of Vietnam. It also depended, in large part, on Chinese, North Korean, and Soviet aid that flowed in after recognition of the DRV in 1950.

The DRV’s reorganization on September 20, 1955 was a renewed focus for Bernard Fall in the revised 1956 edition of The Viet-Minh Regime. It was significant because Ho Chi Minh relinquished part of his “prerogatives to Pham Van Dong who became the D.R.V.’s first Prime Minister.” Ho Chi Minh’s authority in the DRV was not necessarily dissipating, but power was increasingly distributed among other important members of the Vietnamese Lao Dong Party. Le Duan, who would become DRV Secretary of the Politburo in 1956, commented that the Lao Dong Party’s leadership, however, was “constantly based on the principle of collective leadership,”

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although leaders such as Pham Van Dong, and especially Le Duan, continued to gain critical powers through the years after the 1955 reorganization.\footnote{Le Duan, \textit{The Vietnamese Revolution: Fundamental Problems and Essential Tasks} (New York: International Publishers, 1971). 139. On changes in leadership, see especially pages 125-129.}

Ho Chi Minh remained central to the DRV as Chairman of the Worker’s Party (Lao Dong) and, along with Pham Van Dong, exemplified long-term commitment to anti-colonialism that enabled the Viet Minh to organize victory against France. Fall also cited other members of the Central Executive Committee Ton Duc Thang, Truong Chinh, Vo Nguyen Giap, and especially Le Duan, and Le Duc Tho as critical leaders of the Worker’s Party.\footnote{Bernard B. Fall, \textit{The Viet-Minh Regime: Government and Administration in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam} (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1956), reprinted by Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1975, 42-43.} Fall assessed the provisional government and the DRV’s constitutional structure, but he also analyzed the Viet Minh judiciary and the organizational structure of the Ministry of the Interior which included its police and security.\footnote{Ibid., 35-36.} Study of such key political-military functions later informed Fall’s understanding of Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare as a holistic, multi-faceted cultural phenomenon. The emphasis he gave to social revolutionary practices, such as land reform in 1953, was becoming increasingly relevant to him as a step toward the type of total war that the Viet Minh had perpetrated against French Union Forces. The subversive qualities of political action before open warfare also figured into his thought even more prominently.

Fall explained, “As in every Communist state, the police network of the DRV was extensive and efficient,” and, “directed centrally by the State Secretariat to the Ministry of the Interior it reached down to the tiniest village and hamlet.”\footnote{Ibid., 35.} In another description, Fall wrote, “The arrival of the young revolutionary elements of the Viet-Minh in the villages had the effect of

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\footnote{Le Duan, \textit{The Vietnamese Revolution: Fundamental Problems and Essential Tasks} (New York: International Publishers, 1971). 139. On changes in leadership, see especially pages 125-129.}


\footnote{Ibid., 35-36.}

\footnote{Ibid., 35.}
the proverbial stone in the village pond,” and added “armed adolescents have replaced the peaceful councils of notables. This is not necessarily an improvement.”  

Fall’s evidence for these developments were collected from the DRV’s official journal, *Viet Nam Dan Quoc Cong Bao*, and from Viet Minh periodicals *Nhan Dan*, and *Cu’u Quoc* among other DRV decrees and regulations he obtained during his trip from May to December 1953.  

Fall, because of his familiarity with internal security organizations during World War II, was aware of their tasks, purpose, capacities, and limitations. He explained that the DRV security apparatus’s roles included “(1) to protect government agencies and property, communication lines, and troop movements; (2) to insure public safety and the property of the population; and (3) to repress any act of a nature likely to be harmful to the interests of the State.”  

The DRV security services were organized into several sections: Political and Protection; Administrative Police, in charge of issuing identification cards, passports, automobile registrations and similar tasks, and an Administrative Section for the everyday activities of running a police headquarters. Fall emphasized internal security units protecting the state, writing “Finally, every village and hamlet had its own ‘Section for the Repression of Traitors’ composed of most of the local party or government officials.”  

The problem of preventing collaboration with occupying forces was an issue Fall recognized as a member of the Maquis during World War II. Internal security, often achieved through elimination of collaborators, was essential to establish, as Fall phrased it from


610 Ibid., 35.

611 Ibid., 35.
his experience of the Second World War, “competitive control over the population.” He described this in detail.

“In order to do this, here and there the Maquis had to kill some of the occupying forces and attack some of the military targets. But above all they had to kill their own people who collaborated with the enemy. But the ‘kill’ aspect, the military aspect, definitely always remained the minor aspect. The political, administrative, ideological aspect is the primary aspect. Everybody, of course, by definition, will seek a military solution to the insurgency problem...the insurgency problem is militarily only in a secondary sense, and politically, ideologically, and administratively in a primary sense.”  

Fall’s friend, François Sully, who barely escaped the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu before it fell, had a similar background as a member of the French Resistance and commented on Fall’s capacity to connect intellectually with warfare in Vietnam. Sully wrote “because of his experience in the French Underground, Fall thought that he was better equipped than anyone else to capture the essence of a guerrilla-resistance movement, and Fall would say, ‘The hardcore guerrilla, the one fully committed does not need hope to keep him going. In Europe, we would have fought to death, even if German Armies had been victorious. People generally do not understand why guerrillas, even those animated by a just cause, sometime resort to terrorism, sabotage, and intimidation. It is a harsh necessity for survival.’”

Fall knew that the Viet Minh were committed to their war against colonialism in a way that had parallels with his experience in World War II. He knew the circumstances of France’s empire in Indochina were entirely different, but the Viet Minh’s commitment to their cause was a quality he recognized. In broader geopolitical terms, Fall believed that Indochina was of minimal

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importance and he had questioned the validity of domino-theory thinking as it applied to Southeast Asia. Nonetheless, he understood that the United States was increasing its commitment to the defeat of communism. As part of the broader Cold War in development, Indochina was only become more important to the United States. Fall, therefore, recognized that his analysis of the different governments in Vietnam, and how the Democratic of Republic of Vietnam functioned, was not only a relevant subject for him to examine, but that it was also a potentially valuable study from which others could better understand the Viet Minh.
Chapter Five – “The Ending is a Beginning”

*The Viet-Minh Regime* had been published in 1954 during a politically-charged era of anti-communism. In this work, his first major publication, Fall analyzed the Viet Minh’s socio-political-military doctrine and its reliance upon Parallel Hierarchies, a form of shadow government administration. Fall argued that the political organization and adaptable nature of the Viet Minh made up for material shortfalls before 1950. After the success of Mao Tse-Tung’s communist forces in China, the Viet Minh were far better positioned to confront French forces leading to conventional battles in late 1952 and early 1954. This chapter argues that Fall’s analysis of Viet Minh internal security units known as Cong An, Trinh Sat, and Dich Van revealed Fall’s ability to identify subversive warfare that he recognized from his own experience as a member of the Maquis during the Second World War. It argues, moreover, that Fall was the only author writing in English about conflict in Indochina who combined field work and formal study with practical knowledge of subversive warfare as a practitioner of it in the Maquis.

Fall applied this aggregate of experience to his analysis of Viet Minh doctrine, internal security, the development of parallel hierarchies, and other factors that sought French defeat. Operation Lorraine, which took place in late 1952 in Northwest Tonkin, is a culminating point in the chapter. This operation was France’s largest military operation to date and was one of France’s most significant colonial defeats before Dien Bien Phu. It marked an important point in Fall’s thought because he saw the interdependence of Viet Minh warfare at work. Viet Minh doctrine, subversion, growing material strength, and the importance of mass mobilization among Vietnamese serving as equipment porters, all worked in concert to undermine French and the State
of Vietnam’s authority. This altogether formed a phenomenon of total war through which the Viet Minh further exploited French aggressive military planning in the Navarre Plan later in late 1953 and early 1954. Fall realized he was researching and writing his analysis in a politically charged environment, but he was well-positioned for the study of modern war in development in Indochina.

I - The Viet Minh Regime

“What we have here is a sort of gouvernement crepusulaire – a twilight government,’ said the French colonel in charge of the Pacification Bureau in Hanoi, ‘In our own area we control the cities and major roads from daybreak till nightfall. Thereafter the Vietminh has the country to itself to levy taxes, attack our posts, and execute the ‘Vietnamese traitors,’ that is, the Nationalists who still profess to believe in victory for our side.”

- Bernard Fall, March 6, 1954

The first edition of The Viet-Minh Regime was sponsored and co-published by Cornell University’s Southeast Asia Program and the Institute of Pacific Relations in 1954. The Institute of Pacific Relations had dominated the study of contemporary Asia through research funding and publication since its founding in 1925 and its coordinating committee, the Pacific Council, served as an umbrella organization composed of a dozen national councils for the study of Asia across

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the Indo-Pacific Region. It was an organization that would come under conservative fire after 1949 because its councils had contributed to perceived liberal policies, especially pertaining to China. *The Viet-Minh Regime* was published, therefore, within a politically contentious era because of the gathering Cold War. Moreover, successful Viet Minh political action against the State of Vietnam and French authority in Indochina increased western agitation that communism was expanding beyond the region.

In the United States, social and political conservatism and a vocal anti-communist lobby grew in the early 1950s with Mao Tse-Tung’s triumph over Chiang Kai Shek’s Kuomintang Government. A central argument of the anti-communist agenda among government officials and like-minded intellectuals, as historian Ben Martin explains, “was to unseat and discredit those who had presided over policy formulation and opinion-making with respect to Asia in the late 1940s.” Anti-communists lambasted officials for pursuing a “liberal” agenda. But they did so rather than prioritizing serious study into the realities of colonialism in countries where communism was prevailing, and why it was succeeding. The Institute of Pacific Relations, in contrast, sought to reveal these problems and, as a result, it served as a proxy for such liberal policy related to Asia. Because of its prominence “as a forum for interaction among liberals” studying such subjects, the Institute became “a natural target for investigation.” The Institute of Pacific Relations operated, therefore, under a political cloud at the time of Fall’s first publication. Anti-communists especially despised a liberal elite whose policies, they believed, led to Chiang Kai-

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shek’s defeat in late 1949. National Security Council policy, NSC-68, creating a dynamically expanding national security state emerged from this political setting in April 1950.618 As it related to Southeast Asia, historian George Herring observed, “the collapse of Chiang Kai-shek’s government in China in 1949 and the southward advance of Mao Tse-Tung’s army raised the ominous possibility of Chinese Communist collaboration with the Viet Minh.”619 This possibility materialized between 1950 and 1954 and culminated at Dien Bien Phu. The defeat of French forces there, despite domestic events in the United States like the subsequent censure of Senator Joe McCarthy, only increased anti-communist rancor and political antagonism among competing U.S. foreign policy circles.620 Strident anti-communism raised questions, moreover, whether or not analysis of communism in Southeast Asia was objective. Overall, it was a perilous political environment in which to investigate communism in Southeast Asia and Fall was almost alone as a young scholar studying the development of the Viet Minh and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam through first-hand research in Indochina during the war.621

When *The Viet-Minh Regime* was published, anti-communist paranoia was not immediately or personally problematic for Fall because his work was not yet well-known. However, knowledge of his work was growing and he would successfully publish in prominent

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establishment journals such as *Foreign Affairs* in 1955. Fall did have some problems in Indochina as he neared completion of research in 1953. Fall wrote to his fiancé, Dorothy Winer that he had not been invited to the U.S. consulate in Hanoi for 4th of July celebrations, an invitation he might have expected given his status as a Fulbright Scholar. Fall had antagonized the “vice consul over lunch by telling how he and many Frenchmen felt about the execution of Julius and Ethyl Rosenberg, the alleged atomic spies, two weeks earlier.” Fall continued, “Better apply for my re-entrance visa to the U.S. from another consulate now, I guess.” But such petty slights did not deter Fall from his intellectual task of understanding subversion and competition among Vietnamese organizations as they struggled for legitimacy and dominance.

These factors, particularly legitimacy, were critical in conflict among Vietnamese groups as they simultaneously struggled with French forces. Fall was interested in political violence and internal competition within Vietnamese society because the groups that succeeded would dominate and chart the future course of Vietnam after the French defeat. Moreover, Fall clearly recognized that the end of French influence in Indochina had important implications in the growing Cold War. To succeed, however, the Viet Minh faced considerable odds, including eliminating competing Vietnamese political factions, militarily prevailing over American-supported French forces, and, most importantly, co-opting or coercing the Vietnamese peasantry to meet logistical, financial and personnel requirements for military service.

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624 Fall referred to this army as the Vietnamese People’s Army (VPA) but, in accordance with modern convention, People’s Army of Vietnam (PAVN) is used throughout to refer to the Viet Minh’s army, except when used in direct quotations by Fall.
In order to wield influence internally among the Vietnamese population and to protect the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the Viet Minh’s intelligence and security infrastructure was critical. As an anti-colonial organization, and in order to avoid infiltration by colonial authorities, the Viet Minh “developed techniques of compartmentalization, secrecy, deception, counterintelligence, internal punishment, and elimination of enemies.” Viet Minh personnel developed these skills with assistance from Chinese communists to form a comprehensive security service. Previously, the DRV’s intelligence and security apparatuses were limited in what they could accomplish without external logistical and advisory support so Fall viewed 1950 as a period of transition for the intelligence-security functions and capability of the Viet Minh. “While it has not been officially verified, mention was made of a lend-lease agreement contracted by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam with People’s China during Ho Chi Minh’s visit to Peking in April 1950.” Material aid consisted of extensive military equipment to support the Viet Minh’s offensives against French posts strung out along the Tonkin-Chinese border in September 1950, but, most importantly Fall stressed, aid from China included refinement of a “successful politico-military doctrine.” DRV doctrine was codified in statutes and decrees, especially those promulgated in Viet Nam Dan Quoc Cong Bao (the DRV’s official journal) and the DRV’s constitution. DRV doctrine directed security and intelligence units’ tasks and defined their

627 Ibid., 87-88.
628 Ibid., for references on which Fall relied pertaining to the judiciary and internal security of the DRV, see pages, 37-38. Relevant Viet Nam Dan Quoc Cong Bao decrees included 59, 60, 63 - 66, 70, 77b, 77c, 85. See also Fall’s comments on the DRV’s Penal code in “The New Code of Justice” pages, 33-35.

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purpose while functioning as a *raison d’etre* for internal security and intelligence units’ creation as protectors of the Viet Minh’s administration.

Viet Minh doctrine was protean since additional decrees were added and old ones modified as required. Adjustments made after land reform problems became evident in 1953 exemplified how Viet Minh doctrine could change as needed. Viet Minh doctrine also served as a basis for interdependence among social-political-military factors in the unique circumstances of the Viet Minh’s war against the French and Vietnamese competitors. Quoting a statement by Lao Dong Secretary General, Truong Chinh, Fall cited the October 1951 Congress of the Workers’ Party’s revised doctrine as consisting of several parts: “intensifying struggle behind enemy lines; ideological reformation of the party; ideological and technical reformation of the army; and readjusting the work of mass organizations.” Material aid critically assisted the Viet Minh as well. Fall recognized, however, that increased advisory efforts improving Viet Minh capabilities depended on baseline organizations in the Viet Minh that preceded Chinese assistance. Chinese technical advice, military equipment and financial support therefore sustained already existing Viet Minh organizational autonomy, but the Viet Minh forged further refinements of Maoist-inspired social-politico-military doctrine according to relevant goals in their war with France between 1946 and 1954.

Fall would soon identify the result of these developments as Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare, consisting of socio-political factors stemming from anti-colonial agitation filtered

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630 Ibid., 88.
through communist-oriented organizational and ideological doctrine. The period between the DRV’s formation in 1945 and Chinese assistance beginning in 1950, was critical because these years revealed not only how the Viet Minh and the DRV survived administratively in the face of Vietnamese competitors and French expeditionary forces, but also demonstrated how the Viet Minh adapted Maoist ideas to suit their purposes to achieve a movement for independence that was distinct and free from Chinese oversight, let alone control. Fall’s former experiences in the Maquis and French army, skills developed at Nuremberg as a research analyst, and his academic training with Amry Vadenbosch augmented his interest in Vietnam, enabling him to perceive these Viet Minh processes at work and he would develop increasingly sophisticated analyses of modern warfare as it progressed in Indochina.

Parallel Hierarchies were foremost in Fall’s mind as a key function in the Viet Minh’s way of war. Fall learned of this term from French officers, particularly Charles Lacheroy and Roger Trinquier who Fall met in 1953.631 These officers, including Jean Hogard, Jean Nemo, and others, formed an intellectual collective based in shared experiences of war with the Viet Minh in South East Asia as the First Indochina War drew to a close and as they reflected on French defeat. Lacheroy, in particular, was foremost among French officers “whose experiences in Indochina led them to seek new ways of countering anticolonial insurrections” after Indochina.632 Among their most central actions were describing Parallel Hierarchies amid the complex organizational structures of the DRV, its security apparatus, and the alternative administrative networks they

supported. Identifying this phenomenon was similar to determining a thicket of trees in a forest that, with a great deal of observation and knowledge, appeared to contribute to that forest the most. Parallel hierarchies were Viet Minh-led social administrative apparatuses used to form a shadow government and used to subvert and replace a competing government’s control over society. Fall explained that the establishment of them often took two forms: “the utilization of existing administrative structures through the infiltration of subversive individuals, or the creation of altogether new clandestine structures designed to take over full administrative responsibilities when political and military conditions are ripe.”

Fall added, “This was thoroughly studied by the French Army and reported on in 1957.” Parallel Hierarchies were important features of Viet Minh warfare and Fall recognized them as a phenomena from his experience in the Maquis during the Second World War, but meeting Lacheroy and Trinquier helped him find a shared vernacular to describe the Viet Minh’s actions in Indochina. Fall explained the nature of parallel hierarchies further, writing “Starting in World War II, both systems [of parallel hierarchies] have been used extensively, sometimes simultaneously with, but more often subsequent to, the infiltration of subversive individuals preceding the creation of an independent apparatus.”

Parallel Hierarchies were identifiable to Fall, a point he made explicit, because he recognized them as tools of the French Resistance in Nazi-occupied France.

Parallel Hierarchies were crucial because the Viet Minh developed and began to make effective use of them before they began receiving external aid. The role of psychological operations and direct-action units that employed terrorism and propaganda to control perception and actions of Vietnamese villagers were notable features in this framework, and were necessary

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634 Ibid., 134.
635 Ibid., 134.
to eliminate dissent and ensure compliance with communist party rule. According to political scientist, Paul Staniland “organizational dynamics remained crucial: the Indochinese Communist Party needed to elbow aside competitors, bargain with and co-opt powerful local actors, and figure out how to govern under fire.” In the broader geopolitical picture developing at the time, “when and how these communist insurgents could pose sustained, organized challenges to governments helps us understand the broader political evolution of Southeast Asia during the tumultuous Cold War.”

Fall was increasingly aware of Viet Minh internal security, intelligence and reconnaissance units’ political action on the ground and how these organizations contributed to development of parallel hierarchies. The effects of their actions became more pronounced as the Viet Minh gained greater local-level support, eliminated Vietnamese competitors and subverted French authority. These units were not the only tools used, but internal security units’ actions served to gain competitive control over Vietnamese society, and the development of competing administrative structures, parallel hierarchies, facilitated this process. Parallel hierarchies, in other words, formed a shadow government which physically paralleled French and the State of Vietnam’s administrative control of civilians. Instead of attempting direct military destruction of French and the State of Vietnam’s authority or its military forces, the Viet Minh used parallel hierarchies to compete with, undermine, and eventually replace or destroy French and State of Vietnam control. Taxation, for example, was a key indicator demonstrating control over society and Fall

638 Ibid., 216.
claimed that “to the last breath a government will try to collect taxes.”

If the Viet Minh successfully eliminated government taxation, and collected revenues themselves by taking away this economic life-blood -- and Fall knew they were doing this efficiently in much of rural North Vietnam -- then they were effectively in administrative control of that region. This was the type of “political” domination that Fall viewed as of far greater relevance than military power which did not provide a political function but merely presided over ‘securing’ political functions. Once security lapsed in oversight of governance, which certainly included taxation but also education and other administrative functions, the Viet Minh’s parallel hierarchy would infiltrate that governance gap, replace it with Viet Minh authority and continue to build other parallel hierarchies in other areas of social and political control. In Fall’s eyes, Viet Minh ability to collect taxes was perhaps the most significant indication that a Viet Minh-led parallel hierarchy had replaced French or State of Vietnam authority in a given area.

Fall pointed out other important indicators of actual Viet Minh control, such as their control over local judicial and educational functions, especially curriculum development and teacher assignment. Instead of military indices, such as troop strength, fortification defense, or possession of signature weapon systems, Viet Minh control over civil-political functions, demonstrated through teacher selection and determining what they taught, for example, more accurately revealed those areas in which the Viet Minh’s socio-political-military doctrine was at work and where they were most likely to achieve, or had already gained, competitive control over the population. This was the type of “warfare” and “control” that Fall found fascinating and effective, despite competition from Viet Minh opponents. A local farmer did not need to know

640 Ibid., 217.
641 Ibid., 217.
642 Ibid., 217.
the intricacies of Marxist dogma, but the individual typically demonstrated adherence, whether willing or pressured, to whomever was recognized within a community as the authority in terms of paying taxes. If the individual believed the taxation was fair, or if they were treated fairly in terms of accessing land to farm, it is likely that an authorities’ legitimacy was elevated and such recognition might eventually develop into genuine support. Coercion, violence, and unfair treatment clearly backfired, as in the case of the Nghe An revolts in 1956 against the Viet Minh, but local civil administrative control was where legitimacy originated. Military-oriented assets were largely, if not entirely irrelevant, for example, in curriculum development, teaching others, or creating a political ideology worth fighting for among Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians seeking to eliminate French control of Indochina. When Fall discussed the irrelevance of military control it was irrelevant in the face of administrative and ideological functions that military authorities did not regard as military targets or within their mandate.

Fall provided a detailed account demonstrating his point. “When I first arrived in Indochina in 1953, the French were mainly fighting in the Red River Delta…I checked in with the French briefing officer and asked what the situation was in the delta. He said: ‘Well, we hold pretty much of it; there is the French fortified line around the Delta which we call the Marshal de Lattre Line – about 2200 bunkers forming 900 forts. We are going to deny the communists access to the 8 million people in this Delta and the 3 million tons of rice it produces. We will eventually starve them out and deny them access to the population.’” Fall replied, “Do the communist hold anything inside the delta?” The answer was, ‘Yes, they hold those five black blotches.’” Fall brought up this story to other Vietnamese under national Vietnamese control at the University of

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Hanoi who said “that their home villages inside the Delta were Communist-controlled and had Communist village chiefs…that both the French and the Vietnamese Army simply did not know what was going on.” Fall continued, “To the last breath a government will try to collect taxes so I used a working hypothesis: I went to the Vietnamese tax collection office in Hanoi to look at the village tax rolls. They immediately indicated that the bulk of the Delta was no longer paying taxes. As a cross-check on my theory I used the village teachers. The village teachers in Viet-Nam were centrally assigned by the Government. Hence, where there were school teachers the Government could be assume to have control. Where they were none, there was no Government control. The resulting difference between military ‘control’ and what the Communists controlled administratively [italicized in original] was 70% of the delta inside the French battlelines! In fact, the military situation was complete fiction and had absolutely no bearing on the real [italicized in original] situation inside the Delta. The area was solidly Communist-infiltrated and collapsed overnight.”

The Viet Minh’s strength resided not in military strength but as a social and political force among Vietnamese. As Fall put it in a letter to his fiancé, “Funny when you think that every Vietnamese around you, that grimy beggar, the flower girl, the vagabond salesman of odds and ends, they may all be part of the fanatical group that does more to keep the Viet-Minh alive as a political force than any of the Chinese-delivered Soviet (and U.S.) made guns ever could.” In an important sense, the weakest and most vulnerable of Vietnamese society made the Viet Minh the strongest. Winning over beggars, salesmen, and flower girls enabled the Viet Minh to

644 Ibid., 217.
645 Ibid., 217-218.
withstand far superior military might in terms of their political legitimacy, while, in contrast, the French failed to develop control through force. Moreover, the Viet Minh developed political and social control by providing governance and services and, when needed through force that was specific and swift. This asymmetry was obscured by technological innovations found in jets and tanks, though nineteenth-century French officers like Gallieni and Lyautey would have seen and understood this kind of Viet Minh administrative strength right away.647

The Viet Minh wielded not only power, but often prevailed in terms of legitimacy in areas where they controlled socio-civil-political functions. Exceptions to this existed, as the Nghe An revolts demonstrated, and the Viet Minh violently repressed dissent when necessary, but when they gained control of the population through provision of social functions, it endowed their control with an aura of legitimacy among local populations that was tangible and more effective because it did not generate grievances caused by violence or initiate cycles of revenge. Moreover, Fall believed that socio-civil-political indicators, including parallel hierarchies, revealed much more than military indicators because military forces were not responsible for providing, and were mostly untrained to serve, socio-political functions in areas where they were deployed. The French military increased civil affairs operations in which medical and social services might better pacify areas. French General Raoul Salan created teams of civil affairs teams, Groupes Administratif Mobile Opérationnel (GAMO, translated as Mobile Operational Administrative Groups), and a progression of “Morale and Information Service” sections evolved into Psychological Warfare Sections by April 1953, but these units were “hampered by a lack of

In the case of education, like taxation, Fall explained “The school teachers in Viet-Nam were centrally assigned by the Government. Hence, where there were school teachers the Government could be assumed to have control. Where there were none, there was no Government control.” Fall concluded “when a country is being subverted, it is not being outfought: it is being outadministered.” This was perhaps one of Fall’s most revealing statements regarding his thought on social-political control which, more than militarily ‘securing’ an area, was what mattered in terms of legitimacy and authentic authority.

Viet Minh leadership rigorously prioritized selection of personnel in the control of local populations. Party members were typically assigned positions of primary importance while sympathetic party affiliates assumed less critical positions. Fall described the effects of their work in 1956 writing, “All [French and Vietnamese] agreed that the Red River Delta area was actually under the administrative control of the Communists, that is, the area where they collected the taxes, ran the village government, and indoctrinated the children in the schools, this was far greater than even the extent of VPA [Vietnamese People’s Army] military control.” Overall, taxation,

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650 Ibid., 220.
651 Bernard Fall, Indochina: The Last Year of the War: Communist Organization and Tactics,” Military Review, Vol. 36, No. 7, October 1956, 11, Series 1.06, Box A-1, BBF, JFKL.
schools, and local government were the “battlegrounds” in which the Viet Minh out-administered its adversaries.

In the context of post-World War II Vietnam, the DRV’s efforts to eliminate Vietnamese nationalist groups and French authorities therefore, utilized parallel hierarchies which grew as the DRV confronted increased numbers of French forces after late 1946. In addition to administrative control through acts like taxation, the Viet Minh sought to gain control of Vietnamese national identity to achieve social cohesion and increase its symbolic legitimacy along Vietnamese traditional lines. The Viet Minh’s success achieving administrative control among Vietnamese, however, varied widely across the country and Vietnam was anything but unified. Because of Japanese occupation during the Second World War, post-war division of Vietnam between Chinese and British authorities, the later reinstallation of a centralized but weak, French-supported government, and the many conflicting Vietnamese factions fighting for control, Vietnam was critically divided.

In contrast to the north of Vietnam, administrative dominance was difficult to achieve in South Vietnam due to its diverse populations, especially among Buddhist-oriented religious groups, such as the Hoa Hao, who violently opposed the Viet Minh. In the south, especially in the Mekong Delta, “shifting tactical alliances, ethnic, political, and religious conflict,” reflected the region’s formidable social environment and it was the region with “the most extreme range of beliefs of any part of Vietnam.” In this area, where groups of Hoa Hao, Khmer minority groups, and groups of Cao Dai spread from their main headquarters in Tay Ninh, the Viet Minh was the

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654 Ibid., 102.
most powerful organization fighting the French, but it faced “legions of local competitors” and did not dominate. The complexity of Vietnamese society and important differences between North, Central, and Southern regions, let alone Laos and Cambodia, explains why war in Indochina differed from place to place and why it was difficult, if not impossible, to analyze categorically for Western scholars. Viet Minh dominance was uneven therefore, but generally greater in the north and weaker in the south.

In those areas where the Viet Minh did dominate, there was competition over real power, such as the threat of violence, but also symbolic forms that included assimilating the legacy of national identity associated with the Nguyen Dynasty represented by Emperor Bao Dai. Although the Viet Minh rejected the monarchy, they understood the importance and legacy of imperial power. This respect was demonstrated when Viet Minh historian, Tran Huy Lieu, traveled to the “Nguyen capital in Hue to claim the imperial seal and imperial regalia from the ex-emperor.”

While historian Francis FitzGerald believed that the Viet Minh literally and figuratively tore the Vietnamese mandate of heaven from its dynastic forebears, this view possibly overemphasized ownership of the “Mandate of Heaven” as a material-oriented transfer of power. The Viet Minh more likely took the regalia to buttress its position among Vietnamese still under imperial influence. Nonetheless, it suggests that the Viet Minh regarded Confucianist-order associated with the monarchy as something worth both accounting for and controlling. These changes in Vietnamese society -- propelled by modernity and war from the early 1940s that piled upon decades of colonial exploitation since the nineteenth century -- clearly contributed to a weakening

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655 Ibid., 102.
of the Confucianist-Taoist-Buddhist social order in Vietnam and, according to Historian David Elliot, “the whole texture of rural society was dramatically transformed between 1930 and 1975.” The work of nationalist fire-brands early in the twentieth-century, such as Phan Boi Chau however, suggests that these revolutionary transformations preceded 1930, back at least to the Russo-Japanese War and the Đông-Du (Eastern Movement) initiated in 1905. Historian David Hunt has also pointed out that, “Destabilizing dynamics associated with the political and military history of the region of South Vietnam were only part of the story, for even without war and revolution, modernizing trends were refashioning the social order of the countryside.” In another view, Dan Van Sung, a nationalist and former leader in the Dai Viet, also known for publishing the Saigon-based daily Chinh Luan, more forcefully claimed “Vietnam has probably changed more in the last three decades than in the previous twenty centuries.” Sung’s point not only demonstrated Vietnamese cognizance of change across society, but the rapid intensity with which developments materialized.

Fall also recognized that developments associated with modernity, such as technological advancements, drove social transformations in Vietnam. But other dynamic changes resulted

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659 Alexander B. Woodside, Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), 37; Hue Tam Ho Tai, Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 170. The transformation of Vietnamese society is an extensively studied subject in environmental and Vietnamese histories that account for technological and communication advancements as features of modernity. The scholarship of Michitake Aso, David Biggs, Kim Ngoc Bao, Shawn McHale, and Edwin Martini provide accounts of transformative changes in Vietnamese society through rubber production, water management, print-media, and chemical-warfare using Agent Orange, respectively.
660 David Hunt, Vietnam’s Southern Revolution: From Peasant Insurrection to Total War (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 136.
as Vietnamese radicalism evolved in the 1920s and 1930s, after path-finding nationalist struggles to achieve Vietnamese independence grew in the earlier years of the twentieth-century. Vietnamese nationalism was clearly prevalent before the formation of the Viet Minh’s socio-political communist ideology and were led by Vietnamese intellectuals such as Phan Boi Chau, Nguyen An Ninh, and others.663 More moderate nationalist positions also existed, including demands for better treatment under French colonial rule, a position held by Phan Chu Trinh. Other elites, like Bui Quang Chieu of the Constitutionalist Party, accommodated and accepted French policies to a fault. The Viet Minh, not surprisingly, viewed Chieu’s relationship with French authority as blatant collaboration.664 Chieu, along with prominent Trotskyist leaders, Ta Thu Thau and Phan Van Hum, were eventually assassinated by Viet Minh “Honor Squads to Eliminate Traitors” (doi Danh du tru gian) because of their cooperation with the French.665 Fall was aware of these challenges and changes in Vietnamese society and he recognized their magnitude. Moreover, his interest and ability to do this sometimes put him a culturally-minded realm shared by Indochina-focused anthropologists like Bernard Philippe Groslier, Jean Chesnaux, Gerald Hickey, and others. Along with Viet Minh ethnic policy, cultural understanding was qualitatively different when compared to French policies and this, according to Oscar Salemink, was shared among analysts like Fall and Chesnaux. 666 The Viet Minh, Fall realized through his study of the First Indochina War, were seizing opportunities to harness their socio-political-military doctrine to this transformative shift across Vietnamese society in order to steer the country towards

664 Ibid. On Phan Boi Chau and Phan Chu Trinh, see pages 22-26; on Nguyen An Ninh, see pages 72-87. On Bui Quang Chieu, see pages 39-46.
666 Oscar Salemink, The Ethnography of Vietnam’s Central Highlanders: A Historical Contextualization, 1850-1900 (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003), 129.
objectives directed by Ho Chi Minh and his colleagues. And examples of transformation that the Vietnam sought to guide abounded, particularly in agricultural sectors like rubber.

The long-perpetuated brutality towards rubber plantation laborers exemplified the social costs of transformation inflicted by colonialism in Vietnam. Tens of thousands of rubber laborers emphatically shared a hatred of the French with prominent nationalists such as Phan Boi Chau and Phan Chu Trinh. Fall sought to account for the development of the Viet Minh and where it stood in relation to nationalists, like Phan Boi Choi and others seeking independence in the context of this era of dramatic social and political change. Fall had come to Vietnam at the peak of anti-colonial agitation that had spurred and accelerated social transformation for decades and he was clearly also interested in groups antecedent to the Viet Minh, such as Vietnamese secret societies, and in how their tactics of secrecy were appropriated by Viet Minh internal security and intelligence units. These groups, then, formed a type of precedent on which communist organizations might be modeled. Fall perceived this fusion, writing “It was a combination of Marxist ideology and the secret societies of Vietnam that produced the one effective political organization the country has ever had – the Indochina Communist Party.” This kind of statement was revealing, not because Fall suggested a direct link between secret societies and the Viet Minh, but that similar approaches were shared through influence and perhaps direct personal connections among such groups. The statement also demonstrated how Fall tied past Vietnamese anti-colonial agitation together with the Viet Minh’s political action as he was seeing it on the ground in 1953,

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and this is characteristic of his ability to view present events in light of their deep historical contexts.

Fall considered the Viet Minh internal security-intelligence apparatus, especially the Cong An, Trinh Sat, and Dich Van, important because they protected the Viet Minh against infiltration, provided intelligence and counterintelligence, eliminated collaborators, and they infiltrated Viet Minh opposition. These operations were crucial because the DRV initially struggled to consolidate its strength, was internally fragmented, and was targeted by French Union forces. This fragmentation of the DRV, especially between 1946 and 1950 before Chinese support, explains why Fall described the DRV during this period as, literally, a government “in the bush.” These security units also epitomized important aspects of socio-political-military warfare that Fall perceived in 1953. As he recognized, communism incorporated social engineering to reduce the element of risk associated with military effort, whenever possible.\(^{669}\) Organizationally, Viet Minh internal security-intelligence units, such as Cong An, Trinh Sat, and Dich Van, provided an advantage in competitive control because they subverted competitors and provided space for the Viet Minh to administer taxation, judicial matters, and education more effectively than other Vietnamese competitors.

These Viet Minh groups accomplished political control through violence, but also minimized Viet Minh vulnerabilities. Accurate retribution against them usually affected small numbers of Viet Minh, and when innocent Vietnamese were unjustly targeted or punished as alleged Viet Minh, usually gruesomely in front of families according to French Legionnaire Henry Ainley, this only increased antagonism against French and SVN authorities.\(^{670}\) These units, as a

\(^{669}\) Ibid., 214.

result, achieved their mission, were killed or captured in the attempt of subversion, or spurred grievances against French troops, civilians, and other supporters when innocent Vietnamese were wrongly targeted in response to Viet Minh attacks. In such cases, individuals subsequently decided to join or support the Viet Minh cause, or pursue vendetta against those who wrongfully targeted family or friends. This was calamitous for Vietnamese society, especially innocent individuals and their families, but, in an honor-bound society with close knit familial ties, violent retribution and cycles of violence characterized the brutality of war in Indochina and the Viet Minh were most effective at making this work to their advantage.

II - The Cong An, Trinh Sat and Dich Van 671

The Cong An, Trinh Sat, and Dich Van contributed to a parallel hierarchy of security that was centralized, flexible, and developed to “create unity of command at every level from the village up…via the ever-present members of the Party to conduct the war as they please, without fear of the opposition or of ‘deviations.’” 672 Bernard Fall described the Cong An as a civilian secret police, comparable to the French Sûreté, regulated by centralized authority that originated with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) government in 1946. 673 At that time, the Cong

671 Fall later built upon his early analysis of these groups by examining their evolution and pervasiveness in South Vietnam after 1958 “under the Central Research Agency (CRA) (Cuc Nghien Cuu Trung Uong) under the National Defense Committee of the North Vietnamese Government.” In addition to the Cong An, Trinh Sat, and Dich Van analyzed in this chapter, Fall expanded his later study to include Tri Van, who “worked with professionals, students and intellectuals and were concentrated in cities” and Binh Van who “directed its attention to Government soldiers and Government paramilitary organizations.” See Bernard Fall, “South Viet-Nam (1956 up to November 1963),” Special Operations Research Office, Series 1.05, Box P-3, BBF, JFKL.
673 Ibid., 137.
An comprised a merger between the DRV security service and various police units, particularly after the dissolving of the Indochinese Communist Party in November 1946, before its reestablishment as the Worker’s Party (Viet-Nam Dang Lao Dong) in February 1951. 674 These organizations were led by individuals with long-standing ties to core members of the Party, or were themselves Party cadre. Fall identified the civilian “Director General of the Police and Security Services,” and his deputy as “members of the Indochina Communist Party (ICP) for more than twenty years” which, considering the founding of the ICP in 1930, demonstrated the importance of commitment and trust in how ICP leadership staffed these positions. 675 The Cong An conspired with the military structure of the DRV at the regional-level, especially when seeking out and eliminating Vietnamese competitors, such as nationalist factions or collaborators and traitors (Gian). Fall’s detailed task organization chart, “Structure of the State Secretariat to the Ministry of the Interior (Police and Security),” illuminated the complexity of this organization. (See Chart 1 in Appendix II, Charts and Maps). 676

Trinh Sat were operational intelligence teams primarily tasked to monitor French units and posts along the de Lattre Line around the Red River Delta in northern Vietnam. Their assignments consisted of active intelligence collection which, for example, included intercepting documents, reporting movement, and preparing attacks against French posts. 677 In contrast to the Cong An, Trinh Sat functioned as an intelligence component of the military and they were task-organized as

674 Ibid., 136. David Marr’s work on this subject also supports Fall’s conclusion and clarifies the dates of this merger. Marr states, “In late February 1946, the DRV government merged the Security Service and various police units to become the Vietnam Public Security Department (Viet Nam Cong An Vu), which we will call the Cong An.” David G. Marr, Vietnam: State, War, and Revolution (1945-1946) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 402.
676 Ibid., 36.
an attachment to conventional DRV troops from company to division levels of command. According to Fall, Trinh Sat personnel operated as politico-military sappers along the de Lattre perimeter and sought out vulnerabilities in military lines and among angry Vietnamese willing to provide information on French and SVN troop movement or operational planning. In this role, they were more prominent after 1950 when Chinese material and advisory support increased the capacity for military intelligence in the Viet Minh military.\footnote{On the extensive military and advisory aid provided by China and other communist countries in and after 1950 see Bernard Fall, \textit{The Viet-Minh Regime: Government and Administration in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam} (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1956), reprinted by Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1975), 81-83, 87-88. See also, Qiang Zhai, “China and the Geneva Conference of 1954,” \textit{The China Quarterly}, No. 129, March 1992, 103-122. Zhai writes, “between 1950 and 1954 China provided the Vietminh with 116,000 guns and 4,630 cannons, equipping five infantry divisions, one engineering and artillery division, one anti-aircraft regiment, and one guard regiment.” (Zhai, 106).} The completion of the de Lattre Line in 1951, even though it was subsequently infiltrated by the Viet Minh over the next three years, provided only an illusion of control to French authorities, and their inability and unwillingness to confront this infiltration infuriated Fall. Fall was discrete in published accounts of this frustration, with few exceptions.\footnote{One exception was Fall’s article “…Und den Krieg fuhrten die Dummen,” Series in \textit{Munchen Illustrierte}, September-Oktober 1953. (Fall translated this as “…It’s the Imbeciles Who Fight the War.”) It was one of numerous articles Fall wrote and published in German. See Bernard Fall, \textit{The Viet-Minh Regime: Government and Administration in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam} (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1956), reprinted by Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1975), 194.} After visiting “nearly every North Vietnam province in May and June 1953,” Fall created a situation map as actual Viet Minh control alongside a map of purported French control that “shows what a well-organized guerrilla force which enjoys at least the partial support of the population can do behind the lines of even a well-equipped enemy.”(See Map 1 in Appendix II, Charts and Maps).\footnote{Bernard Fall, \textit{The Viet-Minh Regime: Government and Administration in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam} (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1956), reprinted by Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1975), 91-92.} The extent of activity appeared clear to Fall and he commented on the Trinh Sat as a vanguard unit, writing “Infiltrators of the Trinh Sat precede every
movement of the Vietnamese People’s Army’s (VPA) regular units, often by months.”

Such preparation also demonstrated effective use of local intelligence.

Trinh Sat specialized in targeting French officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) who tortured alleged Viet Minh suspects and generally victimized Vietnamese communities accused of providing local support to the Viet Minh. According to Henry Ainley, a Legionnaire who provided first-hand accounts of extensive rape, torture, and theft by French and Vietnamese collaborators, French soldiers were aware that “the Viet maintained a first-class filing system in which were included not only Europeans renowned for brutality but also the officers, NCOs and men who worked in key positions.”

In Fall’s evaluation, Trinh Sat played an important role in maintaining this filing system and “did excellent reconnaissance work.”

Fall often integrated historical comparisons of “anti-Vichy Resistance members’ work in Nazi-occupied France” with his descriptions and analysis of the Viet Minh’s development of parallel hierarchies. Fall envisioned parallel hierarchies, the shadow government organizations created through the work of these internal security and military intelligence units, taking two forms. The first of these utilized existing administrative structures that were eventually controlled through infiltration of individuals tasked to subvert them from within. The second was the “creation of altogether, new clandestine structures designed to take over full administrative responsibilities when political and military conditions are ripe.”

Fall described a comparative experience from his time with the Maquis in Haute-Savoie during World War II, writing that, “the infiltration of subversive individuals preceding the creation of an independent apparatus” led to

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684 Ibid., 134.
685 Ibid., 134.
the “establishment of the CNR (Conseil National de la Resistance) in 1942, [which] began the creation of a full-fledged nationwide parallel network of underground administrative organs.”

In another formulation, Fall explained how methods forming parallel hierarchies were pervasive in subversion, “By trial and error all insurgent movements eventually concentrate on some forms of population control – and both the Communists and the John Birch Society by and large agree on the methodology; at least, on the basic level. The French specialist term for that stage is nuclearization, or the creation of nuclei of hard-core activists who will penetrate existing organizations and slowly change their character.”

Fall’s role in the Maquis, along with his research on the Krupp Corporation’s internal security forces that controlled slave labor during World War II, directly informed his understanding of internal security apparatus’ role in subversion. Fall’s research was cutting edge because he was the only author writing in English about subversive conflict in Indochina who combined formal study and field work with the authenticity and knowledge he possessed as a practitioner of subversion in the Maquis. Critically, the murder of his father by the Gestapo almost certainly heightened his sensitivity and awareness of aggression in the name of protecting against anti-Nazi subversion. He knew, in visceral sense of losing his father as a victim, that the Gestapo, along with the Soviet Union’s People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) and the Bolshevik Cheka before it, epitomized brutality under the auspices of maintaining security and “protecting the state.”

It is not surprising that Bernard Fall would notice similarities elsewhere, including those found among diverse and complex societies in Indochina.

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686 Ibid., 133-134.
687 Fall originally used the term “noyautage” which is translated here at “nuclearization.” Bernard B. Fall Papers, “The Guerrilla Craze,” Undated, Series 1.5, Box P-1, BBF, JFKL.
Dich Van units were a third component of the Viet Minh internal security apparatus and the one to which Fall gave the most attention. In contrast to Trinh Sat, Dich Van specialized in espionage, propaganda, and infiltration of Vietnamese auxiliary units. While Dich Van also actively collected intelligence, they also targeted individuals, capabilities, and resources, and Fall did not consider them military intelligence-reconnaissance assets in the same manner as Trinh Sat.689 Trinh Sat adopted more conventional approaches to operations whereas Dich Van appropriated greater clandestine skill, yet they still inflicted brutal violence to evoke psychological terror through messaging when necessary. Fall commented on the Dich Van’s ability to “make themselves felt at a specifically ‘Vietnamese’ level of fighting upon which the foreigner has no effect.” He added, “It will be a Dich Van group that will capture the mayor of a recalcitrant village and cut his body to ribbons, or leave his head dangling from a bamboo pole in the middle of a village (with a note attached to it warning that anyone who takes it down will suffer the same fate).”690 Dich Van violence and psychological operations were enhanced through dissemination of their efforts through print and radio and these units were further distinguished by advanced linguistic capabilities in French. Working in groups of three, like other security units, Dich Van divided tasks among members, with a specialist in anti-French propaganda, a second member who focused on infiltrating auxiliary troops and connecting with Europeans for information, while a third member “acted as a liaison agent between the group and headquarters and contacted local agents.”691

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690 Ibid., 137.
All members were selected for French fluency and the agent tasked with infiltration of auxiliary Vietnamese units “was frequently given to women: clever and attractive physically, they tried to become either the congäie of European soldiers or else the wives of auxiliaries.” The commitment to and nature of these operations is apparent in the development of such practices. Marital and carnal relationships, thus, served as small scale-parallel hierarchies that added to an overall subversion of authority. These practices also embodied a type of infiltration that avoided military categorization because tangible defensive measures were a challenge and certainly not found in tangible obstacles like barbed wire or clear fields of fire. Preventing attractive and intelligent women, purposely crossing paths with young French and Vietnamese soldiers, was difficult to contain. Fall pointed out that one solution included establishment of military brothels called BMC (Bordel Mobile de Campagne - Mobile Field Bordellos). Fall recalled similar units from World War II when he served with the 4th Moroccan Mountain Division and, in Indochina, these units included Algerian women from the Oulad-Naïl tribe. These individuals’ origins varied, however, and historian Ruth Ginio cites Vietnamese women as the primary staff of military brothels. Clearly, infiltration through sexual allure was a known and prevalent problem. Historian Douglas Porch claimed that Dich Van were seventy percent female and predominately employed as informers. In the case of males, they were typically “recruited through fear of reprisals against their families and instructed to be model soldiers and earn promotion.”

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Printed propaganda worked together with physical infiltration by Dich Van, especially among colonial troops. Fall devoted several sections of a chapter in *The Viet-Minh Regime*, “The Party in Power,” to this subject and stressed that “the Democratic Republic took into full account the ethnic and national differences between the various component units of the French Union Forces.”

Dich Van often distributed leaflets received in China from, for example, the East German Social Unity Party and the French Communist Party. The leaflets’ purpose was two-fold: to influence morale at the tactical level, but also to persuade soldiers through longer-term strategic goals which engendered discontent if they eventually returned to their home countries. Fall analyzed multiple leaflets designed to change behavior among French forces and, due to his service with the 4th Moroccan Mountain Division towards the end of World War II, paid close attention to a leaflet targeting Moroccan troops printed in Arabic.

“Moroccan soldiers – You fight for an unjust cause at the service of your oppressors…The Americans and French carve up your country. Moroccan soldiers, the Vietnamese are your brothers…the soldiers of the Vietnamese Army fight against your oppressors for the liberty and independence of their country…”

Fall’s knowledge of Moroccan soldiers, and the conflicted historical circumstances in which they served with French expeditionary forces, explains his interest in long-term effects the Viet Minh sought to achieve by changing Moroccan soldiers’ perceptions of France before they returned home. Fall recognized that subversion of French interests by North Africans, especially in Algeria, aided the Viet Minh’s subversion of French administration in Indochina by weakening the French colonial empire as a whole. Rising political dissent in Algeria during the 1950s, unquestionably

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697 Ibid., 54.
698 Ibid., 54.
contributed to the aggressiveness of Viet Minh propaganda on the matter of colonialist exploitation among North African soldiers. Sub-Saharan African troops, like North Africans, were also the target of anticolonial propaganda. However, the propaganda did not always appeal to African soldiers as part of a unified anti-colonial brotherhood. They were certainly targeted to elicit their sympathy or support for the Viet Minh cause, but they were also manipulated as racialized objects. Racial and ethnic difference with African soldiers could be portrayed in denigrating, racist terms to appeal to Vietnamese villagers who might be undecided, or to sow fear among potentially cooperative Vietnamese interacting with locally-based French Union troops. As an agitprop tool, in portrayals developed for Vietnamese consumption, Africans were often vilified, construed as ethnically demonic and even cannibalistic.699

The threat Viet Minh propaganda posed to French Union force’s loyalty was real. French military authorities feared that the anticolonial war in Indochina challenged Africans’ commitment so significant effort was expended to increase Africans’ sense of belonging to France. Ruth Ginio, like Fall did earlier, has contextualized the problems French authorities encountered when using colonized subjects in the service of French wars of colonization. Ginio explained, “it was difficult to ignore the fact that African soldiers were being sent to fight against national movements seeking to end colonial rule – the same colonial rule under which they themselves lived.”700 Fall also devoted a great deal of analysis to the Viet Minh’s efforts to convert prisoners of war into anti-colonialists. Africans were targets who returned home “ideologically indoctrinated,” as Fall put

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it, “through treatment similar to that received by United Nations prisoners of war captured in Korea.”

As an intellectual thread through his work, Fall’s early scholarship on Indochina and the DRV consistently returned to organizational capacity and adaptation of the Viet Minh as it confronted Vietnamese competitors and French forces. Units such as Cong An, Trinh Sat, and Dich Van were critical in Fall’s view because they enabled the Viet Minh to subvert opponents at little cost compared to set-piece conventional battles. For these reasons, Fall spent a great deal of time working to understand the organizational structure of the DRV’s security apparatus. His analysis emphasized the DRV’s organizational development horizontally, across Viet Minh held territory, but also vertically as the Viet Minh consolidated power in depth at local levels. In later stages of the conflict, Fall determined that similar techniques were spreading geographically and began to appear in Central and South Vietnam. In the early period after the DRV’s founding in 1945, flexible organizational capacity was critical because, while the Viet Minh had popular support in many areas, there was considerable opposition among Vietnamese Nationalists, other Vietnamese political organizations, and other ethnic groups, such as Nung (Hoa Nung, or Tau Nung, also referred to as ethnic Chinese living in the area of modern-day Quang Ninh and Lang Son provinces in Northeast Vietnam), who detested the Viet Minh. Land reform efforts in 1953, in one of the most severe cases, created significant opposition to the Viet Minh after the Viet Minh military repressed and and killed tens of thousands of Vietnamese. In the post-World War II years, to mitigate possible anti-communist feeling among Vietnamese, the “Communist coloration of the

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[Viet Minh] leadership was not as yet directly evident to the vast majority of supporters” so the Viet Minh sought footholds before its ideological orientation dissuaded potential supporters.\textsuperscript{703} Internal propaganda, establishment of parallel hierarchies to subvert Vietnamese competitors and organizations, and elimination of enemy collaborators were preconditions for transitioning beyond a Maoist-inspired second stage of equilibrium towards fulfillment of the third stage of conventional warfare. Gaining control through subversion included approaches Fall undeniably recognized and experienced in the French Resistance during World War II. It is not clear whether Fall read Mao Tse-Tung writings at this time, but it is almost certain he was familiar with the broader contours of Mao’s three stages of revolution. However, Fall rarely, if ever discussed Mao’s theory directly. Instead, Fall’s background with partisan-guerrilla war in Europe in the Maquis, assisted by considerable subsequent study and an apparently intuitive nature, contributed to a collective ability to see similar processes in action in Indochina. Subversion, in Fall’s view, was a key component of the Viet Minh’s socio-political-military and communist-oriented doctrine and it was inextricably linked to organizational structure.

Contemporary theorists also draw attention to this relationship between organizational structure and violence as a substantive matter. Political scientist, Jeremy Weinstein has delineated how control of populations depends on a manipulation of multiple mechanisms, facilitated by organizational configuration. According to Weinstein, “violence can be an effective strategy because it is both persuasive and selective, but the strategic use of violence requires effective organization.”\textsuperscript{704} Violence inflicted upon recalcitrant village leaders by Dich Van personnel, for example, might have epitomized strategically-oriented subversion even more effectively had they

been able to disseminate the results of their violence more pervasively through television or other media. Yet small, networked structures organizationally positioned Dich Van units for such tasks among local populations who would have clearly known what Dich Van messaging meant. In the case of Dich Van personnel entering into long-term relationships to subvert French or State of Vietnam personnel, it may be dehumanizing to regard an attractive female Dich Van member as a small, networked structure, but the Viet Minh’s socio-political-military doctrine counted ‘martial-infiltration techniques’ as one effective method among many. The plurality of relationships Dich Van cadre could enter into with French and SVN Vietnamese authorities certainly demonstrates flexibility in organizational design that the Viet Minh adopted as circumstances warranted and opportunities for subversion appeared. The cadre of security and intelligence units, such as Cong An, Trinh Sat, and Dich Van, were therefore critical components of Viet Minh efforts to gain and coordinate control over the Vietnamese civilian population through selective and strategic violence.

Fall studied the Viet Minh internal security apparatus at a time when it was in development and its tasks were changing. As a result, Fall’s analysis was centered upon a moving target, especially between 1951 and 1954 as the Viet Minh sought to achieve increased capacity in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. These developments were in flux because the Viet Minh were working towards improved conventional-oriented capacity through increased Chinese-supplied arms, much of it American military equipment captured in Korea, and through forced mass-mobilization achieved by land reform and other efforts.\footnote{In addition to equipment captured in Korea, the Viet Minh could rely “upon U.S. parts captured from Franco-Nationalist forces to repair and maintain its American material.” (81). In Bernard Fall, \textit{The Viet-Minh Regime: Government and Administration in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam} (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1956), reprinted by Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1975), 81, 87.} 705 According to historian,
Christopher Goscha, the Public Security Department in 1951 “was assigned a new and clear role in the strengthening of the party, the state, and people’s democracy (meaning communization).”

Fall emphasized what might be considered the subversive stage in Viet-Minh operations between 1946 and 1950, during which time the Viet Minh held on against French forces by taking approaches that minimized vulnerabilities. Moreover, Fall was concerned with the DRV administration as a comprehensive organization in 1954. With time, he allocated greater attention to the capacities of subversion and its contribution to Viet Minh socio-political doctrine in Indochina. While Fall’s ability and access was remarkable at the time, it was not absolute, and his analyses were not infallible. He was not able to understand the development of the Viet Minh security apparatus consistently and his analysis was not, understandably, as comprehensive as that of later scholars. Nonetheless, Fall’s descriptions and his mapping of Viet Minh internal security organizations, especially his charting of the Structure of the State Secretariat to the Ministry of the Interior in 1954, has been corroborated by later scholarship.

The work of Viet Minh internal security organizations among local populations and against French forces assisted in Viet Minh consolidation of control over North Vietnam by 1954. According to the Viet Minh, as a result of such efforts along with military operations, the northern region became “the revolutionary base area for the entire nation, a firm foundation on which our army could build and expand.” In the south, in contrast, “the people of South Vietnam quickly

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shifted from armed struggle to political struggle.” Sympathetic populations certainly facilitated internal security units’ success and recruiting drives for PAVN, but so did abuse by French troops. Invariably, French torture of peasantry and mistreatment of Vietnamese auxiliaries did more to support Viet Minh security units’ missions than they could accomplish themselves. Henry Ainley’s first-hand accounts of atrocities committed by French troops, and those perpetrated by Vietnamese collaborators known as Bande Noire, are vivid and horrifying. French use of Vietnamese proxies to inflict violence upon other Vietnamese characterized colonization and exacerbated the viciousness of civil conflict. In these wars, Vietnamese companies, “had been taught how to soldier in the French colonial paratroops,” and this entailed brutality against often innocent suspects who were subjected to a variety of tortures, ranging from wrapping a suspect in barbed wire to beating a suspect’s stomach until it collapsed and the individual vomited it out. The Bande Noire, Ainley explained, “were usually instrumental in the application of torture or beatings employed during the interrogation of Viet suspects.” Ainley also spares nothing in his account of sadism inflicted by French officers and soldiers. Bernard Fall was familiar with Ainley’s work and certainly knew of similar cruelty from his research into Gestapo-Krupp treatment of slave laborers during the Second World War. Fall did not describe the inhumanity inflicted upon Vietnamese in the nauseating detail Ainley provided, yet Fall recognized how

709 Ibid., 14.
711 Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 101-103. The Cambodian soldier, Thuong, who Sheehan describes committing atrocity, “had been taught how to soldier in the French colonial paratroops long before the Americans had persuaded Diem to form Ranger companies to fight the guerrillas, and he was proud of his antecedents.” (102). Methods, like Thoung’s, are almost identical to those used in Ainley’s descriptions. In addition to rape, murder, looting, the extremity of actions against the Vietnamese population suspected of Viet Minh support were severe and included setting attack dogs upon bound prisoners, kidney and liver targeting, and electrocution of genitalia. See Henry Ainley, *In Order to Die* (London: Burke Publishing Company, 1955), 31-35, 42-43, 96-100.
Vietnamese auxiliaries’ abuse of other Vietnamese contributed to a socially destructive cycle of violent retribution.

The brutalization of Vietnamese peasants was also self-defeating for French forces because it denied them access to tactical intelligence. According to Douglas Porch, this failure “had a direct effect on French morale and combat performance and made a significant contribution to the French army’s high casualty rates in Indochina.”\(^\text{713}\) According to Ainley, “The French were justly and universally unpopular and nearly every native was willing to pass on to the Viet the slightest piece of information, no matter how unimportant.”\(^\text{714}\) Brutality inflicted upon non-combatants was therefore self-defeating for military reasons. Moreover, Ainley decried the lack of operational security among French troops who underestimated Vietnamese, noting “Europeans as a whole were shockingly indiscreet and carried on conversations about past and future operations as though the Viet had never thought of sending out agents who were trained linguists.”\(^\text{715}\)

Vietnamese auxiliaries’ conditions and their treatment by French personnel also percolated into a toxic environment that permeated local societies. According to Ainley, auxiliaries “received starvation wages, held grudges against the French who treated them like dirt, even when they were NCOS or commissioned officers....All too frequently auxiliaries were hit, kicked and generally roughed around by the European commanders, and in each case it left behind a violent and lasting resentment which was easily turned to active hatred.”\(^\text{716}\) Animosity often increased Viet Minh-


\(^{715}\) Ibid., 106-107.

\(^{716}\) Ibid., 109.
PAVN membership, fueled and validated its propaganda, and generally intensified anti-colonialism thought and action propagated against French and State of Vietnam personnel.

Non-violent mistreatment of colonial troops revealed another angle into colonialism in Indochina. During a stop in Cambodia in 1953, Fall noticed the paternalism of French officers towards a Cambodian master sergeant of the French Marines, Les Troupes Coloniales. The story demonstrated not only their arrogance, but also their apathy towards the French cause. Fall described this, writing “When I went to the Transportation Office, a Cambodian orderly told me apologetically that the [French] Lieutenant went to the mess to play tennis with the Captain. Since a convoy which I expected to catch was supposed to leave at dawn, I decided to stroll over to the mess in order to get my travel documents signed there…Since the men were in the midst of a set, I had little else to do, I sat down at a neighboring table. Then emerged from the verandah a soldier in French uniform. His small stature, brown skin and Western-type features showed him to be Cambodian…On his chest above the left breast pocket of his suntan regulation shirt were three rows of multi-colored ribbons: croix de guerre with four citations, campaign ribbons with the clasps of France’s every colonial campaign since the Moroccan pacification of 1926; the Italian campaign of 1943 and the drive to the Rhine of 1945.” Fall added, “In his left hand, he carried several papers crossed diagonally with the tri-colored ribbon; travel orders like mine, which also awaited the signature of one of the officers.” During a break in their game when the officers joined their wives for drinks, the master-sergeant “strode over in a measured military step, came stiffly

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to attention in a military salute, and handed the orders for himself and his squad to the captain...[the captain’s] eyes narrowed suddenly as he understood that he was being interrupted.”

“Sergeant, you can see that I’m busy... wait until I have time to deal with your travel orders. Don’t worry. You will have them in time for the convoy.” Fall described the sergeant standing at attention, saluting, stating ‘A vos orders, Mon Capitaine,” and resuming “his watch near where the Cambodian messboys were following the game.” Fall continued, “The sun began to settle behind the trees of the garden and a slight cooling breeze rose slightly from the nearby Lake Tonlé-Sap, Cambodia’s inland sea. It was 1700...All of a sudden, the beautiful bell-clear sounds of a bugle playing ‘lower the flag.’ Nothing changed at the tennis court; the two officers continued to play their set...Only the old sergeant moved. He was standing stiffly at attention, his right hand raised to the cap in the flat-palmed salute of the French army, facing in the direction from which the bugle tones came; saluting, as per regulations, France’s tricolor hidden behind the trees.”

Fall concluded, “Something very warm welled up in me. I felt like running over to the little Cambodian who had fought all his life for my country, and apologizing to him for my compatriots here who didn’t care about him, and for my countrymen in France who didn’t care even about their countrymen fighting in Indochina...And in one single blinding flash, I knew (italics original) that we were going to lose the war.” This incident symbolized the non-violent apathy that determined how failure in Indochina was perhaps unavoidable. The story certainly demonstrated Fall’s frustration on many levels: with French policy, his compatriots, but also with the blatant racism the French officers demonstrated. Fall wanted to explain the futility of the French cause in Indochina and, in contrast to the absolute commitment he knew prevailing among
the Viet Minh, the story proved that Imperialism was bereft of not only moral authority, but even the pretense that France’s cause mattered to French officers, signaled by their ignoring of the French flag being lowered in the afternoon. Moreover, officers were supposed to be leaders. In Fall’s experience, as a former member of the French military during the end of World War II, this kind of behavior would be inexcusable anywhere and the officers’ behavior was clearly disillusioning to Fall, just on the level as an army man. The fact that these were officers represented, additionally, complete absence of devotion to duty on a policy level. Perhaps more importantly, for military audiences, who Fall anticipated as an important group reading his work, the anecdote would demonstrate an insulting condescension towards enlisted personnel, let alone colonial troops. The fact that the Cambodian solider was a Master-Sergeant is critical. This rank is held by the most experienced, knowledgeable, competent, and important member of any military service in any nations’ military. In terms of Master Sergeants’ focus on troops and their welfare, instead of planning and policy preoccupying Generals, Master Sergeants are a far more important rank than General Officers. Fall clearly knew that non-commissioned officers are the back-bone of a military. His story, therefore, is about how France disregarded its own troops, but also how it disregarded its cause.

Non-violent and violent enmity collectively contributed to an endemic cycle of cruelty in colonized societies. In Frantz Fanon’s perspective, “the native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor” because the agony the oppressed experiences motivates revenge. Fanon’s larger point was colonialism, as the initiating force creating cycles of violence, essentially devolved into a type of nihilism, “a non-thinking machine, a body without
reasoning faculties.” These factors revealed colonialism as “violence in its natural state” only yielding “when confronted with greater violence.” The anguish of colonization was a persistent undercurrent to war in Indochina. It generated ever greater violence in Southeast Asia and was made only worse “when the Communist conquest of the Chinese mainland and the subsequent attack on Korea made Indochina an important pawn of cold war strategy in the Far East.”

The deconstruction of Vietnamese society, especially when initiated by land reform in 1953 because of endogenous violence among Vietnamese, contributed to an overall environment of disorder but it also enabled the Viet Minh to mobilize the peasantry against French forces. A critical component of the Vietnamese Army that Fall emphasized was its civilian logistical transportation corps of porters. This transportation-supply system, requiring mass mobilization, facilitated the Viet Minh’s capacity to wage strategically significant battles including defeating French operations in late 1952 and others culminating at Dien Bien Phu in April and May 1954. Massive numbers of porters supporting the Viet Minh, in Fall’s view, exemplified “total war in which men and women over eighteen were mobilized throughout the territory of the DRV in November 1949.” Fall added that those “who were recruited into the People’s Army often served with village level guerrilla forces (Du Kich) to gain sufficient training before joining main force units (Chu luc).” Additional obligatory labor legislation was approved on September 1.

720 Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (New York: An Evergreen Book published by Grove Weidenfeld, 1963), 53. The early work of Paul Mus is important to consider on these points, although beyond the scope of this dissertation. See Paul Mus, Le Destin de l’Union française: de l’Indochine à l’Afrique (1954).
721 Ibid., 61.
724 Ibid., 84.
1952 requiring all healthy citizens between eighteen and fifty to serve as porters. Fall’s emphasis upon their immense numbers and their critical importance to conventional operations was indicative of the type of collapsing distinctions between combatants and civilians required to carry out the Viet Minh’s doctrine of socio-political-military in warfare against France. Mass mobilization typified a scale of political effort that undermined the kind of French military planning that lay behind ideas such as the de Lattre line and its strings of fortifications, which Fall first encountered when he came to Vietnam. In tactical situations where Viet Minh forces had previously attacked bunkers and blockhouses along the de Lattre line, breaches, Fall observed, were soon “abandoned in favor of a thorough political and guerilla infiltration of the Red River delta, while the main forces of Giap proceeded to further consolidate their hold upon northern Laos and the tribal Thai territory of North Vietnam.” The de Lattre line, it was clear to Fall, might as well have been invisible in terms of its relevance.

The Vietnamese people were absolutely critical to the Viet Minh’s cause. “People’s Workers” (Dan Cong), according to Fall, were not only important as supporters, but “constituted the logistical backbone of the Republican forces.” Modified bicycles, designed to carry heavy loads contributed in areas, but Fall added, “it was chiefly with the help of such primitive means [of individual human labor] multiplied by a huge number of individuals that the Viet-Minh actually succeed in winning its battles, which were first and foremost logistical victories.” Historian Christopher Goscha seconded Fall’s point by noting the DRV “initiated from 1950 what became

726 Bernard Fall, Indochina: The Last Year of the War: Communist Organization and Tactics,” Military Review, Vol. 36, No. 7, October 1956, 7, Series 1.06, Box A-1, BBF, JFKL.
728 Ibid., 85.
one of the most ‘totalizing’ wars in the history of the twentieth-century decolonization, profoundly transforming its state and the society it sought to mobilize.”

Fall confirmed that, in an operation in June 1953 in Laos, women and men carried up to 45lbs., an average of fifteen to twenty miles a day. It is worth pointing out that the terrain covered was rarely, if ever, level and was obstructed by jungle growth that scouts and forward groups had to remove. Moreover, because the carriers consumed between “2 and 2.2. lbs. of rice per day… on a 300-mile haul of fifteen days…the porters’ (final) payload was reduced to 12 lbs.” The numbers of individuals contributing to this specific operation were also remarkable with Fall writing, “the two Republican [Viet Minh] divisions operating in the area had an aggregate supply column of 95,000 porters. Similar figures were frequently cited by both friend and foe and may even be considered as conservative.”

Recent studies of this operation in Laos from 1953 estimate the presence of 62,530 porters but, in the overall context of civilian labor between 1950 and 1954, the “DRV mobilized 1,741,281 people as civilian porters, almost all of them peasants.”

This human effort astounded Fall in terms of the numbers of porters, but also in terms of Vietnamese creativity and industry. In an interview conducted in 1953, Fall recounted how a former Viet Minh construction worker and his unit were ordered to build twenty supply buildings in five days. Fall recorded that “Lacking tools, they had the initiative to cut tree trunks into flat slivers for use as spades to dig into the ground.”

French Legionnaires were aware of Viet Minh

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731 Ibid., 86.
ingenuity, but many French officers underestimated the use of tens of thousands of “coolies” to carry disassembled arms, including artillery and mortar systems, and their ability to reassemble them to engage French forces.\textsuperscript{734} Like their French counterparts, leaders in the United States were aware of Viet Minh military organization and increasing material capacity, but synergy between political and military factors, demonstrated by massive numbers of civilian porters who hauled equipment in places vehicles could not reach, for example, was difficult to understand fully. Total war transcended not only conventional military measurement and analysis but conventional thinking as well. Total war in a “peasant” country like Vietnam added further complexity for Western thinkers.

Also contributing to Viet Minh strength were a series of Viet Minh political networks which extended throughout much of Southeast Asia before the outbreak of war with France in 1946. Fall explained that the Viet Minh and the Worker’s Party (Lao Dong), “made a serious attempt to assume the leadership of other Communist-inspired ‘national liberation movements’ in Thailand, Burma, and Malaya—not to speak of those of Cambodia and Laos which are totally under the Party’s control.”\textsuperscript{735} Three organizations, in succession, developed these networks according to Viet Minh direction. According to Fall, these included the “Southeast Asia League, which collapsed in 1948 after a brief appearance in Thailand prior to Marshal Phibun’s return to power [on April 8, 1948]; the Ku Sap Be, which operated under Nguyen Van Long, another Moscow-trained Vietnamese; and lastly, the Communist Co-ordination Committee in Southeast Asia which, as its name implies—supposedly coordinates the operations of the Communist parties on the whole

\textsuperscript{734} Michael Kaponya, \textit{The French Foreign Legion and Indochina: In Retrospect} (Mustang, Oklahoma: Tate Publishing, 2013), 111.

Southeast Asia mainland and Indonesia.” Fall identified these organizations, and the physical sanctuaries they provided, extending into Thailand, and especially Laos and Cambodia, through his research conducted in 1953. These connections, moreover, had deep roots and preceded formation of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) since their foundations were established in the early twentieth-century by anti-French Vietnamese Nationalists, such Phan Boi Chau, and later built upon by Nguyen Ai Quoc in the 1920s before he adopted the name Ho Chi Minh.

Organizational dynamics that helped the Viet Minh eliminate competitors, achieve a functioning administration and gain mass support were important, but this horizontal expansion of networks into other geographical areas was even more critical. As Jeremy Weinstein explained, “In the absence of economic endowments, leaders must build networks rooted in identities and ideologies to succeed.” At face value, French pressure upon Vietnamese nationalist and communist groups, especially in South Vietnam, forced them to expand beyond Vietnam for survival. But the development of organizational frameworks’ extension to other places and continued organizational linkages through established networks were political processes that also explain broader political changes in Southeast Asia during the Cold War. In 1953, Fall recognized a series of networks extending into Laos when Viet Minh forces joined the Lao Issara, led by Souphanouvong, to form the Pathet Lao in 1950. Fall believed that the Pathet Lao, with its government in Viengxay scattered across a network of limestone caves in Northeast Laos,

736 Ibid., 58-59.
facilitated North Vietnamese communist efforts “during the Spring Offensive of 1953 against French forces.” These bases in Laos, from which the Viet Minh could launch operations, figured significantly in later operations leading to Dien Bien Phu in the spring of 1954.

Fall claimed in 1953, before Dien Bien Phu changed the political landscape in Indochina, that Cambodia was also of great importance as sanctuary. He wrote, “Vietnam has a more direct interest in Cambodia inasmuch as the latter has been Vietnam’s favorite overflow area for the last 150 years.” Khmer populations in Cambodia, however, opposed incursions that dated from the 1830s and ethnic assimilation policies by the Nguyen dynasty, which ruled the region at the time, led to uprisings during the 1840s. While Fall was generally correct in this analysis, relations between Kinh (ethnic Vietnamese) and other ethnicities were never uncontested. The diversity and history of ethnic relations were lessons Fall was processing in 1954 and later he wrote with more sophisticated understanding of them. Viet Minh inroads to and from Cambodia were consequential enough for Fall to detail these connections in a section entitled, “The Worker’s Party and the Khmer Issara,” in the third chapter of The Viet-Minh Regime. Through forty pages of analysis into relations among the Viet Minh, Pathet Lao, and Khmer Issara, Fall concluded in 1954 that connectivity between the Viet Minh and these neighboring groups and regions had been planned and developed prior to World War II, and later researchers provided evidence to support Fall’s conclusions.

741 Ibid., 61.
742 Ibid., 61.
745 See Christopher E. Gosha, Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of the Vietnamese Revolution, 1885-1954 (Richmond Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999), Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series. For further analysis
Laos and Cambodia clearly stood out as important to Fall in 1954. In a section entitled, “Relations with the other Indochinese States,” Fall remarked on the Viet Minh relationship to Cambodia, writing, “The young Democratic Republic of Vietnam had learned its lesson well. Hardly five years after its own liberation from the chains of colonialism, and in the midst of a war for its own survival, it had created a full-fledged satellite of its own.” Cambodia and Laos were central to Fall’s study on the Viet Minh, and his recognition of networks among the Viet Minh, Pathet Lao and Khmer Issara demonstrated an important mark in Fall’s thought. He understood, in 1953, that socio-political Maoist-inspired doctrine, which the Viet Minh shaped to its own ends, had been harnessed to already established pre-communist anticolonial and nationalist networks that extended through Indochina before the early 1940s. Fall’s emphasis on these networks and sanctuaries clearly originated in his experience as a member of the Maquis during World War II. Commitment to a totalizing war that mobilized Vietnamese society also contributed to Fall’s sense that Vietnamese survival was at stake, or at a minimum, that it was portrayed as such among Viet Minh adherents. Based in his own experience, Fall could empathize with the communist Vietnamese, writing of his time in the Second World War that “for us there was nothing except the endless tunnel. Either the Americans, British and the Free French landed and we would be

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on pre-war networks in Southeast Asia, see Paul Staniland, Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 206-212.
747 Cambodia was particularly important during the American-era of the Second Indochina/Vietnam War. Kenneth Conboy and John Prados reported that approximately 70% of all logistical supplies allocated to the National Liberation Front were channeled through Sihanoukville instead of along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. The Cambodian port of Sihanoukville eventually funneled, according to Kenneth Conboy, “70 percent of communist arms to the lower provinces of South Vietnam” during the Second Indochina War and would become a “prolonged misreading” of Cambodia’s importance. By 1970, the “revealion turned on its head the common wisdom about the role played by the Ho Chi Minh Trail corridor, and obviously it called into question U.S. military strategy that centered on disrupting the logistical flow down the Laotian panhandle.” See Kenneth Conboy, The Cambodian War: Clashing Armies and CIA Covert Operations (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013), 33; see also, John Prados, The Blood Road: The Ho Chi Minh Trail and the Vietnam War (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1999), 296.
saved, or you’d just die – that was all there was to it – there was no giving up or being a prisoner – you landed in a concentration camp for extermination.”

In late 1952, Laos preoccupied government authorities in Paris and Washington because of Viet Minh incursions into neighboring Northwest Tonkin (North Vietnam). These concerns and France’s expensive efforts in Indochina were already severe problems in President Eisenhower’s view. Since 1951 collective security in Europe depended on France’s support and participation, but French inability to contribute sufficiently as a member stemmed from losses and costs incurred in Indochina despite massive amounts of aid provided in previous years by the Marshall Plan that continued well into 1952. Diplomatically, France was also recalcitrant: it would not adjudicate the Indochina question at the United Nations and it would not grant full independence to the Associated States of Laos, Cambodia, or Vietnam unless it achieved a military victory over the Viet Minh. As Eisenhower claimed, France tied “the fate of the European Defense Community (EDC) to our willingness to do things in Indochina as the French government desired.”

Eisenhower maintained that the United States was bound to the problem of Indochina because the United States was bound to France. “The decision to give aid [to France] was almost compulsory,” Eisenhower later reflected, “The United States had no real alternative unless we were to abandon Southeast Asia” and, in doing so, risk losing French commitments to collective defense in Europe as the Cold War intensified. For these reasons, the United States was as

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750 Ibid., 360.
751 Ibid., 373.
concerned as France about the Viet Minh presence in Laos. If the Viet Minh and their socio-political doctrine spread to other areas, France’s position in Indochina would become potentially untenable. Viet Minh attacks against garrisons in Tonkin, along with increasing Pathet Lao-Viet Minh cooperation, presented such a threat that France initiated operations against the Viet Minh in the region to preempt further communist attacks. A year and half before Dien Bien Phu, an important military operation gave Fall much insight into how the Viet Minh operated. It is helpful, therefore, to provide some background to events that eventually led to Dien Bien Phu. Operation Lorraine was this key to the later decisive Viet Minh victory in 1954. Operation Lorraine, the largest operation in Indochina to that point, was, ironically, inherently defensive and came about to save a beleaguered garrison at Gia Hoi, southeast of Nghia Lo in late October 1952.\footnote{Bernard B. Fall, \textit{Street Without Joy: The French Debacle in Indochina} (Guilford, Connecticut: Stackpole Books, 1961), 64.} The operation demonstrated to Fall that the Viet Minh’s doctrine, sanctuaries, and use of human porters all came together to prove that the Viet Minh had the capacity to defeat France’s army in Indochina. The days of the DRV existing as a “government in the bush” were long past. Moreover, Operation Lorraine contributed to conditions that the Viet Minh would later exploit a year and a half later in the valley of Dien Bien Phu. Initiating offensives against the Viet Minh, as Operation Lorraine would prove, were far more challenging than French planners foresaw.
Operation Lorraine sharpened French and American military and political leaders’ focus. The operation’s questionable planning centered around rescuing the Gia Hoi garrison but, in its return from the garrison’s location, French forces, particularly its Group Mobiles 1 and 4, were ambushed after the operation was cancelled on November 14, 1952. French Defense Minister Rene Pleven, attempted to explain the operation’s outcome before the French National Assembly because the result was “a miserable failure, costing some 1,200 Expeditionary Corps casualties altogether and failing to draw [General Vo Nguyen] Giap into major combat.” This focus had narrowed, moreover, because Lorraine was the largest military operation to date by French forces and included over 30,000 troops consisting of three parachute battalions, two infantry battalions, Dinassaut naval forces, two armored groups, two artillery battalions, engineering units, and two tank destroyer squadrons. Despite this firepower, according to Fall, Operation Lorraine was “disastrous” because “practically all French troop movements in Indochina took place in a ‘fishbowl.’” Fall’s account of Operation Lorraine is one of the most dramatic narratives in his writing, and Operation Lorraine was especially consequential because, “the desperate search for the set-piece battle became an obsession of the successive French commanders-in-chief in

Indochina until the end of the War.”\footnote{757} Fall added, “The set-piece battle had, in fact, become the 
credo of not only the French who were fighting the Indochina war but of the United States which, 
after 1952, had become more and more directly involved in its financial and often in its strategic 
aspects.”\footnote{758}

Despite Operation Lorraine’s failure, Fall was bewildered that even more aggressive 
French operations were developed to entice PAVN forces into a conventional battle, particularly 
through the subsequent “Navarre Plan” offensive initiated in 1953. Fall later wrote extensively on 
this period because Lorraine, despite its problems, contributed to the later decision to garrison 
troops in the valley of Dien Bien Phu. Fall remarked with sincere sorrow, since he personally 
knew French soldiers garrisoned there, that “the French already had extended themselves a great 
deal by attempting ‘Operation Lorraine’ at all.”\footnote{759} Fall was also astounded at French inability to 
learn from Operation Lorraine while, in contrast, “The Communist High Command,” in 
recognizing that attacks upon isolated garrisons like Gia Hoi led to vulnerable rescue attempts, 
“had decided upon a military strategy from which no French initiative and no amount of American 
military aid were going to cause it to deviate until the end of the war.”\footnote{760}

Operations in Northwest Vietnam, exemplified by Lorraine and supported by infiltration 
into Viet Minh held areas with \textit{Groupement de Commandos Mixtes Aéroportés} (GCMA), later 
known as \textit{Groupement Mixte d’Intervention} (GMI) after 1953, “began to assume strategic

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\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{758} Ibid., 105.
\item \footnote{759} Ibid., 104-105.
\item \footnote{760} Ibid., 63.
\end{itemize}
importance” that year. These commando units, Fall wrote, “were organized on the basis of the experience gathered during World War II by the European Maquis and by such Allied long-range penetration groups as the British ‘Chindits’ of General Orde Wingate in Burma, and the United States ‘Marauders’ of Brigadier General Frank D. Merrill.” They typically parachuted into Viet Minh-held territory, were left to their own devices to destroy what they could, and, if possible, exfiltrate back into French-held territory. Dinassaut naval forces, which Fall considered “one of the few worthwhile contributions of the Indochina War to military knowledge,” were also critical. Dinassaut were division d’infanterie navale d’assaut, often translated as “naval assault divisions,” and were composed of joint forces that included army infantry and marines, as well as sailors for ship handling and navigation. Their tasks consisted of transporting infantry, blocking Viet Minh retreat across waterways, and providing logistical support and fire-support. Initially developed in 1945 with fourteen landing craft “purchased from the British and modified with additional armor and armament,” dinassaut contributed to later US “brown water” naval operations across the Mekong River Delta after 1965, to provide “gunfire support and logistics for these forces once they engaged with the enemy.”

The innovation of these military forces held potential so, despite Operation Lorraine’s outcome, larger garrisons were assigned near Laos to draw Viet Minh forces into the open for

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761 Ibid., 275. Fall translated the GCMAs as as “Composite Airborne Commando Group” but did not translate GMI, translated here as “Composite Infiltration Group.” For Fall’s discussion on the effectiveness of GCMA.s, see Ibid., pages 267-279.
762 Ibid., 268.
763 For an example of such operations, see Pierre Schoendoerffer, La 317e Section (Paris: Gallimard, 1963).
765 Joint, as used here, means the integration of military service components, Air Force, Army and Navy in the execution of a unified single military operation at tactical, operational or strategic level.
conventional battle through the Navarre Plan. Fall wrote that “The now-famous ‘Navarre Plan,’ named after the unlucky French commander-in-chief in Indochina in 1953-54, were intended to break ‘the organized body of Communist aggression by the end of the 1955 fighting season,’ leaving the task of mopping up the remaining (and presumably disorganized) guerrilla groups to the progressively stronger national armies of Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam.”\footnote{Bernard B. Fall, *Street Without Joy: The French Debacle in Indochina* (Guilford, Connecticut: Stackpole Books, 1961), 105. See especially, “Set-Piece Battle-II”, p. 61-106.} In a move that would subvert Dulles’s optimism, the French placed their garrison at Dien Bien Phu in the type of terrain Fall described as a “Fishbowl,” in which most French operations in the Red River Delta and western reaches of North Vietnam failed. Dien Bien Phu, a valley surrounded by hills filled unexpectedly with Viet Minh artillery, mostly hauled in disassembled pieces by tens of thousands of human porters, marked the beginning of the end for France in Indochina.

On the battle itself, Fall remarked that “Communist commander-in-chief, Vo Nguyen Giap, explained that the French Expeditionary Corps ‘was strategically surprised because it did not believe that we would attack—and we attacked; and it was tactically surprised because we had succeeded in solving the problems of concentrating our troops, our artillery, and our supplies.’”\footnote{Ibid., 106.} Fall explained that infiltration of the Red River Delta in the years before Dien Bien Phu was the groundwork that made Viet Minh strategic victory possible, writing, “Warfare behind French Union lines had already weighted the scales of war heavily in favor of the Vietnamese People’s Army before Dien Bien Phu, and even before the development of the Navarre Plan.”\footnote{Bernard Fall, *Indochina: The Last Year of the War: Communist Organization and Tactics,* *Military Review,* Vol. 36, No. 7, October 1956, 7, Series 1.06, Box A-1, BBF, JFKL. Qiang Zhai, writing in 1992, reinforced Fall’s point by noting, “Under the direction of Chinese advisers, the Vietminh liberated the north-western region in late 1952, which in turn served as a convenient staging area for the later siege of Dien Bien Phu.” See, Zhai, Qiang, “China and the Geneva Conference of 1954,” *The China Quarterly,* No. 129, March 1992, 105.}
consequential defeat of the French, Fall understood, was the result of long-term political action by the Viet Minh. It was achieved by the Viet Minh’s socio-political-military doctrine, through development of parallel hierarchies and the efforts of the Cong An, Trinh Sat, and Dich Van, through the mass mobilization of Vietnamese local populations in support of the Viet Minh, and by the development of sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia that had long been in existence before Dien Bien Phu. Western inability to understand how the North Vietnamese defeated the French revealed a lack of understanding of these multiple complex components, which Fall was piecing together. He was incrementally recognizing a type of warfare in Indochina that military forces alone could not defeat.

IV - Upstate New York

When Bernard Fall returned to Syracuse, New York in late 1953, he began writing. In the field, he had implemented his war-time experience in the Maquis and French Army during World War II and he applied analytical abilities developed during the War Crimes Commission at Nuremberg and through graduate study of Indochina. Many aspects of his own experience of war, he had recognized, existed in Indochina. For example, there were sanctuaries assisting in the survival of beleaguered soldier-citizens and, in Indochina, the Viet Minh built on this development from networks established in Cambodia and Laos before the Second World War. The depth of Fall’s organizational analysis of the Viet Minh and the DRV would likely have been less impressive without the skills he had developed from his work at Nuremberg and through graduate
study at SAIS and at Syracuse University. Fall’s thought on warfare in Indochina was being pulled together from his past, from research gathered during his first trip to Indochina, and from reflection on this material in 1955 and 1956. The research gathered from this first trip would serve as a foundation not only of his 1955 dissertation, which he would soon complete at Syracuse University, but also for Street Without Joy, and one of the most important and well-known books on the Battle of Dien Bien Phu ever published, entitled Hell in a Very Small Place.\textsuperscript{770}

There were, however, physical downsides to field-work in Indochina. While conducting research in 1953, Fall developed a case of jungle rot on parts of his back, groin, and along one arm and leg. As he wrote to his fiancé, Dorothy Winer, he was earning his Ph.D. “the hard” way, particularly when it came to fixing the problem writing, the “treatment consisted of ripping open the pores where the fungus is lodged, and then kill the stuff inside. This is done by first shaving the body hair in the area affected, then using a nylon finger brush on the sore area until it breaks. Then taking some cotton and rubbing the entire area with a solution combining salicylic acid, benzoic acid, iodine, sulfuric ether, and pure alcohol. Together, you ought to be able to melt metal with it.”\textsuperscript{771}

On a personal, but more intellectual level, Fall claimed that the experience with French and Vietnamese soldiers in the field “along the defense perimeter, wet and afraid,” reinforced an empathetic awareness and he was sharing, even reliving, the plight of soldiers that he himself had

\textsuperscript{770} Hell in a Very Small Place and Street Without Joy utilized primary source material Fall gathered during his initial research trip to Indochina in 1953. See Fall’s references to sources used in Hell in a Very Small Place in Bernard B. Fall, Last Reflections on a War (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1967), 23-24. Fall’s comments on his research trip and experiences gathered in 1953 are cited in Street Without Joy, pages 19-20. The “upshot of my personal experiences and interviews which I could not use for my research went into a diary in the form of letters to the American girl who is now my wife.” See Bernard B. Fall, Street Without Joy: The French Debacle in Indochina (Guilford, Connecticut: Stackpole Books, 1961), 19-20.

\textsuperscript{771} Dorothy Fall, Bernard Fall: Memories of a Soldier-Scholar, (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2007), 75-75. Salicylic acid in merthiolate, was a similar concoction used in the South Pacific during World War II. See also, James A. Michener, Tales of the South Pacific (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1947), 132-133.
previously experienced during World War II. It is clear from his descriptions that he recognized the camaraderie of soldiering from his service in the Maquis and French Army. Getting to know Vietnam and Cambodia were powerful experiences for Fall, and, as he consistently explained, he had committed himself to the region and Indochina would remain his intellectual focus for the remainder of his career.\footnote{Bernard B. Fall, Last Reflections on a War (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1967), 23.} Altogether, Fall wrote to Dorothy in 1953, that these interactions combined to “knock the intellectual superciliousness out of me.”\footnote{Bernard B. Fall, Street Without Joy: The French Debacle in Indochina (Guilford, Connecticut: Stackpole Books, 1961), 19.} This reflection is important because it implied Fall’s belief that field research inoculated him against becoming an armchair analyst removed from the realities he described. His research gave his work an authenticity and practical utility that mere intellectual abstract reflection would lack. And if he was to be authentic, he had to be honest in describing what he saw.

Prior to his return to the United States in November 1953, Fall offered further reflection on his first trip to Indochina. In the same letter describing the treatment for jungle rot, Fall wrote, “Mixed feelings about leaving? Sure. With all my bookish air and with my highly peaceable education, I nevertheless enjoy a good tough scrape, just to prove to myself that I’m no sissy. I guess that I’ve been trying to prove a point to myself ever since my parents died.”\footnote{Ibid., 80.} The intimacy of the statement was rare. In Dorothy’s perspective, as someone who knew Bernard Fall better than anyone, it was “a profound piece of self-analysis.”\footnote{Dorothy Fall, Bernard Fall: Memories of a Soldier-Scholar, (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2007, 80.} Fall’s friend François Sully also knew of Fall’s loss but explained that “Fall never talked about his father who was captured and killed by the German Gestapo in France.”\footnote{“Sully comments on Bernard Fall,” François Sully Papers and Photographs, Newsweek Files, Feb-March 1967, UMass-Boston, Series II, Subject Files, Box 2, Folder 31, p. 5.} It is possible that Fall found in Indochina, especially in

Vietnam, something that enabled him to cope with or somehow mitigate the loss of his parents. The war in Indochina certainly provided academic opportunity, but Fall’s dedication to his study was all-consuming. Fall’s teacher at SAIS, Amry Vandenbosch was correct, nobody knew much about Indochina, at least among English-speaking audiences, so Fall set about filling this gap for the rest of his career. The first trip proved, in any case, that Fall had found a calling and he would study and write about Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia with fervor after 1953, and he would do so with a “tireless effort to secure the facts and data as they are, and not as one wishes them to be.”

Syracuse University and the goal of writing up his research to complete his doctoral dissertation were, however, not far from Fall’s mind. After returning from Vietnam, with a short stop in Paris to spend time with an aunt and uncle, Fall returned to the Maxwell School at Syracuse to develop his research into a dissertation for his political science advisor, Dr. W.W. Kulski. Before leaving Vietnam, however, a reminder of life at Syracuse reached him in the field. Fall explained “While in Lai-Chau, the airhead behind Communist lines,” Fall recalled, “a mailbag was parachuted in to us, since the airfield was flooded. It contained a letter for me which had followed me, through all my changes of address, from Syracuse, N.Y., to France, Hanoi, and the postal unit of our Airborne Resupply Group. It was a court summons issued for a parking violation committed while a graduate student at Syracuse. (P.S. I went back to pay it one year later, but the judge dropped the matter when he heard under what circumstances the summons had been delivered.)”

With a dissertation to complete, this served as a reminder that Fall had a very different type of work ahead of him after nearly a year in Indochina.

778 Ibid., 257.
Fall’s first trip to Indochina in 1953 was important because it served as the source for his first book, numerous articles published between 1953 and 1956, and much of the base material for two of his most recognized books. Intellectually, Fall saw more clearly the implications of the Viet Minh’s organization and tactics for their war against French forces and the almost one-hundred-year long legacy of colonialism in Indochina. Viet Minh units, like the Cong An, Trinh Sat, and Dich Van created parallel hierarchies to compete with established French and the State of Vietnam’s authority. They provided the Viet Minh with options, other than direct military confrontation, and their efforts, along with many others, weakened French control to improve the Viet Minh’s chance of success when open warfare was eventually engaged. Moreover, in battles like Operation Lorraine in late 1952, the Viet Minh mobilized masses of Vietnamese to conduct total war against French forces. Fall used his knowledge and experience, gained during the Second World War, to assess better the subversive nature of Viet Minh warfare, the importance of networks and sanctuaries outside of Vietnam, and especially the geostrategic importance of the People’s Republic of China victory in 1949 which provided increased material aid to the Viet Minh in the early 1950s. Fall was the only individual describing these developments from the field in Indochina in English in 1953 and 1954. This positioned him to understand Vietnamese warfare and his knowledge base, moreover, provided him with an important grounding for the future trajectory of his thought on warfare in Vietnam. Fall was coming to recognized modern warfare in Indochina and he was uniquely positioned and equipped to describe it in ways few others could. Fall’s knowledge of modern warfare as a result of his first trip and subsequent study formed a critical baseline with which he could compare changes when he returned to Indochina again in early 1957. Those days, however, lay ahead and after the completion of his dissertation in upstate New York in 1955.
Chapter Six – “The Wind and the Water”

Fall completed several studies in 1955 and 1956 after moving to Washington D.C. These included analyses of the 1954 Geneva Agreements that concluded the First Indochina War, the new Republic of Vietnam government in Saigon under the leadership of Ngo Dinh Diem, and the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao religious groups in South Vietnam. Much of this was based on material collected during Fall’s nine months in Indochina in 1953, but he also collected further evidence while in the United States. This chapter argues that Fall’s assessment of violations of the Geneva Agreements, his descriptions of insufficient understanding of South Vietnamese diversity, and his criticism of poor US assistance planning to Vietnam, along with misguided internal policies within the Republic, revealed significant political problems. Fall called attention to these so that the United States and Diem’s government might adjust its policy course but, instead, Fall was ignored.

Fall’s compulsion to tell the truth of what he saw in Indochina, such as issues with US foreign assistance, created problems because the truths he published did not support the current course of US and Republic of Vietnam policy. Fall would pay a price for his candor and he would be rejected by US policy-makers and professionally blocked from future employment with the US State Department. He would be forced to find other institutions, like his academic home at Howard University, through which he could continue his scholarship of growing problems in Indochina. This chapter begins by examining these three analyses. It then focuses on Fall’s analysis of later developments in South Vietnam in the summer of 1957 during his second research trip to Vietnam and Cambodia. Foremost among issues Fall learned of from his visit to Vietnam was Ngo Dinh Diem’s decision to remove elected village leaders in 1956 and replace them with government-
appointed officials. A friend of Fall’s, historian Paul Mus, referenced a Confucian proverb he personally heard Ho Chi Minh recite. The proverb referred to Vietnamese village leaders and their communal villages as “The Wind and the Water” and that village leaders were “the expression of a place, the spirit of a locality.” Diem’s determination to disrupt this relationship, along with other troubling decisions, created social instability that the Viet Minh sought to create and exploit during the First Indochina War. There were limitations to Fall’s understanding, however. The Viet Minh also disrupted local society and removed village elders they deemed as unsupportive of their cause. Communists consistently railed against feudal aspects of Vietnamese society. It appears that Fall was inclined to understand why the Viet Minh succeeded, whereas the efforts to revolutionize society in the south did not make similar sense to him, or at least, did not appear as legitimate as the Viet Minh’s efforts. There was a bias, therefore, in Fall’s early criticism of the Republic of Vietnam and Diem’s decision to remove village elders. Without question, Fall had studied the Democratic Republic of Vietnam at much greater length than the South Vietnamese administration, so a degree of prejudice in his analysis may have been a result. If he was biased in favor of the Viet Minh, it was not because of any affinity for its communist ideology but, rather, because of its guerrilla nature and underdog status, a situation with which Fall might have sympathized as a former guerrilla fighter himself. Diem’s policies, along with US assistance to South Vietnam, nonetheless, initially drew Fall’s attention far more than the Viet Minh’s problems during his second trip. Still, Fall would criticize the Viet Minh because they had their own self-inflicted wounds, such as land reform disasters and brutal repression of peasant revolts.

779 Paul Mus claimed that, in Vietnamese society, the village was the most essential structure and that Ngo Dinh Diem’s most consequential mistake was to replace the leaders of South Vietnamese villages, who were, according to Mus, “the expression of the country, as they say the ‘Wind and the Water’ of the locality.” Mus claimed that Diem brought an “extinguishing of the light of the Vietnamese.” See Paul Mus interview, In the Year of the Pig, documentary (1968), minute 39.10 – 41:10. https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2zpgbw
Fall’s 1957 research trip to Vietnam originated with an Institute of Pacific Relations’ commission to study Vietnam’s economy and changes in the country since 1954. In addition to the Geneva Agreements, Diem’s decision-making, and the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao, Fall turned his attention to US assistance programs supporting the Republic of Vietnam. The most important result of this work was an article, “Will South Viet-Nam Be Next?”, published in *The Nation* in May 1958. The second section of the chapter examines this critical, even scathing, analysis of U.S. economic aid programs to South Vietnam. It marked a crucial turning point in Fall’s career for two reasons. First, Fall charted differences in Indochina that occurred between 1953 and 1957 and, especially, problems stemming from seriously flawed US assistance overwhelming the Vietnamese economy. Second, the article marked a difficult turning point for Fall’s career. In late 1957, Fall negotiated a contract with the International Cooperation Administration (ICA), a precursor to USAID, to teach at the Royal Institute in Phenom Penh, Cambodia. In reaction to Fall’s outspoken criticism in “Will South Viet-Nam Be Next?,” along with critical comments Fall provided at a New York speech before the Association of Asian Studies, Fall’s contract was rescinded at the last moment by authorities in the US State Department. The third section of the chapter describes these subsequent events following Fall’s New York speech and the publication of “Will South Viet-Nam Be Next?” This frustrating experience would compel Fall to find other institutions for future support, and further rely upon his academic home at Howard University because of their belief in Fall’s scholarship on Indochina, US foreign policy, and his overall effort to describe ongoing and developing problems in South Vietnam. Fall did not call attention to widening and increasingly evident problems in Vietnam for partisan reasons, instead, he did so because he knew the Viet Minh possessed significant capability to exploit security and economic problems and, historically, that they had successfully done so against the French. In the mid and
late 1950s, Fall did not want to see the history of the Viet Minh’s war against the French possibly repeating itself. He wanted to apply the history he knew to assist anti-communism and better inform those responsible for the growing presence of the United States in Southeast Asia in support of its ally, the Republic of Vietnam.

_I – “The Village is the Spirit of a Place”_

After completing his doctorate at Syracuse University in 1955, Fall moved with Dorothy to Washington D.C. as an assistant professor in the department of Human Relations Area Files at American University.\(^{780}\) This transition was a dynamic period for Fall. On top of his work in the Human Relations Area Files, Fall served as a guest lecturer at SAIS and George Washington University, teaching graduate courses in Southeast Asian Politics. The following academic year, Fall moved to more permanent employment as a lecturer in the Department of Government at Howard University.\(^{781}\) At Howard, Fall consolidated his professional life and was promoted to associate professor in 1957. Howard University would serve as an intellectual home for the remainder of his academic career. This progression in Fall’s professional life provided structure for a critical period in the development of his thinking about Indochina. Not only did employment at Howard University provide stability, the intellectual environment there also provided freedom to think seriously about warfare in Indochina, rights in time of war, and America’s international role supporting France and, more broadly, the United States’ role in the world. Fall, moreover, was naturally emboldened as a writer and thinker, but he was now professionally supported and

\(^{780}\) Bernard Fall, “CV,” Series 1.01, Box F-1, BBF, JFKL.

\(^{781}\) Ibid.
encouraged to do so. Ralphe Bunche, who founded the political science department and taught at Howard before Fall arrived, served as world-recognized diplomat and role model Fall could emulate in addition to teachers, like Amry Vandenbosch and others.

Fall was not content to study his subjects from a desk and his teaching and research addressed contemporary problems in foreign policy. Fall also never forgot his experiences during World War II and he worked to ensure others did not forget Nazis crimes either. At the Human Area Relations Files and as a guest lecturer, Fall showed his colleagues films he obtained from the U.S. Army on Nazi atrocities. As his wife Dorothy explained “He thought [the films] were the best way to make people understand the reality of Nazism. The films were somewhat subversive in Washington, at a time when our government mainly wanted to forget about the Nazis and concentrate on our ties to West Germany.”

Fall clearly believed that Americans must heed the lessons of the Second World War when developing foreign policy. Membership in the Washington D.C. branch of the French War Veterans group, Les Anciens Combattants Français, and a decoration for valor during German occupation awarded by the French government in October 1955, reinforced his resolve to remember. In addition to his work at Howard in 1957, Fall worked as a research associate for Systems Analysis Corporation, which was under contract to the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Henceforth, Fall would pursue two parallel career paths: one in academia at Howard and the other in government-supported research. These two paths converged in the years immediately following the First Indochina War.

783 Bernard Fall, “CV,” Series 1.01, Box F-1, BBF, JFKL.
784 Ibid.
785 Ibid.
In 1954, while the battle of Dien Bien Phu was still concluding, the Geneva Conference convened and participants agreed to a ceased fire that divided Vietnam at the 17th parallel. \(^{786}\) Fall described these developments in an article in March 1955, “Indochina Since Geneva.” He noted that one of the most critical aspects of the agreement was that, “Nationwide elections are supposed to be held in both sections of divided Vietnam sometime between March and July 1956.” \(^{787}\) The elections planned for 1956 would unify the country after temporary division along a demilitarized zone at the 17th parallel, agreed to at the conference. After the State of Vietnam’s (SVN) demise, Ngo Dinh Diem assumed the presidency of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), contingent on later elections determining governance within South Vietnam in 1956. \(^{788}\) Fall focused on the predicament of the Republic of Vietnam, writing “the overall difficulty which faces the Diem government is that of a rapidly-disintegrating regional, provincial and local administration.” \(^{789}\) Fall drew on his own observations and on those of journalists whose judgment he trusted, such as C.J. Sulzberger of *The New York Times*. Sulzberger described Diem’s administration scathingly in 1955: “Largely through the obstinate insistence of our own State Department the inept and chaotic Ngo Dinh Diem Regime remains in power. But anarchy, rather than Diem, governs…Experts are betting that South Vietnam will fall of its own corrupt weight.” \(^{790}\) This may have been true in Sulzberger’s perception, but historians have challenged these kinds of one-sided understandings of Diem to develop more complicated analysis of his ideology and why he was supported by the United States, despite his shortcomings. \(^{791}\)

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\(^{787}\) Ibid., 3.


\(^{790}\) Quoted in Ibid., 5.

Ngo Dinh Diem, a Catholic in a country where the majority of Vietnamese were Buddhists, was initially appointed prime minister by Bao Dai on the condition that he would have military and civilian control as prime minister. This allowed Diem to build further executive power, which he consolidated in the second half of 1954 and through two elections scheduled for 1955 and 1956, respectively, one determining the executive and the other deciding the national assembly. The first election, held on October 23 after a fall-out between Bao Dai and Diem, was a runoff and Diem masterfully maneuvered to gain power. He subsequently established the Republic of Vietnam on October 25, 1955 and announced his administration as its executive. Later, on March 4, 1956, elections for the 123-member national assembly occurred under a cloud of political suspicion. Anti-Diem Vietnamese claimed “that the [national assembly] elections were unfair and were merely designed to find Diem a puppet legislature which he could dominate.” On the national stage, another referendum determining Vietnam’s future, originally conceived at Geneva to unify the country in 1956, however, was never held. As stipulated in article 6 of the Geneva Agreements, preparations to unify Vietnam through a referendum were supposed to begin on July 20, 1955 with the referendum scheduled for 1956. Pham Van Dong, the North Vietnamese Vice Premier and Foreign Minister, sought to initiate this overall process but his efforts were rejected by Diem. Instead, not only did Diem refuse to hold elections, he would hold-out until “true liberty” was established over north Vietnam. Diem’s position was that, since the State of Vietnam was in its transition towards establishment of a new government in the Republic of Vietnam, it was

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793 Ibid., 140-142.
“not a signatory to the Geneva agreements of July 1954, and so was not bound to honor them.”

The United States also did not sign the agreements, nor did it encourage Diem to hold national elections in 1956. According to historian George Herring, “[President] Eisenhower and [Secretary of State John Foster] Dulles agreed…that if elections were held immediately Ho Chi Minh would be an easy victor.” Clearly, this was not the type of outcome that democratic processes were supposed to produce.

Regardless, the new state in South Vietnam was not the result of democratic decision-making. As Fall described the situation, “The Republic of Vietnam has publicly proclaimed that it does not feel bound by an agreement to which it was not a partner, and which was made over its objections, and present United States policy is to support the Republic on this position.” Fall admitted “It is not yet clear what alternatives can be chosen should elections not take place as scheduled.” In such an environment, anti-communist factions competed internally for power, as well as against Viet Minh cadre left behind in the South after the conference was concluded in 1954. The political religious organizations, the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao, initially turned towards Diem’s administration but rivalry for power in the South created widespread political instability. Viet Minh efforts to organize local ‘resistance’ committees and thwart local Republican administration whenever and wherever possible also exacerbated problems.

In addition, another early challenge to Diem’s authority in the autumn of 1954 originated within South Vietnam, led by the Vietnamese National Army’s leader Major General Nguyen Van

800 Ibid., 152.
Hinh, son of former State of Vietnam Prime Minister Nguyen Van Tam. Fall described this potential coup, stating “Diem’s rift with the Vietnamese National Army and its chief of staff Hinh, resulted in several bloody clashes between Army units and police groups loyal to the Premier [Diem], and these further underlined the weakness of the regime.” Hinh was dismissed in November 1954 and emigrated to France where he continued work to support anti-Diem factions. Fall did not explain the origins of Tam and Hinh’s antagonism towards Diem’s administration, but it is possible they viewed Diem as incapable of consolidating a genuine consensus among the Vietnamese people, a consensus they believed was required to create a legitimate representative government in South Vietnam. They, therefore, deeply resented the eventual election of a “rubber stamp” national assembly that occurred in March 1956. Nguyen Van Tam, frustrated with France’s historical dismissive position towards Vietnamese autonomy during his days as a leader of the State of Vietnam, had already resigned as prime minister in December 1953. His dissatisfaction with Diem and the national assembly election results, however, went too far in the wrong direction and he emigrated to the United States in 1955.

802 The 1954 conflict between forces allied to Chief of Staff of the Vietnamese National Army, Nguyen Van Hinh, and Ngo Dinh Diem’s faction foreshadowed internal threats to Diem’s administration later in April 1960 in which eighteen members of a dissenting political party, the “Bloc for Liberty and Progress,” issued the Caravelle Manifesto [named after the Saigon hotel at which the statement was signed]. According to historian Ronald Bruce Frankum, Jr. the 1960 manifesto “represented a legitimate threat to the Saigon government and raised questions [concerning Diem’s political legitimacy] that [Ambassador Elbridge] Durbrow had long believed to be valid.” See Ronald Bruce Frankum, Jr., *Vietnam’s Year of the Rat: Elbridge Durbrow, Ngo Dinh Diem and the Turn in U.S. Relations, 1959-1961* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2014), 50.
804 Donald Lancaster, *The Emancipation of French Indochina* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 283. Tam was compelled to resign, according to Lancaster, because of disagreements with “the imperial cabinet at Dalat, and also with the French authorities.” Lancaster notes that Tam was also under a political and social cloud after his daughter received wedding gifts from the Chinese community in Cholon. Lancaster did not explain if Tam had more than one daughter or, if two, which daughter accepted the gifts. Fall claimed that Tam’s oldest daughter was married to the Viet Minh’s surgeon general, a relationship that likely was difficult to accept for Tam since he was categorically anti-communist and lost two sons to Viet Minh violence. Fall pointed this out because it demonstrated the type of complex social environment in which war was fought in Vietnam. See Dorothy Fall, *Bernard Fall: Memories of a Soldier-Scholar* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2007), 77.
Fall saw other problems with Diem’s leadership that were perhaps more consequential than internal conflicts between Diem and his former army chief of staff, Hinh, or former prime ministers like Tam. Fall described Diem, writing he is “highly cultured, but he neither knows nor trusts the masses and does not know how to use them. He does not, like [Philippine leader Ramon] Magsaysay, visit the villages dressed in ordinary soldiers’ uniform or an open-collared shirt. On the contrary, photographs of his visits to the ragged refugees who have just escaped the Viet-Minh and have lost everything have pictured him and his aides in immaculate white suits in the best ‘colonial’ tradition.”

More problematically, American support for Diem had broader strategic implications because U.S. officials blamed France for “sabotaging the pro-American regime of Ngo Dinh Diem and of supporting the Vietnam Army clique which, under Major General Nguyen Van Hinh, defied the authority of the Diem Regime.” This distrust formed one among many deterrents that prevented the United States from learning from France’s experiences in Indochina, particularly knowledge gained over seven years of war against the Viet Minh. Moreover, Fall explained, the French government of Prime Minister, Pierre Mendès-France, “wanted American full-scale involvement in the area in order to prevent the United States, ‘as she already did before the cease-fire’, from deserting France, and leaving to France ‘alone the responsibility of a failure in South Vietnam. If failure there is to be, let us make sure to see to it that the United States carries at least a half share of the blame.”

Fall could not directly resolve these high-level political disputes, except to call attention to them in the hope that perhaps, the United States might gain from French experience in Indochina.

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806 Ibid., 22.
During his nine-months of field research in 1953, Fall had gained a first-hand view of the origins of many of the problems of 1954 and 1955. Not only had he met with Nguyen Van Tam during Tam’s tenure as State of Vietnam Prime Minister, learning of Tam’s frustrations first-hand, but Fall had also met other leaders. Foremost among these was Pham Cong Tac, a figure of importance in Tay Ninh and beyond because of his stature as the Ho Phap (Pope) of the Cao Dai. Tac was more than a religious figure, however, in fact, his political and nationalist views made him one of the most influential leaders throughout South Vietnam. According to historian Jayne Susan Warner, “The Superior’s [Pham Cong Tac] moral and political influence among southern peasants probably exceeded that of any other Vietnamese leader, except Ho Chi Minh.”

Fall was clearly fascinated by Pham Cong Tac and the Cao Dai cathedral in Tay Ninh. After spending three hours with Tac, Fall wrote Dorothy, his fiancée at the time, that Tac “had a piercing intelligence and his approach to things are very realistic. I learned more about Indochina than I’d learned before in 3 ½ months. To think that he was sitting there with me talking about the need for French help after he’d spent 5 years in French banishment in Madagascar. The man was fascinating and I can see why 2 million people think he’s the next thing to God himself - and that includes a lot of educated Europeans.”

Fall’s interest in the Cao Dai, and the Buddhist sect the Hoa Hao, was clearly registered in his 1955 article, “The Political-Religious Sects of Viet-Nam.” In it, Fall analyzed the Cao Dai, the Hoa Hao (a millenarian Buddhist revival movement in the western Mekong Delta region), and the Binh Xuyen, a crime syndicate controlling prostitution and gambling establishments in Saigon-Cholon. Fall described the historical origins of the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao in detail, a considerable

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early achievement in English-language understanding of the organizations, but the bulk of his analysis focused on the sects’ political and military power among Vietnamese in large areas of western South Vietnam and in other geographical pockets throughout the region.\footnote{Ibid., 236. For more on the Buu Son Ky Huong tradition on which Hoa Hao belief is based, see Hue Tam Ho Tai, \textit{Millenarianism and Peasant Politics in Vietnam} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983). For more on the Cao Dai, see Jayne Susan Warner, \textit{Peasant Politics and Religious Sectarianism: Peasant and Priest in the Cao Dai in Viet Nam} (New Haven: Monograph Series 23/Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1981).} (See Appendix II – Charts and Maps – Map 2). Pham Cong Tac, the Cao Dai leader, in Fall’s description was “exceedingly sensitive to changes of the political atmosphere in the country, [and] Pham Cong Tac in 1953 steered the Cao-Dai movement on a strictly Vietnamese nationalist basis.”\footnote{Bernard B. Fall, “The Political-Religious Sects of Viet-Nam.” \textit{Pacific Affairs} 28, No. 3, September 1955, 241.} When conflict between Diem and army forces led by Nguyen Van Hinh erupted, Pham Cong Tac, in Fall’s view, “adroitly succeeded in avoiding a head-on clash between the Cao Dai Sect…backed by a well-disciplined hierarchy and a devoted following of more than two million faithful…and the Diem regime during the brief civil war of April and May 1955.”\footnote{Ibid., 243.} Fall emphasized Pham Cong Tac’s interest in the Cao Dai’s longevity and autonomy as a spiritual organization, its commitment to Vietnamese through community assistance-associations, and the maintenance of a formidable militia to achieve these goals.

In addition to narrowly averted conflict involving the Cao Dai in the spring of 1955, Ngo Dinh Diem’s administration also had problems with the Hoa Hao Buddhist sect. Initiated by Huynh Phu So in 1939, Fall noted that by 1955 “the Hoa-Hao sect claims nearly 1,500,000 adherents, mostly concentrated in the highly fertile rice bowl of the Mekong Delta, particularly in the \textit{Mien-Tay}, the ‘new West’ area of the Trans-Bassac” [the western Mekong Delta region].\footnote{Ibid., 243.} The Hoa Hoa evolved from a millenarian tradition known as Buu Son Ky Huong and its followers
were recognizable by amulets they wore with Buu Son Ky Huong inscribed on them. The Hoa Hao became politicized, however, in 1947 when Huynh Phu So was assassinated by the Viet Minh, after which the Hoa Hao “pursued fiercely anti-Communist policies, for which they became well known during the Vietnam War.”816 The reason the Hoa Hao were a threat to Diem’s administration was because their previous support for the former French-associated State of Vietnam relied upon French subsidies that “had nearly completely stopped by January 1, 1955.” Thereafter, “the Diem regime had gained full control over such subsidies,” now provided by the United States.817 The same “applied to all logistical support of the armed groups of the sects: the flow of arms and other equipment was reduced to a trickle, if not stopped altogether.”818 The decision to constrict and even eliminate subsidies and other support, Fall explained, came about at a September 1954 French-American meeting in which “American economic aid was henceforth to be channeled directly to the Associated States, and American military missions in Indochina were to be transformed into training missions for the national forces in replacement of similar French teams,” departing from Indochina.819 Moreover, “At the conclusion of the Washington conversations between France and the United States in September 1954, this policy of gradual elimination of France and direct relations between the United States and the Associated States was extended to the economic and military fields,” with aid directed to the Diem regime thereafter.820 When Diem eliminated their subsidies, which the French used to ensure Cao Dai and Hoa Hao support, “The sects now became an economic and social, as well as a political problem.”821 Fall clearly knew, moreover, that the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao’s militias, with their accurate and locally-

818 Ibid., 251.
819 Ibid., 22.
820 Ibid., 22.
sourced intelligence and devoted religious commitment, presented Diem with a serious military challenge as well.

Fall viewed Cao Dai and Hoa Hao-related policy as a problem because “the loyalty of the sects to the cause of the West has been thus far based entirely on a type of self-interest that can hardly be called ‘enlightened.’” Rather, “This situation now seems to have given way to a system of subventions, in effect bribes, paid to the sect leaders in a return for their nominal support for the Diem regime.” Such payments continued through at least later March 1955 and, even then, Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen allegiance remained suspect. In a 16 March Memorandum from Edward Lansdale to J. Lawton Collins, Lansdale wrote “At President Diem’s request, I saw him early this morning. He said he needed 15,000,000$ urgently to provide funds for Cao Dai troops, whose support he needed to retain in the present situation. The President [Diem] has exhausted all his own funds except for 200,000$. It is not clear when these kinds of payments to the religious groups and Binh Xuyen concluded, but, most likely, not long after this March memorandum since significant conflict between the groups and Diem’s government was imminent. The removal of financial support, therefore, created problems and whether considered bribes, as Fall regarded them, or more euphemistically as “subsidies,” as Air Force General Lansdale preferred, the Cao Dai and especially, the Hoa Hao relied upon them. Fall and Lansdale would debate whether they were bribes, the accurate extent of financial support provided, and this would lead Lansdale and his supporters to question Fall’s motivations and whether he was possibly a French agent. (See Appendix III – Bernard Fall and Edward Lansdale Debate) Regardless of terminology, pulling their financial support caused the sects to become “an economic and social,

as well as a political problem.” But Diem was determined, “with the help of the American authorities, to reduce the influence of the sects to a point where they became politically and militarily manageable, and drying up their sources of income” was a means to achieve control. However, this was also a means to force the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao into opposition against Diem.

Diem’s failure to provide anything other than token governmental representation to the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao was also significant because Diem’s government “consisted overwhelmingly of Catholics and his own friends and family, many of whom lacked the requisite experience to perform their jobs effectively.” As historian Jessica Chapman has noted, “dissatisfaction with Ngo Dinh Diem’s political favoritism…drove them [the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao] to increase their pressure on the prime minister to broaden his government.” Political attempts to include sect leaders in Diem’s cabinet as a gesture not surprisingly failed. Most prominently, Hoa Hao leader Tran Van Soai was made Minister of State, but appointments like this merely plastered over deeper political divisions and “in March 1955, Pham Cong Tac and Tran Van Soai and another Hoa Hao leader, Ba Cut, among other Binh Xuyen and sect leaders, sent an ultimatum to Diem, giving him five days to broaden the government.” These movements created, not unsurprisingly, greater division between the Republic of Vietnam and the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen.

Fall knew that instability in South Vietnam, especially resulting from its economic insolvency, rendered it vulnerable to Viet Minh exploitation of economic-based grievances among Vietnamese during a precarious time. Cao Dai, Hoa Hao and Binh Xuyen animosity foreboded

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827 Ibid., 88.
yet another existential crisis for the Republic of Vietnam. Fall, moreover, was aware, perhaps more than any other western observer, of the extent of political power wielded by the Viet Minh who were not ambivalent in their condemnation of Ngo Dinh Diem. Fall also knew that the Viet Minh had achieved the capability to conduct Maoist-Third Stage full-scale conventional war, a fact amply proven against French forces at Dien Bien Phu. Because of the threat they posed to South Vietnam, the Viet Minh clearly had political leaders’ attention in Paris and Washington, D.C., and in Peking and Moscow as well. Internal conflict with large, political-religious groups in South Vietnam was, therefore, a serious risk at this point in time because not only was the Republic of Vietnam increasingly dependent on American assistance, but infiltration by Viet Minh cadres added a threat of significant instability. Fall described this in January 1955, writing “French intelligence and press reports show that in many cases, the Viet-Minh did not remove its most important personnel” from South Vietnam, as mandated in the Geneva Accords in 1954. Instead, the Viet Minh “shipped out its inexperienced levies for political indoctrination and military training in the north, while the hard core of chu-luc (army regulars) and can-bo (party cadre) have remained behind with their weapons stored in well-hidden caches.”

Fall saw Viet Minh infiltration as a latent threat, potentially exacerbated by additional political instability caused by withdrawal of financial support to the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao after France’s exit from Indochina. Presciently, he explained “It is clear that the problem of the political-religious sects will soon have to be settled if the authority of the South Vietnam Government is not to remain in a state of constant challenge in its own backyard.” Fall described what was perhaps the inevitable outbreak of conflict writing, “It is not yet clear who

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830 Ibid., 8-9.
fired the opening shot in the battle and the point is unimportant. It is however, certain that Premier Diem’s palace was shelled by mortar fire on March 31, 1955…the battle for the control of South Viet-Nam and, hence, for all of Viet-Nam south of the 17th parallel, had begun.”

A critical development, one that determined the United States’ position to support Diem was in the making. The broader political problem as April 27, was that the United States Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, based on the advice of General Lawton Collins, “reluctantly agreed to the replacing of Premier Diem. He cabled the embassy in Saigon to find an alternative.” The Pentagon Papers relates how General Edward Lansdale played a key role to prevent this from happening by encouraging Diem’s successful counterattack against the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen. The result, according to Pentagon Papers author Fox Butterfield, was pivotal: “‘Washington responded with alacrity to Diem’s success, superficial though it was’…Saigon was told to forget Secretary Dulles’ order to drop Diem. The embassy then burned the April 27 message. Thereafter Mr. Diem had full American backing, and moved with more confidence.”

Diem’s war with the sects and the Binh Xuyen syndicate continued through June 1955 and ended with military victory for Diem’s forces. This was an important development because it gave his administration greater legitimacy in the eyes of American leaders in addition to the more critical outcome that Diem’s administration had survived another internal crisis. Fall, however, saw that Diem’s success was not the result of authentic allegiance but due, rather, to the assistance of CIA support provided through Edward Lansdale, at a critical moment.

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Diem’s victory over the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen in what was called the Battle of Saigon was significant even though, as Fall put it, “the armed remnants of the sects are still able to carry on extensive harassing operations, just as the Viet-Minh did after the French reoccupied South Vietnam in force in 1945, but it is unlikely that they will ever regain even part of their erstwhile political strength.”834 Before open-war between these groups and the Republic of Vietnam, the official U.S. position had been encapsulated by General Lawton Collins who was sent to Vietnam in November 1954 as President Eisenhower’s special representative to Vietnam with the rank of Ambassador. Collins wrote that US policy had “to bring every possible aid to the government of Ngo Dinh Diem and to his government only” making, Fall argued, “it clear that as before and no matter what his obvious shortcomings, that Diem was ‘America’s man.’”835 Moreover, as a way of accepting shortcomings in “America’s man,” Collins acknowledged “We may disagree with their broad philosophy of how they ought to run the country and that sort of thing; but in order to have some kind of stable government we pretty nearly have to support this regime, whose political philosophy we may not agree with, we support it for other reasons.”836 This, Fall thought, was the type of political expediency that would not produce the stability that “Lighting Joe” Collins and other U.S. leaders sought. The problem with Fall’s perception, however, was that Collins was privately very skeptical of Diem’s ability to rule. Collins would write about his frustration working with Diem because Collins knew how important it was to govern effectively. Collins, in fact, would recommend that the United States abandon Diem and find an alternative, including the “possible return of Bao Dai, or the gradual withdrawal of [U.S.]

836 J. Lawton Collins Papers, United States Army War College, Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Box 1, Folder 3, Interview, p. 418.
support from Vietnam.”\textsuperscript{837} The reality was more complex than Fall knew at the time, but, like other critics, he could only base his conclusions on the evidence available to him.

Diem’s success against the Binh Xuyen on April 27, helped his administration survive for the time being. However, American officials still believed in May 1955 that the Diem regime was barely viable, even with the machinations of Edward Lansdale and others. These ideas, of course, were not public knowledge. The withdrawal of millions of U.S. dollars for bribes to maintain Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen support for Diem, created significant animosity that replaced the previously non-committed support they provided. While Diem’s government was locked in conflict with the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen, U.S. support for Diem was hesitant and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles expressed concern about Diem’s leadership. Dulles commented to Collins, “Joe, when you were sent down there, we thought we might have ten chances of saving the Diem Regime, about one-in-ten. I think that you have at least doubled that opportunity, or that potential, at any rate.”\textsuperscript{838} These were not good odds. Diem’s success against the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen the following month, however, tilted the United States’ support toward Diem since policymakers felt they had no other choices. The problem, as Fall’s former teacher at SAIS, Amry Vandenbosch perceived it, was that “Diem probably will work for greater democracy in south Vietnam, if security conditions permit. It may be, however, that he will decide that security conditions do not permit greater democracy in the near future.”\textsuperscript{839} Fall had anticipated Diem’s dilemma concerning security vs. legitimacy. Diem connected legitimacy to security without understanding that authentic legitimacy derived from the will of a significant

\textsuperscript{839} Amry Vandenbosch and Richard A. Butwell, \textit{Southeast Asia Among the World Powers} (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1957), 132.
proportion of the Vietnamese people, if not a majority. Earlier in August 1954, Fall had claimed that Diem would be unsuccessful as long as the “basic problem of eventually creating a solid basis for constitutional government has not been solved to the satisfaction of a sizeable section of the Vietnamese population.”

Political legitimacy was the metric Fall used to assess Diem’s success. Conflict with the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao and Binh Xuyen, which relied on bribes for support, did not indicate Diem’s success with those populations.

Diem had attempted to make progress in other areas, particularly in stimulating South Vietnam’s economy. Measures included restricting overseas Chinese influence in numerous business sectors, modernizing agricultural practices, and developing light industries.

Additionally, Diem pushed for agrarian reform in October 1956 and sought to raise critical rice yields in South Vietnam. Before World War II, rice-producing regions in South Vietnam exported over 1.5 million tons of rice annually but, as a result of the First Indochina War, this amount dropped to approximately 300,000 tons annually by 1951. Increased rice-production, thus, was an important commodity South Vietnam could potentially exploit for economic growth. In another development affecting refugees from the North, the Cai San resettlement center was a positive indicator in an economic and social environment where few options existed without serious downsides.

The Cai San project reclaimed former Hoa Hao dominated land in December 1955 and distributed it to North Vietnamese refugees who left the DRV-controlled region according to

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841 Amry Vandenbosch and Richard A. Butwell, Southeast Asia Among the World Powers (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1957), 151.
842 Ibid., 149.
843 For more on the Cai San Project, see Edward Miller, Misalliance: Ngo Dinh Diem, the United States, and the Fate of South Vietnam (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), 165-170.
mandates in the Geneva Accords. New tenants would rent eight to ten acres with a progressive rent rate over a four-year span beginning with no rent the first calendar year. fall would eventually visit the Cai San project in August 1957, commenting, “No appraisal of the Vietnamese refugee problem would be complete without at least a passing reference to the vast Cai San project…it is certainly one of the most ambitious undertakings of its kind anywhere.” However, Fall added “upon questioning by the writer, the engineers there stated that they doubted that any other area in Free Viet-Nam could meet all the conditions found at Cai San…it is useful per se, in view of its production capabilities and because it absorbs 90,000 refugees, but it cannot be considered as a pilot project for other major resettlement centers.” The Potemkin-village effect, undoubtedly, further undermined the positive effects as a model.

The Cai San project revealed an uneven cost-benefit ratio in Diem’s vision for Vietnam’s future. Moreover, as Fall acknowledged, other constraints on the project’s practical implementation existed elsewhere. The settlement center’s support may have been welcome by North Vietnamese moving south, but Hoa Hao adherents, whose land was taken away, became refugees in order to accommodate other refugees. Cai San, therefore, was symptomatic of broader potential for the Republic of Vietnam, but it was beset by challenges that were difficult to overcome. Fall wanted the Republic of Vietnam to succeed, yet he soon found fault with Diem’s repressive measures, promulgated in breach of the Geneva Accords. Fall pointed out that violations included subverting agreements in matters ranging from “graves registration” (Article 23 of the Accords) to Diem’s expulsion of the Joint Commission of the International Control Commission created at the conference to resolve disputes between the North and South (Article

844 Ibid., 152.
846 Ibid., 94.
33). The violations were further accentuated when Diem “unilaterally abrogated the promise to hold reunification elections in 1956.” This led Fall to conclude that “Saigon had from the start hardly ever made an attempt to live up even to those articles of the Accords which would have somewhat sweetened the pill of North Vietnamese disappointment as it became clear in July 1956, that reunification would not take place.”

Ngo Dinh Diem’s refusal to hold elections not only contributed to later war between North and South Vietnam, but the decision also alienated important leaders who might have potentially helped reach a resolution to war once it began. Historian Qiang Zhai described Chinese delegate, PRC Premier Zhou Enlai’s frustration with the 1956 election failure, writing “Zhou Enlai was very upset with this development…later in August 1971, when James Reston of *The New York Times* asked Zhou if he was willing to mediate in the conflict between the United States and North Vietnam, the Chinese premier answered: ‘We don’t want to be a mediator in any way. We were very badly taken in during the first Geneva Conference.’”

Political disagreements between the North Vietnamese and the Chinese possibly precluded implementation of later Chinese solutions, but perceived and real failures among conference participants in 1954 did not prepare a solid diplomatic ground for future resolution of conflict.

Fall was clearly not alone in voicing his concerns over Diem’s repudiation of elections and his domestic policies in South Vietnam. In addition to C.J. Sulzberger of *The New York Times*, Saville R. Davis, the Chief Editor of the *Christian Science Monitor* and chief editorial writer during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, was another perhaps an even more prominent critic of Diem who argued that autocracy was counterproductive. In January 1956, Saville quoted a Diem

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848 Ibid., 196.
849 Ibid., 196.
opposition leader who claimed “The most serious mistake of President Diem is to crack down so hard on those nationalist groups which are not Communist, and which are frustrated by his dictatorship. His strategy is pushing them over into the other camp. If we continue with a tight dictatorship like this, the word will get around the country that things under Diem are not much better than things under the French, and then Ho Chi Minh and his fifth column will have another real wave of popular discontent to exploit.” Amry Vandenbosch and Richard Butwell seconded this view, commenting, “The achievements of the Diem regime in consolidating itself resulted from totalitarian tactics not much different from those used by the Viet Minh in the north. Diem’s very successes seemed to underscore his primary weakness – his was an authoritarian, not a popular government….President Diem may be digging his own political grave with his policy of opposition to nationwide elections.” The problem was not that critics did not raise the problem of Diem’s increasingly autocratic methods, but that they had no authority to change the minds of decision-makers who might have made a positive difference.

American advisors to Diem, moreover, maintained a paternalism that undermined Vietnamese agency. As of late 1956, Wesley Fishel, an advisor to Diem who worked for the Michigan State University advisory team assisting in the formation of the Republic of Vietnam’s policies, remarked “The peoples of Southeast Asia are not sufficiently sophisticated to understand what we mean by democracy and how they can exercise and protect their own political rights.” Historians have acknowledged the ignorance and narrow-minded, even racist neo-colonialism of such views, but it is important to remember that there were critics such as Fall, Collins, Sulzberger, Davis, Vandenbosch, and others who disputed Fishel’s condescending views and saw that Diem’s

852 Ibid., 127.
policies were leading to disaster. Recent judgments by Seth Jacobs, such as the claim that, “Officials stationed in Saigon might occasionally question whether he [Diem] was the most fitting superintendent for South Vietnam, but no high-level U.S. policymaker ever doubted that autocracy was the best form of government for a recently liberated Asian colony, and no prominent American journalist or authority on Vietnam raised the issue either” overlook critical voices such as those of Fall and others. Criticism of US and Diem’s policy was emphatically clear in nature and it began early. Even if Fall’s scholarship did not have the reach of Time-Life or Look, The Christian Science Monitor was well-known in the later 1950s, with a Pulitzer prize winner among its journalists and with a peak circulation reaching almost a quarter million papers in print daily by 1970. In any case, Fall’s analyses of Diem’s rule not only denied that autocracy was the “best form of government” in Vietnam, but invariably demonstrated how Diem’s authoritarianism subverted the very political legitimacy he needed to govern effectively.

Diem’s options for achieving legitimacy were narrowed, moreover, by other serious misguided decisions. Fall showed that Diem’s policies, especially the January 11, 1956 decree, Ordinance 6, layered additional problems onto an underlying economic malaise. Ordinance 6 stipulated that, “by decision of the President of the Republic upon proposal by the Minister of the Interior, may be sent to concentration camps…all persons considered dangerous to national defense or collective security.” As bad as it was, the damage of Ordinance 6 was outdone, according to Fall, by Diem’s June 1956 decision to abolish elected village chiefs and councils and

857 Ibid., 198.
replace them with government appointees.\footnote{David W.P. Elliott, \textit{The Vietnamese War: Revolution and Social Change in the Mekong Delta 1930-1975} (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), 86-76. Ordinance 6 and similar decrees in 1956 were followed by other excessive laws and, according to Elliott, included “Diem’s repression of the revolutionary forces via the Communist Denunciation campaign as well as the even more draconian Decree 10/59 (National Security Law).” (86-87). Fall addressed the Communist Denunciation campaign and Decree 10/59 (National Security Law) in his later scholarship. His analyses of those developments will be taken up in future chapters.} This was the South Vietnamese government’s “most fateful decision, made in defiance of one of the most hallowed Vietnamese traditions, according to which the power of the central authorities stops at the bamboo hedge of the village…. In doing this, Diem outdid anything that either the North Vietnamese Communist regime or the French colonial administration ever did.”\footnote{Bernard B. Fall, \textit{Last Reflections on a War} (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1967, 198-199.} Fall was astounded. This was a self-inflicted terminal wound that opened the door to Viet Minh infiltration and implementation of parallel hierarchies, effectively creating shadow administrations across rural Vietnam. Fall, however, was probably unaware that the North Vietnamese DRV often eliminated selected elders too and that these moves created extensive social discord. Historians John McAlister and Paul Mus added that “the struggle over who is to govern in the villages of Viet Nam and how, has, certainly, been one of the most tragic examples of political violence since the end of World War II.”\footnote{John T. McAlister, Jr., and Paul Mus, \textit{The Vietnamese and Their Revolution} (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970), 161. For additional commentary on the importance of the village, see McAlister and Mus “The Village Foundation of Vietnamese Society,” in Ibid., 50-54.} Clearly, McAlister and Mus, like Fall, saw such rural struggle consequential and it was a type of violence that would, moreover, be difficult to manage because of its distinctly political nature at the local level. As a result of this decision, recovering political legitimacy among many rural Vietnamese villagers in the south would be impossible.

Fall had reason for concern and he possessed experience and evidence to support his position. In 1953, he had documented how Viet Minh assassinations of elected locally-supported
village officials increased Viet Minh control over rural areas. Why would the Viet Minh not repeat an assassination campaign against even easier to discern appointed officials in 1956? Antagonizing local villages and their elected leaders was an unwise act, but replacing them with appointed Republic of Vietnam officials was another. In only a few years, beginning in 1958, Fall would write “the Vietnamese were losing something like three village chiefs a day.”\textsuperscript{861} By 1960 and 1961, he was writing “the Communists were killing \textit{11 village officials} a day.”\textsuperscript{862} A related problem existed. These government officials’ assassinations subverted Republic of Vietnam control, but these actions were not recognized, let alone addressed, as a problem. Fall wrote, “appointed village chiefs were not considered a military target. They were not considered part of our calculations with regard to what makes a war.”\textsuperscript{863} The failure to even recognize this centered on decision-makers who failed to understand the importance of village leadership and its relationship to Vietnamese villagers.

The village in Vietnam, and the elders and leaders Vietnamese selected, were “The Wind and the Water” of the locality. Fall, therefore, believed government policy should have done all it could to maintain and strengthen this relationship. This was somewhat of an over-generalization and a reductionism of Confucian thought, however. Nonetheless, Fall believed that, instead, “In South Viet-Nam, elected village chiefs were replaced by centrally appointed individuals who, in many cases, were not even native to the village and who, as insecurity grew, preferred to live in the nearby district town. This broke all normal feedback between the 80 per cent of the population which lives in village units of about 2000 people, and the South Vietnamese government. Once the traditional and homegrown village administrative structure had been destroyed by the South

\textsuperscript{861} Ibid., 215.
\textsuperscript{862} Ibid., 218.
\textsuperscript{863} Ibid., 215.
Vietnamese regime, the North Vietnamese and their sympathizers had found the chink in South Viet-Nam’s armor. In a well-organized terror campaign involving massive assassination and kidnapping of local officials, they began to dismantle the South Vietnamese local administration and began to replace it gradually with their own men.\textsuperscript{864} Diem, thus, had opened the door for serious trouble to enter. Destroying the relationship between Vietnamese and their selected officials effectively destroyed the relationship between the people and the government. The Viet Minh’s efforts to eliminate government officials, who were assigned to replace local village leaders and council members, consolidated this destruction between government and Vietnamese. Historian, Paul Mus, a scholar with deep understanding of rural Vietnamese, shared Fall’s disbelief at Republic of Vietnam policy on this subject.\textsuperscript{865} The Viet Minh were formidable in gaining local control of villages in the best of circumstances. Government removal of potential local Viet Minh rivals, local officials who had been elected by their people, was incomprehensible to Fall. As a result, Fall was not surprised that local villagers remained apathetic, and often even happy, when government appointees were eliminated. After the removal of elected officials, villagers’ grievances against the government were difficult, if not impossible, to resolve. All the Viet Minh had to do was watch and then exploit those grievances further.

Fall succinctly condemned Diem’s 1956 decision: “It is Diem who created the movement of discontent in South Viet-Nam.”\textsuperscript{866} This decision, abetted by implementation of the communists’

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\textsuperscript{865} See Paul Mus interview, \textit{In the Year of the Pig}, documentary (1968), minute 39:10 – 41:10. https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2zpgbw
\textsuperscript{866} Bernard B. Fall, \textit{Last Reflections on a War} (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1967), 198. Diem would make similar mistakes again in 1958 and 1959 by increasing authoritarian methods against Buddhists and other groups. Edward Miller explains, as of late 1958, Diem’s “tactics eventually produced a backlash among the rural population, which the Communist Party would exploit to great effect after 1959. As he was shattering the [NLF] party’s apparatus in South Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem was also creating the conditions necessary for its comeback.” See Edward Miller, “War-Stories: The Taylor-Buzzanco Debate and How We Think about the Vietnam War,” \textit{Journal of Vietnamese Studies}, Vol 1. No. 1-2, February – August, 2006.) 468.
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parallel hierarchies, increased the Viet Minh’s capability to ‘out-administer’ Republic of Vietnam’s local governance where political control mattered most. These were not the types of problems that the military could fix since they were, in their very essence, matters of political legitimacy at the local level. Fall regarded Diem’s insistence that he could rule South Vietnamese farmers more effectively than they had ruled themselves as profoundly misguided. Wesley Fishel’s ignorance of the most essential and workable type of democracy Vietnamese had created over centuries, the Village, was equally troubling and detrimental to US policy in support of the Republic of Vietnam.

Diem’s self-inflicted wound powerfully incentivized Viet Minh leaders. This especially applied to individuals from South Vietnam, such as Le Duan, who was taking on ever more important roles in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam politburo. Le Duan almost certainly understood the opportunity provided by Diem’s removal of elected officials in 1956. The removal of village elders, moreover, improved the internal political leverage of Le Duan and other leaders in the “South First” faction of the DRV, including Pham Hung and Le Duc Tho. According to historian, Lien-Hang T. Nguyen, by 1959, Le Duan, “began to draft a more militant resolution [that would become Resolution 15], one that would bind the Party to supporting the armed conflict in the South…it was a gamble that Le Duan and Le Duc Tho were ready to take not only because they had dedicated their careers up to that point to the southern revolution but also because the promotion of war below the seventeenth parallel was the key to their eventual seizure of power within the Politburo.”

Fall was aware of these communist leaders’ strategic vision, writing “Finally on September 5, 1960, at the Hanoi party congress, Le Duan, the Lao-Dong’s party

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secretary and a former southern guerrilla leader himself, took official cognizance in his report of the ‘southern People’s revolutionary struggle’ and advocated the creation of a ‘broad national united front against the U.S.– Diem clique.’ This was a battle for “competitive control” of the people that Fall had witnessed and thought about since he had been in the maquis in Europe during World War II, and it was a conflict, in his perspective, that the Republic of Vietnam was in the process of losing far more than the Viet Minh were in the process of winning.

In terms of military strength, moreover, Fall knew that the Republic of Vietnam’s military forces were not prepared to confront the Viet Minh in conventional battle and “even optimistic Vietnamese military circles view their military mission as a ‘holding’ mission until Western forces arrive to the rescue.” Decisions such as Ordinance 6 and the removal of village elders and councils, made matters worse for an already comparatively weak Republic of Vietnam in terms of both political legitimacy and, even more so, security. Fall was concerned: “Western forces, under such circumstances, would have to be primarily American forces, faced with a tactically far more precarious situation than in 1954.” In his updated 1956 edition of The Viet-Minh Regime, Fall described the DRV’s status as a well-organized and determined adversary that would be a formidable force to face by any outside power.

“The type of war the DRV has chosen to fight thus far is largely invulnerable to airpower, even if armed with ‘unconventional’ weapons. Communist subversion from within, infantry divisions progressing single-file on jungle paths, and peasant-guerrillas striking suddenly and disappearing just as suddenly in the maze of teeming villages, can be fought successfully only at a price which the West might be unwilling to pay for what is, after all, but a secondary theater in the worldwide ‘Cold War.’”

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870 Ibid., 152.
871 Ibid., 152.
He was clearly warning against intervention in Vietnam, a place he viewed as of only tangential strategic importance to the United States. Fall had argued against conventional Domino Theory thinking for at least two years by the time this second edition of *The Viet-Minh Regime* was published in 1956. This book, and the growing list of publications on Indochina that he authored by 1957, demonstrated his authority on the subject. Aside from Paul Mus, Philippe Devillers, Jean Lacouture, and others who published only in French at the time, Fall was almost alone among western scholars using Vietnamese sources to describe how Viet Minh subversion and intelligence operations functioned.\footnote{Philippe Devillers and Jean Lacouture, *End of a War, Indochina 1954* (New York: Praeger 1969).} And Fall was almost alone as a former soldier and current scholar in describing the development of parallel hierarchies in Vietnam, along with other means the Viet Minh used to infiltrate and gain control of power at local levels. French officers, such as Charles Lacheroy, Jean Hogard, Roger Trinquier, and others responsible for developing theories of *la guerre révolutionnaire* (revolutionary warfare) in Indochina, had already moved on to apply their ideas in Algeria after 1954.\footnote{For the most comprehensive analysis of these developments, see Peter Paret, *French Revolutionary Warfare from Indochina to Algeria: The Analysis of a Political and Military Doctrine* (New York: Praeger, 1964).} Fall would take up their ideas but would remain in Vietnam to see how their knowledge and experiences added to his own.

included an article published by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics in the May 1956 edition of the *Monthly Labor Review*. He concluded *The Viet-Minh Regime* with an admonition to western powers that, “A peaceful settlement is as unlikely in Vietnam as in Korea and Germany. Furthermore, the Southern government still has to implement a program that would win it the active support of the majority of the total population. And, unlike the situation in the two other portioned countries, only a minority of the total population is under its control. All this does not augur too well for the future.” Moreover, by 1956, it would not be so easy to keep the two-Vietnams divided because “North Vietnam, with its raw materials and industrial base, and South Vietnam, with its [potential] food surplus, need each other like Siamese twins attached by vital organs. Attempts to separate them may end in the death of one – or both.” These challenges were serious and to know really what was happening in Vietnam, Fall had to see them for himself. He returned to the region in 1957, determined to see how the country had changed as a result of division and as a result of financial and advisory assistance of the United States, now that France was long gone.

**II – “Will South Vietnam Be Next?” – May 1958**

William Holland, the director of the Institute of Pacific Relations, approached Bernard Fall in early 1957 with a request that Fall complete a study on changes in Vietnam after 1954. Fall

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877 Ibid., 155.

had published *The Viet-Minh Regime* with the Institute and he would characterize this new study as focusing on “special problems of administration.”\(^{879}\) His 1957 trip to explore these issues resulted in three significant pieces of scholarship. The longest was Holland’s requested study, *The International Position of South Vietnam, 1954-1958*, a 240-page analysis divided into five volumes.\(^{880}\) A second 90-page analysis, entitled *Spring is Triumphant, but Winter Will Surely Return: Three Years of Viet-Minh Rule in North Vietnam, 1954-1958*, was published in mimeograph form by the United States Information Agency.\(^{881}\) The third, shortest, and most consequential of Fall’s writings was his five-page article for *The Nation*, “Will South Viet-Nam Be Next?,” published in May 1958. As part of Fall’s overall effort, he planned to report his findings on South Vietnamese foreign policy since 1954 to the thirteenth International Conference of Pacific Relations scheduled for February 5-14, 1958 in Lahore, Pakistan.\(^{882}\) Fall would subsequently present his findings to the April 1958 Association for Asian Studies conference held in New York City.\(^{883}\) This activity ensured that Fall was finding a wide audience for his findings.

Fall did not have the personal means to finance his trip to Vietnam, and the Institute of Pacific Relations was unable to provide funds. However, Fall “had developed a close relationship with the Vietnamese Embassy and with Ambassador Tran Van Chuong” and so “in February 1957 Bernard wrote to the ambassador” and asked for his support.\(^{884}\) Fall wrote, “During the course of

\(^{879}\) Bernard Fall, “CV,” Series 1.01, Box F-1, BBF, JFKL. The Southeast Asia Studies Department at Cornell University also sponsored and co-published this study.

\(^{880}\) Bernard Fall, *The International Position of South Vietnam, 1954-1958*, Series, 1.05, Boxes P-01 and P-02, BBF, JFKL.

\(^{881}\) This title is available in Bernard Fall Papers, Series, 1.05, Box P-03, BBF, JFKL and also in mimeograph form at the U.S. Army War College, Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle, PA, Call Number: DS 558.153.F4 1958/OCLC Number: 22149988.

\(^{882}\) Bernard Fall, “CV,” Series 1.01, Box F-1, 7, BBF, JFKL. Fall obtained an American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) travel grant to finance his trip to Pakistan in February 1958. See also, Dorothy Fall, *Bernard Fall: Memories of a Soldier-Scholar* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2007), 107.

\(^{883}\) Bernard Fall, “CV,” Series 1.01, Box F-1, 7, BBF, JFKL.

our [past] conversation you had the kindness to express to me the interest of your government in all research having the objective and destined to make better known to the world the problems and successes of the new Viet-Nam. The Viet-Nam that I know thus, ravaged by war, is no longer the Viet-Nam of today. It would be an injustice to the work accomplished by Viet-Nam since 1954 if I permitted myself to write about it based on second-hand reports and my own recollections during the time of war.”\(^{885}\) Fall added that he was “an independent researcher whose reputation is established in France as well as in the United States” and, “As for my sentiments towards free Viet-Nam, you, Excellence, know that better than anyone.”\(^{886}\) This was true on a personal level between Fall and the ambassador, but also publicly since Fall had made his anti-communist views known in numerous publications since first traveling to Vietnam in 1953.

Fall received partial assistance from the Vietnamese government and so was able to spend three months conducting on-site research during the summer of 1957. The support he received was important because it was provided by individuals who would subsequently resent Fall’s interpretation of facts in his shortest piece, “Will South Viet-Nam Be Next?” The individuals giving support, moreover, were in key decision-making positions in South Vietnam and they believed or assumed that Fall would report information as he was told rather than as he saw it. Ambassador Tran Van Choung, for example, was related to Ngo Dinh Diem because his daughter, Tran Le Xuan, later known as Madame Nhu, was married to Diem’s brother Ngo Dinh Nhu. Fall, in fact, met and thanked Ngo Dinh Diem’s brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu for support during his research trip, writing, “my deep thanks to the following: Ngo Dinh Nhu, who was kind enough to explain

\(^{885}\) Ibid., 108-109.
\(^{886}\) Ibid., 109.
to me some of his thoughts on Vietnamese foreign policy.”

In addition to other prominent Vietnamese and French individuals, Fall added, “Last, but not least, I wish to thank Dr. Wesley R. Fishel, of the Michigan State University Group, for his and his staff’s kind hospitality and for his generosity in providing me with an extensive set of administrative studies completed by his staff.”

This was significant information because it enabled Fall to describe effects of American and South Vietnamese governmental policy with accuracy since he using government sources.

Fall found much to report on in South Vietnam and domestic security was a clearly a problem during Fall’s second trip. As a researcher attuned to the political significance of violence after resolution of the First Indochina War, Fall was alerted when he read accounts in which government officials were targeted. In one case, Fall described how “on September 14, 1957, the district chief of My Tho and his whole family were stopped in broad daylight on a main highway and killed in cold blood.”

Fall described this and several other cases of violence, writing “These are items culled from hundreds of similar incidents reported over the past six months in the South Vietnamese press. They clearly express a trend which has been developing over the past year and one which is hidden from the casual foreign observer behind a screen of immaculate refugee camps, model nurseries and schools, and store displays in Saigon overflowing with Western consumer goods, from nylon shirts to tape-recorders, hi-fi sets and shiny automobiles.”

Model schools and stereo systems might distract from underlying problems, but Fall recognized greater meaning in news articles that were purported to be “random” acts of violence across South Vietnam.

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887 Bernard Fall, The International Position of South Vietnam, 1954-1958, Series, 1.05, Boxes P-01 and P-02, BBF, JFKL., iii.
888 Ibid., iii. Fall interacted with French officials ranging from Marcel Ehret, inspector general of the Terres Rouges Rubber Plantation, Pierre-Bernard Lafont, of the École Français d’Extrême Orient and Rene de Berval, director and editor of the influential journal France-Asie.
889 Bernard Fall, “Will South Vietnam Be Next?” The Nation, May 31, 1958, Series 1.06, Box A-2, 489, BBF, JFKL.
890 Ibid., 489.
Vietnam. He had seen this before in 1953 and, while Fall did not come to South Vietnam in 1957 looking for these events, when he encountered them, he recognized they were not merely random, particularly in the contested political environment within South Vietnam at the time. Historian David Elliot, later confirmed Fall’s concern that targeting of government officials formed a larger strategic goal: “What seemed at the time to have been a nearly complete pacification of My Tho province by 1958 looks in retrospect to have been the point at which the essential groundwork for a revolutionary revival was laid.”

Fall had sense of this, but in “Will South Viet-Nam Be Next?” Fall’s primary concern was South Vietnam’s economic vulnerability. Economic problems, security, and Ngo Dinh Diem’s authoritarian measures acted in concert to make matters worse. Fall’s articles in 1958, therefore, were an attempt to untangle the relationship between these factors but he would address economic issues first in his article for *The Nation*.

After 1955, the International Cooperation Administration (ICA), the precursor to USAID, coordinated United States’ economic aid to the Republic of Vietnam. Fall explained how this worked, writing, “About 80 per cent [of aid] consists of merchandise exported directly to South Vietnam. This merchandise, sold through normal commercial channels, ‘generates local currency.’ This currency, minus normal commercial profits, is deposited in a ‘Counterpart Fund.’ Out of which the receiver government covers the expenses for various projects approved jointly by the local United States Overseas Operations Mission (USOM) and the government.”

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893 Bernard Fall, “Will South Vietnam Be Next?” *The Nation*, May 31, 1958, Series 1.06, Box A-2, 490, BBF, JFKL.
Counterpart funds were used, thus, as a mechanism to deliver foreign aid consisting of US-supplied material goods, such as tractors, commodities, or other items. These material goods would be sold in local markets by consumers using local currency. Sales transactions, thus, converted net proceeds into accessible reserves of domestic currency. Consumers bought US materials that were, effectively, gifted and had no “cost” factor to sellers. Sellers, after completion of transactions, and after deducting a previously agreed to percentage of net profit, then deposited the remaining net profit into government funds called counterpart funds. Buyers would receive American goods while supporting local merchants and the supported government would benefit from access to growing funds in counterpart accounts. This type of aid delivery had a historical legacy: “The phrase ‘counterpart funds’ originated in the Marshall Plan days. When the United States gave assistance to Europe, say in the form of diesel engines, those engines were sold to European citizens. They paid for the engines with local currencies such as French francs, Italian lire or British pounds. Americans who sold the engines received their dollars from Marshall Plan funds appropriated by Congress. The foreign currencies which were not convertible to dollars were deposited in the countries where they were received and became known as ‘counterpart funds.’”

Additional direct US aid supported the Vietnamese military. Fall described this assistance, writing “More than $200 million out of an approximate $250 million a year of U.S. aid goes into

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the support and maintenance of the ten-division Vietnamese army and other security forces. The remaining 20 percent of the total aid is given [to] Vietnam in ‘hard currency’ granted for outright purchases in the United States and other countries.”895 This ‘hard currency’ could often be distributed for purchasing goods from which proceeds often were deposited in counterpart funds. Regarding military expenditures, during the 1957 fiscal year, American aid “supported the whole cost of the Vietnamese armed forces, nearly 80 per cent of all other government expenditures and almost 90 percent of all imports.”896 And this was in addition to assistance, underwritten by the ICA, provided by the Michigan State University advisory program that trained administrators and the police and the United States Military Advisory Assistance Group (MAAG) that trained the South Vietnamese military.897 Despite all this aid, Fall found that “the hard fact is that Vietnam’s economy today is steadily deteriorating.”898 After describing the US assistance program for South Vietnam, “Will South Viet-Nam be Next?” explained how and why these failures were occurring and their effects on Ngo Dinh Diem’s ability to govern effectively.

After a majority of aid was allocated to the military, a still significant percentage of aid in the form of material goods were shipped to Vietnam for sale. The United States, however, sent goods to Vietnam that were often unneeded. Other goods were shipped relentlessly to Vietnam, even if adequate storage facilities did not exist and regardless whether transportation was available to distribute goods beyond the vicinity of ports. Problems leading to a deteriorating economy occurred because “the market is saturated with consumer goods of all kinds which the Vietnamese

895 Bernard Fall, “Will South Vietnam Be Next?” The Nation, May 31, 1958, Series 1.06, Box A-2, 490, BBF, JFKL.
896 Ibid., 490.
898 Ibid., 491.
are no longer able to buy. Merchandise is left to rot on the docks by importers who haven’t the money to pay for it.”

Fall described other deleterious problems, but one stood out to Fall as emblematic of cultural incomprehension: “Last summer, the ICA (International Cooperation Agency) imported U.S. agricultural surpluses of milk, wheat, flour, and corn. Like all Asians, the Vietnamese are not fond of milk, prefer rice to wheat and detest corn. Yet, at the same time, American charitable agencies imported vast quantities of these same surpluses for free distribution to the refugees, who immediately resold them for whatever the market would bear.”

Fall’s explanation of South Vietnam’s economic problems was threefold. First, in 1958, the country was unable to generate enough surplus rice for export. In 1957, it exported only 195,000 tons and, in 1956, it barely exported any rice. This was a fundamental problem because rice was South Vietnam’s most critical commodity and insufficient export revenue of rice resulted in increased Vietnamese reliance on U.S. support. Second, “South Vietnam has none of the basic requisites of an industrial nation: coal, iron, power, skilled labor, and markets.” US assistance, as it related to these requisites, failed to provide them and, additionally, failed to provide the type of support needed to increase rice-production capacity. Instead of sending small water pumps to aid irrigation, for example, or plows to replace old or broken ones, the United States distributed consumer goods South Vietnamese did not require or could even use. The third problem was that the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) was not designed as a long-term development program and, moreover, it was new in 1955 and poorly conceived and organized. The Marshall Plan that so effectively aided Europe could not be simply dusted off and applied to an economy in

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899 Ibid., 491.
900 Ibid., 491-492.
901 Ibid., 491-492.
902 Ibid., 492.
development such as that existing in Vietnam. The use of counterpart funds for aid delivery to Vietnam suggested that the same approach that worked through the Marshall Plan was applied to delivering aid to Vietnam. Clearly, South Vietnam’s economic problems needed robust organization and culturally informed planning at a minimum so when problems became evident, each year that passed made existing problems worse. The ICA, as part of the U.S. Department of State, did not have the autonomy to plan or implement the type of long-term development South Vietnam desperately needed. Moreover, it did not have the wherewithal to adapt when changes were clearly pointed out by Fall and others.  

This possibly explained why changes to US assistance were not forthcoming.

Fall’s analysis of South Vietnam’s economy and US aid in 1958 revealed, therefore, that US foreign assistance programs were a failure. Insufficient aid, and the wrong type of aid, had been delivered to the Republic of Vietnam since its founding. The United States was providing what it thought Vietnam needed instead of focusing on and improving, for example, rice production, the most important economic sector in South Vietnam. As William Lederer and Eugene Burdick explained in The Ugly American, also published in 1958, “We spend billions on the wrong aid projects while overlooking the almost costless and far more helpful ones.” The even bigger problem was that the US State Department did not adapt its policies sufficiently. Moreover, Fall seemed to suggest that the State Department, through the ICA, was either oblivious or ignorant in its aid planning and delivery. It is certainly difficult to imagine that Fall quietly observed what he saw as disastrous policy without commenting on it to officials in Vietnam. If

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greater effort had been made to improve the Vietnamese economy in 1957, it is almost certain that Fall’s criticism would have rung hollow, along with critical remarks made by Lederer and Burdick in *The Ugly American*. As it was, Fall and the two American authors created something of a stir with their published works. Previously, the US State Department, in the case of Fall, did not even budge in changing its assistance policies until Fall’s work was on the verge of reaching *The Nation*’s reading audience in May 1958. After Fall presented his views in New York in April and published them in May, the US State Department would act on Fall’s article with greater speed.

There was significant substance to Fall’s criticism of US policy. Fall described the larger social implications of US assistance deficiencies, writing “rice planting is more than an economic activity: It is a way of life, a whole *Weltanschauung* in itself… And this rural population which represents 90 per cent of all the people in the area…is the object of the various ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ wars fought today throughout southern Asia.” Fall adapted French statesman Georges Clemenceau’s quip, “A drop of oil is worth a drop of blood,” to read: “‘A grain of rice is worth a drop of blood.’” Fall added, “And perhaps Red China and North Vietnam are willing to pay the price.”

Rice production, more than anything else, was the economic engine and social center of rural Vietnamese communal life in agricultural regions of Vietnam. When the United States failed to assist adequately in helping resuscitate this economic and social life-blood to pre-World War II levels, problems mounted. These were, unfortunately, made worse with the importation of non-essential goods under the impression that it would increase spending among Vietnamese.

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906 Ibid., 49.
907 Bernard Fall, “Will South Vietnam Be Next?” *The Nation*, May 31, 1958, Series 1.06, Box A-2, 491, BBF, JFKL.
Fall explained, “The process of ‘generating local currency’ as a source of funds for various projects puts both the Vietnamese and American governments at the mercy of what the public is willing to spend its money on…Compared to $800,000 allocated for tractors and industrial vehicles, $7 million were spent on private cars and $5.5 million on tires and tubes for them. This agricultural country imported $2 million worth of fertilizer, but imported $6.5 million worth of cigarettes and tobacco.”

With American support, “the industries launched were exactly those it needed least: a watch-assembly plant which, after one year of operation, recently closed its doors; a scooter assembly plant, a sewing-machine assembly shop, etc… On January 30, 1958, Vietnam had a stock of typewriters and calculators to cover its needs for eight years. Neither of these items can be successfully stocked in the tropics for so long a time.” Fall would allegedly claim at the Association of Asian Studies conference in New York in April 1958, that “South Vietnam needed a scooter assembly plant like it needed a hole in the head.”

He might have said the same for milk, wheat, and corn that continued to be dumped on the Vietnamese market even if done so with good, but misinformed intentions.

The United States, not surprisingly, looked to the past for guiding its assistance policies. The problem was this: what historically worked in Europe after World War II was not the right model for what could work in Southeast Asia. The Marshall Plan approach to aid, with mechanisms that included counterpart funding and commercial import programs, had worked well in Europe. However, in Fall’s judgment, “they are definitely not a solution for an underdeveloped area such as Vietnam. On the contrary, they channel whatever little capital is available into goods

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908 Ibid., 491.
909 Ibid., 492.
that at best are useless, and are sometimes actually injurious, to a weak economy.”\footnote{911} Moreover, aid delivery was sloppy and counterproductive. In a letter to Dorothy, several problems stood out: “Yesterday I did the Saigon docks from wharf No. 14, under a blazing sun, and it was damn well worth it. My feelings as a U.S. taxpayer are more-raw. Nearly all the merchandise I saw bore the two clasped hands on a U.S. shield of the Mutual Security Program (official figures have U.S. aid at 90% of total trade!!!) and the stuff so imported is in incredible condition thanks to local stupidity and mismanagement. I personally saw six brand new Ford trucks (1957-2 ton) crushed because somebody had unloaded on top of them a cargo of cement bags.”\footnote{912}

Fall concluded “Will South Viet-Nam Be Next?” writing, “These are the hard facts, and they are not very pretty. But they must be revealed now, while it is not yet too late to change course. The change cannot be undertaken in Saigon, but must be carried out in Washington in the face of probable opposition by the well-established ‘Vietnamese lobby.’”\footnote{913} Fall saw problems with US assistance to Vietnam but thought more broadly, “Perhaps the time has come to reappraise the impact of the vast commercial import programs to the economies of underdeveloped areas – in Latin America and the Middle East, as well in Asia. It may be that despite their temporary usefulness as pump-primers, these programs, which have become the favored American form of

\footnote{911}Bernard Fall, “Will South Vietnam Be Next?” \textit{The Nation}, May 31, 1958, Series 1.06, Box A-2, 492, BBF, JFKL. Aid using counterpart funds was an approach that required close coordination and understanding between donor and recipient. American Economist, Henry J. Bruton, formerly of the Center for Development Economics at Williams College, explained, “To use counterpart funds effectively requires considerable knowledge about the recipient economy by both donor and recipient. Of equal importance is that their effective use requires a great deal of conversation with the relevant authorities in the developing countries. The approach requires conversations – not leverage or conditionality – because it does not recognize that the institutions, traditions, practices, ideas peculiar to the country are highly relevant in determining what can be done, and what, indeed, should be done. Hence general principles cannot be the full story.” See Henry, J. Bruton, “The Role of Counterpart Funds in Economic Development,” \textit{IDS Bulletin}, January 1992, ISSN: 0265-5012.


\footnote{913}Bernard Fall, “Will South Vietnam Be Next?” \textit{The Nation}, May 31, 1958, Series 1.06, Box A-2, 493, BBF, JFKL.
foreign aid, in the long run create more problems than they solve.” Fall’s suggestion that the United States completely revamp its aid programs for much of the world during the early years of the Cold War was, not surprisingly, ignored at the time. Fall knew US assistance was important to these countries, but it had to be planned intelligently in terms of cultural awareness and delivered far more effectively to help. He emphatically explained why this mattered in other areas, such as security, writing “the United States can’t afford to take a ‘devil take the hindmost’ attitude in this corner of Southeast Asia. For in this case the hindmost are the landless farmer and the jobless worker. And they made up the Communist shock troops who defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu.” This was more than a warning; it was a historical fact. Communist Vietnamese had already proved they were sophisticated and capable enough to defeat the French Empire in Indochina, even with all the material assistance provided to France by the United States. Communism required more than blunt instruments to defeat it. As an anti-communist, liberal minded individual, Fall knew that cultural and political intelligence and the ability to adapt and innovate were the most effective means to combat the type of political-oriented warfare conducted by the Viet Minh. Fall believed that identifying problems where they existed was the first correct step towards making improvement. US assistance in 1957 and 1958 needed this kind of attention and it needed fixing. Not everyone else reading his work, apparently, felt the same way.

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915 Ibid., 493.
Fall provided a preview of his Nation article at the Association for Asian Studies Conference in New York in April 1958.\textsuperscript{916} His critique of US assistance policy at the conference, moreover, provoked a reaction Fall did not anticipate. In contrast, the long-detailed reports commissioned by the Institute of Pacific Relations and the US Information Service, were overlooked. But Fall’s April presentation, along with the subsequent publication of his main findings in the comparatively concise “Will South Viet-Nam Be Next?” generated more interest in Fall’s work than anything he published previously. His compulsion to relate the facts as he saw them would exact a professional price, even though a US president would later make similar criticisms of US assistance programs, and completely re-organize assistance planning and delivery.\textsuperscript{917} In his address to Congress on March 22, 1961, John F. Kennedy explained the need for re-organization of U.S. foreign assistance:

> For no objective supporter of foreign aid can be satisfied with the existing program – actually a multiplicity of programs. Bureaucratically fragmented, awkward and slow, its administration is diffused over a haphazard and irrational structure covering at least four departments and several other agencies. The program is based on a series of legislative measures and administrative procedures conceived at different times and for different purposes, many of them now obsolete, inconsistent and unduly rigid and thus unsuited for our present needs and purposes. Its weaknesses have begun to undermine confidence in our effort both here and abroad.\textsuperscript{918}

\textsuperscript{916} Bernard Fall, “Abstract of AAS Paper,” Series, 1.04, Box SC-01, BBF, JFKL.
\textsuperscript{918} Ibid.
In the months before Fall’s New York speech and Nation article, Fall pursued a unique opportunity to teach in Cambodia. After Fall returned from his second research trip to Indochina, he established contact with two officials in the Washington-based International Cooperation Administration (ICA).”\textsuperscript{919} The first official was named Thomas L. Eliot and Fall had met another ICA official, Alvin Roseman, the director of the US Operations Mission (USOM) in Cambodia while conducting research there during the summer of 1957.\textsuperscript{920} Fall contacted ICA because he had learned about an opportunity to teach at the Royal School of Administration in Phnom Penh, Cambodia from Wesley Fishel. Fishel, of the Michigan State University Advisory Group (MSUG), provided Fall with administrative support and official documentation for his research. The opportunity to teach in Cambodia was one more show of support for Fall provided to him by Fishel. Fall pursued this opportunity and, in a letter to Thomas Eliot, from November 1957, Fall explained, “Dr. Wesley Fishel of the MSUG in Saigon also expressed to me the hope that, should I be appointed to Phnom Penh, I could also teach a weekly course at the MSUG center in Saigon, by commuting. This is perfectly feasible and I would enjoy doing it.”\textsuperscript{921} The exchange between Fall and Eliot, representing ICA, therefore, initiated discussions with the goal that Fall would receive a two-year appointment to the Royal School in Phnom Penh, scheduled to begin in July 1958.

\textsuperscript{919} The author acknowledges Dr. Robert Fahs, an archivist for the National Archives and Records Administration. Fahs was the first to write about the NARA files discussed in this section after they were declassified and made available for public access at the NARA facility in College Park, MD. Fahs first wrote about these materials in “Back to a Forgotten Street: Bernard B. Fall and the Limits of Armed Intervention,” in \textit{Prologue}, The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, Spring 2011, Vol. 43, No.1. [http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2011/spring/bernard-fall.html](http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2011/spring/bernard-fall.html), accessed December 6, 2016. The author wishes to thank Dr. Fahs for his collegial communications about the files.

\textsuperscript{920} The primary sources referenced are “Cambodia-Contracts-Bernard Fall,” Records of U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1948-1961, Record Group [RG] 469, Entry P85, Box 9, National Archives and Records Administration, [NARA], College Park, Maryland. Hereafter, the source title will be followed by NARA RG469/EntryP85/Box 9 as in: “source title,” NARA RG469/P85/9. USOM were the local missions of the International Coordination Administration (ICA) which administered U.S. foreign assistance programs.

\textsuperscript{921} “Fall letter to Eliot, ICA,” November 1, 1957, NARA RG469/P85/9.
The steps towards achieving Fall’s appointment began in November 1957. Fall believed that teaching in Phenom Penh would be positive on several counts. First, he would be positioned to apply knowledge gained through several years of study and could improve US assistance planned and coordinated for Cambodia. Second, he would help students at the Royal School in Phenom Penh in their preparation to help the Cambodian government administer more effectively. Third, living in Cambodia would further Fall’s own education of Indochina, giving him additional first-hand experience with the Royal Khmer Government, along with a clear vantage of broader political developments quickly changing the region. In Fall’s eyes, and among key ICA officials, Fall’s potential appointment was a win-win situation so in late November 1957, the ICA submitted a proposal to the Cambodian Government to gain their approval of Fall’s appointment and his planned scope of work for the Royal Institute. The appointment process would take time and Fall, employed at Howard University, wanted to ensure that he could return to Howard after his two-year appointment. Therefore, he needed to know by the spring of 1958 in order to notify Howard administrators for a requested a leave-of-absence after the appointment and contract were confirmed.

In late March 1958, the Cambodian Government reached a decision. “The Royal Khmer Government has advised USOM that it wishes to establish [a] chair of international relations [at the] Royal School of Administration and is definitely interested [in] Bernard Fall.” Fall was subsequently notified of these developments and the formal application process within US government channels began. He applied for a USOM-mandated security clearance, submitted his application for federal employment, and completed other related bureaucratic steps over the next

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several months. In addition to these administrative details, Fall refined his planned curriculum at the Royal Institute which provided insight into the training and “scope of service” he would provide the Cambodian government and its students at the school. Fall’s responsibilities would include teaching courses in Public Administration, Comparative Government, International Relations, and Special Courses and Surveys as requested by the Cambodian Government, in addition to establishing an “administrative documentation service for the use of all Cambodian Government Agencies.” This latter duty focused on “finding factual information on problems of a political, economic, legislative or administrative nature.” As a positive sign, Fall’s security clearance was granted on April 4, 1958 and notification that the Royal Khmer Government formally approved his candidacy followed later on April 25.

The US State Department was responsible for the contract’s final decision. This was still pending in late April, however, but the application process was in its final stages. As expecting parents, Fall had written to Dorothy earlier in the process to express his outlook: “Looks fascinating. Phnom Penh was lovely after the other places. At least it looks alive. Job would be for 1958-60 so that we finally have time to get the boy (!) growing before we leave and transplant him (her). I’m really enthused for the first time in 3 months. The next year will be a good one for all three of us. Yes, you’re going on a trip next year, 95% certain – Cambodia…Salary $12-14,000 plus house and trip for all of us. Two-year contract renewable.” By later May 1958, however, Fall still had not received confirmation from USOM or ICA regarding his contract.

923 Ibid.
924 “Scope of Service,” undated, NARA RG469/P85/9.
925 Ibid.
Fall and other ICA officials did not know the reason for the delay. Fall’s security clearance had already been granted and Fall’s application with the Royal Cambodian Government had been accepted in March and formally confirmed again in April. Fall’s position was discussed in an April 25 cablegram between ICA officials: “Fall now under pressure from his faculty head [at Howard University] to declare plans next academic year, needs affirmative word from USOM or ICA. Fall says he cannot afford [to] jeopardize his relationships [with] Howard University since he intends to return there on career basis. Advise priority.” In the last week of April, numerous memorandums circulated among officials concerning administrative issues and other day-to-day arrangements for Fall’s job. A break in communication then occurred for most of May. Three weeks later, an entry appeared on May 25, 1958. scrutinizing

Bernard Fall being considered for assignment under ICA contract to Royal School Administration as Professor Public Administration and International Relations. Fall has been consistent and vocal critic U.S. policy, and in recent months has made public statements extremely critical U.S. aid program Vietnam. Also has criticized vocally Diem and his Government to point where certain members Vietnamese Embassy and American Friends Vietnam are actively looking for means offset his influence as one of self-styled experts on Vietnam in U.S. View these facts and fact Phnom Penh already has several French citizens both critical of and actively working against Diem government question whether Fall should be employed in above capacity by U.S. government at present time. Desire your comments. Reply priority. // DULLES |

The next day, ICA official Thomas Eliot appeared unaware of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles’ telegram to the Ambassadors in Vietnam and Cambodia. Eliot, demonstrating

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integrity on Fall’s behalf showed his support for Fall’s employment in Phenom Penh by submitting additional documentation for Fall’s contract that day:

“Efforts to obtain public administration advisors for Cambodia have not been generally successful. It is our good fortune to be able to obtain the service of Professor Fall, in response to the definite invitation to furnish a professor of American style public administration, as Advisor and Professor of Public Administration and International Relations at the Royal School of Administration, the principle institution education for future civil servants which has heretofore been exclusively a French institution. Dr. Fall, in addition to teaching and advising the school on the development of public administration curriculum and teaching materials and curriculum, will assist in establishing a political, economic, legislative and public administration documentation service in the school for the use of government agencies and the faculty and students of the school.”

A flurry of memorandums and telegrams followed Dulles’ memorandum. Howard Elting, an official at the American Embassy in Vietnam replied to John Foster Dulles’ inquiry, writing “Have not seen Fall’s public criticisms [of] Diem regime and US aid program, but on the strength [of the] unpublished article by Fall [“Will South Vietnam Be Next?”] which came into possession USOM Saigon, strongly feel that Fall should not be employed under US sponsorship in Cambodia or elsewhere [in] Southeast Asia. Fall’s views as set forth in proposed article parallel, but are more extreme than those of David Hotham in THE NEW REPUBLIC article November 25, 1957, and do not exhibit very high professional standards.” Elting did not specify what constituted “very high professional standards,” and this was questionable in light of the value the Cambodian government and the ICA saw in what Fall provided to their organizations. Elting’s response to Dulles’ inquiry nonetheless marked the beginning of the end of Fall’s appointment and, from that moment on, Fall would remain outside policymaking entities of US government. Ironically, Fall became a much sought-after lecturer in Department of Defense institutions. The information he

931 “Elting Telegram to Secretary of State Dulles,” May 28, 1958, NARA RG469/P85/9.
would provide to military personnel would become increasingly relevant as they grappled with escalating problems in Vietnam.

In the days after a decision was reached, Far Eastern Division State Department official, Ed Hough conducted a confidential telephone call with ICA official Tom Eliot. Hough informed Eliot that the State Department Division Chief for the Far East and Hough had “discussed Fall… and agreed to let Fall ‘fall.’”932 Hough provided advice to Eliot regarding how to “handle [the] Fall approach and, as a personal friend, tell him [he] cooked his own goose by ‘shooting off’ or… go further by saying Vietnamese complained to State and [that] certain countries in Southeast Asia will be closed to him.”933 Both approaches had downsides. First, criticizing Fall for ‘shooting off’ was to argue with Fall’s facts. Fall’s assessments of problems in Vietnam were honest and accurate. Though it happened later, in 1961, Kennedy’s changes to US aid in Vietnam -- scrapping the ICA and forming USAID outside of the State Department – indicated that Fall’s critiques were justified. He just recognized them earlier, and characterized them more trenchantly, than others. The second approach to Fall Hough recommended encouraged Eliot to tell Fall that the Vietnamese complained. Neither approaches changed the fact that, a little over a week later, ICA informed Fall that his contract to teach in Cambodia was dropped and that his candidacy was “unacceptable” due to Department of State concerns.934

Fall’s reaction was professionally diplomatic but, this no doubt masked personal frustration. Fall told Thomas Corcoran, a State Department official in charge of Laos affairs, that he “understood that Nguyen Phu Duc, First Secretary of the Vietnamese Embassy, attended the New York City meeting of the Association of Asian Studies in April and that he had persuaded

932 “Record of Confidential Telephone Call, Hough to Eliot,” May 29, 1958, NARA RG469/P85/9.
933 Ibid.
934 ICA Cablegram,” June 9, 1958, NARA RG469/P85/9.
the Ambassador of Vietnam to write to the State Department to protest Fall’s employment in Cambodia.”

Fall, apparently, did not know that a copy of his *Nation* article had come to the attention of Howard Elting, at the American Embassy before its publication. Fall’s public remarks were made in early April, so almost two months elapsed before John Foster Dulles raised the matter. As Fall put it to Corcoran, “he had made certain critical comments based on his honest opinion, but that he was not in fact anti-Vietnamese and that he clearly favored the Ngo Dinh Diem Government over the Communist regime. He intended, however, to tell the Cambodians why his contract had been dropped.”

The State Department, meanwhile, distributed internal memorandums describing Fall’s criticism at his New York speech in more detail. Selig Taubenblatt, a State Department official who heard Fall speak in April, was asked to provide his notes regarding Fall’s actual remarks. Taubenblatt notes claimed that Fall mostly offered comments that were later published in his *Nation* article with only a few variations:

“He [Fall] stated that a candid appraisal would show that recent developments do not jibe with the ‘cook’s tour’ version purveyed to U.S. reporters. He blamed the U.S. for pumping in more consumer goods than the economy could absorb and criticized the mechanism of counterpart funds as inhibiting domestic industry… The ‘high flying propaganda’ about industrialization has resulted in a concentration on prestige items, such as a watch assembly plant and a scooter assembly plant which Vietnam needs ‘like a hole in the head.’ In addition, blame should also be assigned to the Vietnamese Government which has been exempt from criticism too long…the situation is crucial and South Vietnam’s economic problems can be solved only by a basic policy change…in the conclusion that followed, Fall stated that military costs in South Vietnam should be reduced and assistance to sound development projects expanded.”

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935 “Memorandum of Conversation between Thomas Corcoran and Bernard Fall,” June 3, 1958, NARA RG469/P85/9.
936 Ibid.
937 Taubenblatt Memo,” June 6, 1958, NARA RG469/P85/9.  

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Not long after Taubenblatt’s memo was submitted in early June, Fredrick Bunting, the ICA director of the Far Eastern Affairs division in Washington, expressed apprehension about the decision to drop Fall’s contract. “State feels that it would not be in the interest of the U.S. in the area to sponsor Fall…I concur in this view, although I am not happy about it because of Fall’s considerable knowledge and abilities.”938 The same day Bunting met with Fall in Washington to explain why the ICA would no longer sponsor Fall. In a memorandum to Joseph Mendenhall and Thomas Corcoran, Bunting wrote, “Fall was aware that his talk in New York was indiscreet and that the Vietnamese Ambassador had called him to account for the talk on April 12.” Bunting added, “[Fall] feels aggrieved and I suspect he also feels that the U.S. has not a sufficient reason for refusing to conclude the contract. He showed me various publications of his, including one for USIA and another for ICA and the Department of Labor, saying that the U.S. had not hesitated to use his services in the past. Before he left my office, I made it clear that contract negotiations were at an end.”939

After this meeting, Fall did not pursue the matter further. A number of memorandums circulated between the State Department and ICA to coordinate their messages over how to handle the event, should it be brought up again later. One memorandum recorded a meeting between Eric Kocher, Office of Southeast Asia Affairs, Pierre Landy, a counselor to the French Embassy, and Thomas Corcoran: “There was not question of Dr. Fall’s freedom to speak and write as he wished but some of his published charges against the U.S. aid program were inaccurate as well as highly emotional. It also seems that no useful purpose would be served by sending this man who had antagonized the friendly government of Viet-Nam to adjacent Cambodia in view of the delicate

nature of Vietnamese-Cambodian relations. However, the Vietnamese government had made no request to us concerning Dr. Fall’s proposed assignment to Phnom Penh. The Department had become aware of Dr. Fall’s public comments on the aid program on its own.” Pierre Landy, a fellow Frenchman, added that “Dr. Fall was an extremely independent and audacious man and that these characteristics were the cause of his recent difficulty.”

The concluding memos and records clearly indicate that the U.S. government rescinded Fall’s contract based on his criticism of U.S. policy given at his New York Speech and upon pre-publication drafts it obtained of his article for The Nation. It was not a scandal. Bernard Fall spoke inconvenient truths and members of the State Department, especially its secretary of state did not want to hear the facts he presented. John Foster Dulles’ Memo was the first indication to ICA officials and other State Department officials that Fall’s views did not support U.S. policy and that Fall’s potential position in Phnom Penh should be scrutinized, which implicitly meant it should be discarded. In any case, John Foster Dulles was the one who pulled the levers to terminate Fall’s contract. And he did this instead of looking at problems in U.S. foreign assistance that Fall saw in Vietnam and for which Dulles, as Secretary of State, was responsible since the ICA operated under State Department oversight. That, far more than Fall’s contract, was what mattered with regard to U.S. policy towards Vietnam in 1958. It would take John F. Kennedy’s initiative to scrap the ICA, separate foreign assistance from the State Department, and eventually organize US foreign assistance in the separate government agency of USAID in 1961. The entire episode, in the end, demonstrated that neither the United States government, nor the Republic of Vietnam,

940 “State Department Memo,” June 12, 1958, NARA RG469/P85/9.
was receptive to criticism of its aid program. The fact that President Kennedy completely reorganized foreign assistance later in 1961 demonstrated that Fall’s criticisms had merit.

The event was important because Cambodia and the United States lost the opportunity to use Fall’s expertise as a result of John Foster Dulles’ antipathy for Fall’s criticism of US policies. Rather than honestly appraising whether Fall was right or wrong, he was rejected from possible service at a time when it was needed. President Kennedy’s support for the Foreign Assistance Act, signed into law in November 1961, confirmed Fall was right in pointing out problems in this area. The years that passed between 1958 and 1961 were, regrettably, critical years for US foreign assistance to just muddle along when more effective policies might have helped the Republic of Vietnam. The event also demonstrated that Fall had to find other avenues for finding solutions to problems in Indochina. Fall knew, perhaps better than anyone, the development and strategies of the Viet Minh, Indochina’s history, France’s imperial role in the region, and he used this to explain why foreign assistance, since it was needed, must be planned and directed in well-conceived ways appropriate for Vietnam’s rural-based economy. Fall had written for the US Department of Labor, the US Information Service, and as a contractor providing analysis to support the US Senate’s decision-making. He was not partisan in his criticism. He criticized policy. In South Vietnam, anti-Diem and anti-government animosity continued to grow because of failures in land reform, repressive government policy, the removal of villagers’ chosen leaders and their replacement with government appointees, and other problems. Changes in policy were needed to fix these problems. Preventing experts, like Fall, from locating issues and presenting inconvenient truths about areas needing adjustment was not a helpful course of action. Instead of further analysis supporting, or criticizing, US government policy, Fall would have to turn to other institutions. Howard University would grow in importance to Fall for this and other professional reasons. Not only did
Howard University support his research and desire to learn the truth of US policy, but its faculty and administrators demanded this type of perseverence as a matter of academic and professional integrity. Howard University, and other places like it, wanted Fall to report the truth, support it with evidence, and make it known to others. That was the only thing Fall wanted all along.
Chapter Seven – “An Unassailable Position of Total Weakness”

Fall’s article “South Viet-Nam’s Internal Problems,” published in September 1958, built upon his thought developed earlier in the year when “Will South Viet-Nam Be Next?” was published in The Nation. In “South Viet-Nam’s Internal Problems,” he examined economic issues and worsening security in the south with greater detail than in his earlier article. Rather than discussing the importation of unneeded goods, which he did for The Nation, Fall detailed insufficient assistance for rice production, excessive assistance for military expenditures, transportation development, and other economic problems. His two articles in 1958 worked together to record growing discontent in the South Vietnamese countryside. Ngo Dinh Diem’s policies, including the removal of villagers’ elected leaders and their replacement with government-appointed officials in 1956, did much to inflame anger against the government among rural Vietnamese. His economic policies, problems with US assistance, and repression against dissent in 1957 and 1958 made this worse. However, extensive and increasing US assistance for the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, along with a growing advisory presence in Vietnam through the US Military Advisory Assistance Group (MAAG), gave the South Vietnamese government significant military strength. This troubled Fall because underlying political weakness was primarily braced through military power placing the Republic of Vietnam into “an unassailable position of total weakness.”

The second section of the chapter focuses on Fall discovery and use of the term “Revolutionary Warfare.” Fall acquired this term from French officers who developed a military doctrine called la guerre révolutionnaire in 1958. They created what amounted to a ‘counter-

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revolutionary’ approach to war, after their defeat in 1954, from lessons learned fighting the Viet Minh. The section first examines the context in which Fall came to learn of the term. Secondly, it explains how Fall used the term and how he took it in a different direction than French military officers applying their doctrine in their war against an independence movement in Algeria.

The third and final section of the chapter describes how Fall believed an incipient Second Indochina War was emerging. Economic problems in the south, government repression against dissent, anger with insufficient land reform, and other troubles contributed to a difficult, but self-created political environment for the South Vietnamese government. This situation was aided by the United States. The Republic of Vietnam continued to receive increased aid to build its national army, growing numbers of American advisors were deployed to coordinate US aid, and President Ngo Dinh Diem became increasingly entrenched in his position, and more unwilling to implement needed reform. American advisors, like Wesley Fishel, with whom Diem worked for years, grew increasingly troubled by this combination of problems and frustrated with Diem’s intransigence. Fishel, moreover, discussed Fall’s articles with Diem, but Fishel could still not force Diem to progress sufficiently towards what Americans thought was better governance of South Vietnam. Together, the Republic of Vietnam, the United States, and Ngo Dinh Diem’s policies, in Fall’s words, “slowly but surely created an unassailable position of total weakness.”  

After setbacks resulting from his article for The Nation, Fall’s career rebounded. At Howard University, Fall was appointed the Ralph Bunche Chair in International Relations in 1958 and he produced even more articles on developments in South Vietnam. Fall met with Bunche on at least two occasions when Fall brought Howard University students to the United Nations’ headquarters to meet with Bunche while undersecretary for Special Political Affairs and on the New York City Board of Education. Fall had another connection with Bunche. It is almost certain that Fall’s teacher at SAIS, Dr. Amry Vandenbosch, knew Bunche as a result of their service together in the OSS and at the 1945 San Francisco Conference, at which Bunche was in charge of a “Department of Trusteeship of the UN” to increase “self-determination among societies who had not yet attained self-government.” Fall was eager, therefore, to perpetuate Bunche’s legacy at Howard University and beyond. Despite this positive career step, Fall continued to work privately through significant backlash that his article for The Nation generated.

After receiving what Fall termed an “avalanche” of letters, including many from the US-Vietnam group, “American Friends of Viet-Nam” of which Fall was a member, Fall wrote several letters to the editor of The Nation to clarify misinterpretations of his article. In the first of these letters, Fall explained “I don’t think my article was critical of [US] policies. It was critical of

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943 Bernard Fall, “CV,” Series 1.01, Box F-1, BBF, JFKL.
947 Bernard Fall “Letter to the Editor,” July 9, 1958, Series 1.01, Box F-01, BBF, JFKL.
methods, which is fundamentally different.” Fall’s letter attempted to explain these differences in more detail and he appeared to learn from this difficult experience. In another letter, Fall provided five detailed rebuttals to criticism from Christopher Emmet, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. Fall explained, “It is obvious that there are certain areas of disagreement between the United States and South Vietnam. I would say, and my observation is based upon solid evidence, that the feelings Vietnamese give vent to when it come to American action in Viet-Nam is mostly DISAPPOINTMENT. The Vietnamese are not ungrateful. They know that U.S. aid and political support has saved them from disaster – but they’re still disappointed, and that is their privilege. Perhaps a little more personal contact and human kindness would do the trick, who knows?”

In a show of support, Howard University republished Fall’s article, “Will South Viet-Nam Be Next?” in the November 8, 1958 edition of Howard Magazine, a gesture Fall likely appreciated. Later, Howard Magazine’s editors further commented upon the influence of Fall’s honesty in “Will South Viet-Nam Be Next?” writing “Fall revealed many facts about the impending political situation in Vietnam which were generally unknown to Americans. The article brought about vigorous denials by Vietnamese officials, but what Dr. Fall wrote at that time has since been substantiated.” Fall reflected further about the article’s reception, writing “the roof literally caved in on me after that article. The editor of The Nation was swamped by an avalanche of letters originating from Diem’s propaganda organizations in the United States, the gist of which was that (a) I was an unreconstructed French ‘colonialist’; (b) ‘hated’ the Vietnamese; and (c) did

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948 Ibid.
949 Ibid.
950 Bernard Fall “Will South Viet-Nam Be Next? reprint, Howard Magazine, November 1958, Vol. 1, No. 1, Series 1.06, Box A-2, BBF, JFKL.
951 “Howard University Biography,” Series 1.10, Box AM-1, BBF, JFKL.
not know what I was talking about.” He added, “The next reaction came from Saigon itself: apprised of the fact that neighboring Cambodia wanted to appoint me as professor to the Royal Institute of Administration, the Diem regime, via the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, had my appointment rescinded at the last moment.” “Will South Viet-Nam Be Next?”, however, was vindicated by events after 1958. The Kennedy Administration’s later reorganization of US foreign assistance, in both “methods and policies,” indicated that Fall’s mistake was being honest about what he saw and publishing those findings. Regarding the worsening security situation in South Vietnam, moreover, he was the earliest analyst to describe the Viet Minh’s methods as Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare. In agreement with Fall’s observations, historian David Elliot reflected on events in South Vietnam, writing “the explosive situation existed even before the armed struggle began, and that the main cause of this was the actions of the Diem Government…it was the actions of the Diem government during the six years of peace as much as or more than the legacy of the Viet Minh that fueled the opposition to the GVN (Republic of Vietnam).”

In September 1958, Fall was emboldened enough to publish another article analyzing South Vietnam entitled, “South Viet-Nam’s Internal Problems.” The article emphasized key points from “Will South Viet-Nam Be Next?” but did so more temperamentally. Fall appeared to recognize costs incurred because of his journalistic independence and outspoken position. It had been a frustrating to lose an agreed-upon contract to teach in Phnom Penh earlier in the year, but the professional safety net afforded as the Ralph Bunche Chair in International Relations at Howard

952 Bernard Fall, “Book Reviews by Fall,” Series 1.08, Box BR-1, BBF, JFKL.
953 Ibid.
955 Fall’s article for Pacific Affairs, “South Viet-Nam’s Internal Problems,” is available in the Bernard Fall Papers, Series 1.1, Box F-1, BBF, JFKL. It was commercially reprinted as “The Birth of an Insurgency,” in chapter 13 of Bernard B. Fall, Viet-Nam Witness, 1953-1966 (New York: Praeger 1966). Due to its greater accessibility, page number references to this article are taken from Viet-Nam Witness, 1953-1966.
University was emboldening too. Fall’s position on the Republic of Vietnam became more even-handed, if not less critical. He clearly believed, for example, that the Republic of Vietnam had taken on substance as a state and that its legal legitimacy was not debatable.\textsuperscript{956} The delivery in Fall’s subsequent articles may have been moderated, but his content became more forceful as he accumulated evidence to support his assessments of economic and security problems in the South.

“South Viet-Nam’s Internal Problems” demonstrated Fall’s willingness to double-down when he knew he had facts to support his claims. Moreover, his support at Howard University provided important freedom to criticize policies and methods when he knew the criticisms were honest, backed with scholarship, and the policies could lead to greater problems for the United States. The article was a turning point in his analysis of the war in Southeast Asia because, after the dust settled, Fall would unrelentingly call out the facts as he saw them in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. This would, in later years, lead to his formative role as a founder and model for other critics coalescing into a nascent “New Left” school critical of war in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{957} It is important, moreover, to emphasize that Fall saw the Republic of Vietnam as a legitimate state, and that his most incisive criticisms were directed towards its policies which he viewed, in many cases, as self-defeating. His awareness that the Republic of Vietnam was authentic -- even if it was often wrong and authoritarian -- would be a crucial point of divergence between Fall and others of the New Left who later cohered around the claim that the Republic of Vietnam was illegitimate. Because of its importance to the development of Fall’s thought in 1958, it is useful to consider other


problems Fall perceived in South Vietnam’s economy and security in “South Viet-Nam’s Internal Problems.”

Fall described the creation of an economic vacuum in South Vietnam after French troops left, writing “These French forces, spread throughout the countryside and relying far more on local goods and services than was usually imagined, constituted an economic stabilization factor of no small importance. The expenditures of these troops, who ate much local food and used thousands of local clerks, mechanics, servants, or communication operators, contributed greatly to the wartime prosperity which, financially at least, was less artificial than is generally believed.”

One of the problems was the speed of their departure because “with the disappearance of this ‘built-in’ purchasing power…the local market found itself facing a huge wave of imported products which had to be absorbed by a local economy suddenly deprived of any chance of increasing its resources.” In place of dissipated purchasing of locally-produced goods, the United States directed aid towards military related expenditures with approximately 80% of financial assistance allocated for Vietnamese military for pay and equipment. The problem, Fall noted, was that “The International Cooperation Administration must provide the necessary economic underpinning to the country to help it meet its force goals [for the Vietnamese military], with purely economic long-range undertakings necessarily assuming a role of secondary importance.”

France, with US assistance, had poured significant resources into its operations in Indochina. Fall, however, appeared to assume in the article that readers would simply understand

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959 Ibid., 173.
960 Ibid. 174. Fall describes “force goals” as: “the number of military units planned to be activated and maintained on a basis of varying readiness by virtue of U.S. aid.”
that Vietnam’s economy was better able to absorb French occupation than when the majority of US assistance was directed to the Vietnamese military after 1955. It is not always clear why US funds directly supporting the Vietnamese military created different or more severe problems than the support provided to French and allied Vietnamese forces during the First Indochina War. Readers of “South Viet-Nam’s Internal Problems” were left to wonder why South Vietnamese troops, if they had at least some increased buying-power, were not able to prime the economy. Moreover, Fall did not explain why the United States was so insistent on “dumping” unneeded consumer goods onto the Vietnamese economy. Clearly, Fall believed that US aid planners did not think through the right type of aid a non-Western, non-industrial country would require but he did not explain why except through several brief references to benefits accrued to American producers of goods imported into Vietnam. These ambiguities aside, Fall appeared more concerned with slowing exports, particularly rice, which decreased after 1955. As a result, he focused primarily on the insufficient provision of US assistance to increase rice exports which, after rubber, was Vietnam’s most valuable commodity.961

In “South Viet-Nam’s Internal Problems,” Fall provided much greater examination of agricultural deficiencies in rice production, compared to his earlier analysis published in The Nation. This demonstrated an increased awareness of deeper problems as he reflected on his research gathered the previous year. Rice production, more than anything else, was central to not only economic but Vietnamese social and political life. He explained that insufficient assistance to the agricultural sector of the South Vietnamese economy, specifically to help increase rice yields, was the most critical deficiency in US assistance planning. Fall’s renewed focus on meagre

961 Ibid., 176. Fall noted that rubber accounted for “62.5 per cent of all South Vietnamese exports in 1957… but France, a year ago South Vietnam’s largest rubber buyer, now has turned to importing Malayan rubber.”
agricultural production, especially concerning rice yields, strengthened his argument that South Vietnam’s overall economy faced serious challenges despite the inherent environmental strengths of Vietnam’s Mekong Delta region for growing this commodity. US assistance not only failed to fix this problem but made it worse by sending Vietnamese goods they did not need and allocating funds to projects that did not help Vietnamese farmers and their families. This was the population, in terms of numbers and their role growing rice, that needed assistance the most. In the French era, this problem was not as noticeable because financial flows into Vietnam paid French troops who spent money in the Vietnamese economy even though rice yields after 1946 were lower than pre-World War II levels. With the combination of non-exportable rice yields, removal of French buying power of locally-produced goods, and the importation of non-essential consumer goods, the Vietnamese economy deteriorated.

In his September 1958 article, Fall sought to describe how this economic malaise emerged, whereas his earlier work for The Nation offered a more jolting view that condemned more easily observable importation of unneeded goods into Vietnam. “South Viet-Nam’s Internal Problems” provided a more grounded view of how deficiencies in rice production, and lack of assistance to improve problems in this area, created structural stresses within Vietnamese society. The importing of milk, corn, hi-fi sets and calculators only accentuated the more critical problem of rice production. Fall’s call for reform, and his evidence supporting that call, was also becoming clearer to other specialists and this was reflected by the subsequent reorganization of US assistance.962 This partially explains why the State Department did not publicly contest the content of Fall’s articles after 1958. Fall and his analysis, Foggy Bottom seemed to understand, could not

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be publicly contained since he incorporated first-hand knowledge gained in Vietnam with US
government reports, including United States Operations Mission (USOM) “activity reports,” and
US Senate studies as sources to verify his claims. The information in these kinds of reports, he
suggested were often ignored, or incompetently implemented because of insufficient
understanding of Vietnam. His two articles, “Will South Viet-Nam Be Next?” and “South Viet-
Nam’s Internal Problems,” worked in tandem by calling attention to problems that could be fixed
in Vietnam before 1959 and through explaining how more effective aid would improve both the
Vietnamese economy and its security environment. He demonstrated not only government
officials’ inability to interpret and apply information that their own offices generated, but also that
there were better ways to address South Vietnam’s problems.

The bigger issue with US policy was that US assistance to South Vietnamese farmers did
not improve after 1958. After military-related expenditures, transportation development projects
received a large proportion of economic assistance and over 40% of economic assistance was
allocated for building of roads after 1954. Fall was not the only one to see these problems.
Historians William Lederer and Eugene Burdick, like Fall, saw similar troubles in 1958, writing
“We pay for huge highways through jungles in Asian lands where there is no transport except
bicycle and foot.” This situation steadily worsened. Political scientist Robert Scigliano, noted
of US assistance in 1963, “Nearly all of the transportation projects entailed road construction, and
while road-building served economic ends it was carried out in accordance with military strategy.

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963 Fall cited, for example, “USOM-Vietnam, Activity Report, June 30, 1954-June 30, 1956 and The Military
Assistance Program to the United States, U.S. Senate Special Committee to Study the Foreign Aid Program
The Ugly American is well-known but, in relation to Fall’s work, provides a narrative-fictional equivalent to Fall’s
analysis of problems with aid, security, politics and cultural interaction.
A 20-mile stretch of highway [between Saigon and Bien Hoa] cost more money than the United States provided for all labor, community development, social welfare, housing, health, and education projects in Vietnam combined during the entire period 1954-1961.” Fall was charting a trajectory of US aid that would continue to create more problems than they solved for rural Vietnamese. Scigliano’s research suggested that Fall was correct in his assessment of not only problems associated with rice production, but other overall economic challenges associated with US assistance to the South Vietnamese Republic that ranged from military aid, counter-part funding, and many others. Clearly, Fall had a finger on the pulse of a predicament in South Vietnam and, as his experience with the State Department, which rescinded his contract to teach in Cambodia demonstrated, this did not go unnoticed. The State Department could prevent Fall’s employment in Phenom Penh, but could not prevent the publication of Fall’s articles. It could, however, complain to other departments of the US government about his increasingly critical work. After 1958, the FBI began to monitor him and his communications with others. These measures increased in proportion with the vehemence of Fall’s criticism.

“South Viet-Nam’s Internal Problems” was evenhanded because it included a modicum of praise for the Republic of Vietnam. Fall drew brief positive attention to Ngo Dinh Diem’s efforts embodied through the refugee camp in Kien Giang Province called Cai-San. However, after describing its qualities, even if Potemkin-like, he concluded that “Diem’s larger land reform had become bogged down in its early stages.” In the case of Cai-San, Fall did not pull punches as to its artificiality writing, “In January 1958, the provincial governor [of Kien Giang] appeared at the

settlement with an escort of Civil Guards to explain to the farmers that the word ‘distributed’ used in their land grants was not be confused with ‘definitely granted,’ and that they owed rent or purchase payments to the ‘rightful owners’ of the land. Needless to say, the situation became explosive.†969 Considering the majority of people settled at Cai-San were refugees from the North, this was not a shining example of generosity that other American reporters, Fall claimed, were told about fully. The South Vietnamese government, Fall believed, did not really think about where these refugees would find the money to pay for their resettled existence. Fall concluded his discussion of Cai-San, writing “The situation is far from settled, for riots in Cai-San, involving more than one hundred refugee farmers and former owners, were subsequently reported in the Saigon Press.”970

Fall saved his most trenchant criticism of South Vietnam’s policies for its internal security predicament. On this subject, he emphasized some material that originally appeared in “Will South Viet-Nam Be Next?” especially the relationship between economic problems and security. In “South Viet-Nam’s Internal Problems,” however, he drilled further into a problem he saw during France’s occupation of Indochina in 1953. This central issue consisted of government authorities’ repeated claims that there “weren’t really any problems” of communist infiltration of its “secured areas.” Despite these claims, Fall had revealed Viet Minh infiltration in 1953 by studying tax and education records that clearly demonstrated lack of government control in large areas.971 In 1957 and 1958, Fall saw this problem occurring again. The Republic of Vietnam and the United States did not want to acknowledge a worsening security environment even when confronted with facts

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969 Ibid., 180.
970 Ibid., 180-181.
that it was degrading. He believed that the expulsion of elected village leaders by the Diem administration in 1956, was a central reason creating this problem because, in response, the Viet Minh targeted government-assigned village leaders at alarming rates.

Fall’s prior knowledge, gained in 1953, gave him confidence that he knew what was happening. Similar campaigns during the First Indochina War revealed a negative trend that contributed to eventual French defeat in 1954. In 1957, he was not really surprised to see similar tactics returning and, in fact, he documented how Republic of Vietnam control over the rural population was being hollowed out by Viet Minh cadres. This angered Fall because of the inability of the Republic of Vietnam or the United States to heed the problem. French intransigence was one thing, since it was difficult to figure out the nature of Viet Minh war, American intransigence was another because Fall anticipated and had the evidence to show what was happening. Viet Minh methods interested Fall as a phenomenon because they evoked similarities he recognized from the Second World War. The specificity of local knowledge that was conveyed into actionable intelligence led Fall to conclude that “activities in South Viet-Nam during 1957 and 1958 no longer represent a last-ditch fight of dispersed sect of Communist rebel remnants.” 972 This was a broader movement that used local and culturally-specific knowledge to target specific individuals with government supported administrative control at the Vietnamese village level. Viet Minh targeting of government officials was not random. “The target,” Fall wrote, “is always chosen according to its political impact.” 973 Fall explained divergences between the “official” government line and this reality, writing “There is a certain contradiction in the simultaneous assertions that there is peace and normal activity in the countryside of South Viet-Nam and in the justification of police-

973 Ibid., 265.
state measures because of the threat of internal subversion by still-existing Communist and sect guerrillas.” 974  Fall’s thought and confidence consolidated at this point because he could confirm a trend and phenomenon he recognized not only earlier in Vietnam, but also from his own past experiences.

As a western observer, he used his knowledge as a former guerrilla fighter to look for similarities in Vietnam that he knew from his past as a member of the Maquis and soldier in the French Army during the Second World War. He blended this experience with his formal academic study to point out early insurgency indicators, writing “To the Vietnamese on the spot, the resurgence, rather than the continuance, of rebel activities [in 1957] has become a fact of life with which he has to cope on an increasing scale over the past twelve months.” 975  Fall continued, “The extent and rise of this insecurity need not be explained in subjective terms which may be biased according to the particular viewpoint of the observer. It can be simply plotted for which daily newspapers or non-secret reports provide the basic raw material” 976  Fall’s map of incidents demonstrated how the incisive collecting and processing of public information revealed significant insight intelligence officers might have missed. (See “Map 3” in Appendix II – Charts and Maps for Fall’s reference). Fall’s effort to document the reality of the security situation, by gathering facts on the ground, and then to compare that reality with official government pronouncements which erroneously identified the situation, is one of the two most important contributions Fall offered in his analysis of war in Southeast Asia. He accomplished this “as an extremely independent and audacious man,” as one French critic stated, but his criticisms of the South

974 Ibid., 184.
975 Ibid., 184.
Vietnamese and US government were not based on a lack of agreement with the ideological ‘rightness of their cause’ against the authoritarianism of communism. Instead, Fall’s criticism centered on Vietnamese and American governments’ failure to see the truth of what was really happening on the ground and their failure to report this information honestly both to themselves and to their citizens.

Fall was among the first to call attention to problems with the US government’s credibility on developments in Vietnam. Journalist David Halberstam would later write, “It is not a credibility gap which exists in Washington but rather, a reality gap. ‘Leaders’ believe what they are saying, but they are wrong in their appraisal of the war and they have been from the start, and if the war goes on five more years, they will be wrong for five more years.”

Halberstam knowingly channeled Fall and directly credited him for calling out the disparity between truth and government announcements. According to Halberstam, “Fall was the man who taught us about that small fierce country’s past when we most desperately needed it,” and he did so “when the leaders of the most powerful nation in the world did not yet know that they would be the architects of the least attractive part of their country’s twentieth century destiny in that country.” It is no wonder, then, that individuals such as Daniel Ellsberg were attracted to Bernard Fall’s work years before Ellsberg later achieved notoriety for leaking the “Pentagon Papers” in 1969. The lack of honesty

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977 David Halberstam Papers, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, Box 54, Folder 9.
about Vietnam narrowed the South Vietnamese and US governments’ ability to adapt politically to challenges posed by the Viet Minh, the North Vietnamese and, later, the NLF/PLAF.

Fall’s other critical contribution to describing warfare in Southeast Asia was his description of Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare. He deployed the term rarely before 1958 but used it very frequently thereafter. His use of Revolutionary Warfare was inextricably linked to his recognition of political processes and Viet Minh efforts to control in Vietnamese villages. Functionality was critical and this explained why specific government officials were targeted. Other than French officers who survived Indochina and wrote about the Viet Minh’s methods, these were not political-military actions that western authors often wrote about.980 As Fall noted, “The new terrorists seek out the local police chiefs, security guards, village treasurers, and youth leaders and kill them in as spectacular a manner as possible. It would be pointless to describe here the hundreds of cases reported in detail in the Saigon press [in 1957 and 1958], but in general they document the fact that the objective of the rebels – gradual ‘insulation’ of the central authorities from direct contact with the grass roots – was achieved.”981 He was unique in pointing this out because of his familiarity with such methods.

It is essential to recall Fall’s intimate knowledge of this kind of warfare. “Insulation” was the same term he used from his experience during the Second World War to explain how the Maquis separated French civilians from Nazis by killing collaborators. Targeting collaborators during World War II, Fall wrote “was the kind of deterrent effect we were actually looking for,


the kind that would isolate the German troops from the population, in fact insulate them. There would be complete loss of contact with the population without creating any kind of adverse reaction toward us [the Maquis].”

Fall’s understanding of warfare in Vietnam grew out of processes he directly experienced and knew. It was warfare developed to achieve social and political effects among Vietnamese villagers, where authentic government control was achieved or lost. Fall recognized the Viet Minh’s application of Revolutionary Warfare in ways that no one else wrote about in English by 1957, a critical fact since there was still time to change the course of government policy in the United States and South Vietnam, before greater problems emerged. His ability to recognize Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare was shaped by years of thought, research, experience, and knowledge gained as a Maquis in the French Alps, at Nuremberg, and through years of academic study.

II - Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare in Indochina

“A dead Special Forces Sergeant is not spontaneously replaced by his own environment. A dead revolutionary usually is.”

In 1958, Fall finally found the words he needed to describe the Viet Minh way of war: Revolutionary Warfare. This was crucial to Fall’s thought because the term was more effective and concise than his previous descriptions that used an aggregate of social-political-military doctrine-related terms that varied slightly from one published article to another. Clearly, he needed a term that would improve his ability to communicate the complex, qualitative nature of war conducted by the Viet Minh. Succinctly describing intersections of guerrilla warfare, mass mobilization, land reform, Viet Minh organization, and Viet Minh subversion of France and similar attempts in South Vietnam was certainly a challenge. In an October 1956 *Military Review* article, Fall’s description of Viet Minh action required lengthy explanations of multiple and complex Viet Minh operations that formed an integrated whole but that he could not yet describe efficiently. As an example, “In Indochina prevalent types of terrain have brought about four major types of guerrilla warfare: urban terrorism; rice field and swamp warfare; hill and mountain warfare; and jungle warfare.” Added to this mix, Fall used other terms as well: “the type of political-military-guerrilla warfare fought by the Communists within the main French Union position, the Red River Delta, proved to be the operation that, more than Dien Bien Phu, finally broke the back of the French war effort in Indochina…” Fall could see what the Viet Minh were doing and that it was successful, but it was difficult to describe consistently and in accessible and easily understood terms.

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985 Ibid., 9.
Descriptions like “a type of political-military-guerrilla warfare” were accurate but not concise. Moreover, Fall’s strings of adjectives were relevant but the varying combinations he used made it difficult for readers to understand clearly what Fall meant unless they consistently read his articles and had a sense of his past work. Previously, the progression of Fall's analysis of Viet Minh warfare up to 1958 remained uncharted so Fall's readers may have found his ideas difficult to assess. This is particularly true since his thought and descriptions of Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare tended to be qualitative and, additionally, they expanded between his first and second trips to Vietnam in 1953 and 1957. Fall's decision to settle on "Revolutionary Warfare," thus, helped to consolidate his thought in words. Finding and using the term, therefore, was as important as it was efficient. Fall was not alone in his search for a good descriptive label. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) also had difficulties landing on a specific term to describe warfare conducted by Vietnamese communists. In one memorandum, a CIA analyst resorted to listing Viet Minh tactics and strategies, possibly because 'insurgency' seemed inadequate.\(^{986}\) Fall certainly recognized that Revolutionary Warfare was a term laden with meaning, but it accurately described the socio-political nature of war. A term like ‘insurgency’ did not incorporate the scope of social and political transformation since insurgents might want only a change in government without reordering society. Revolution, the eradication of colonial empire, with over a century of control in Indochina, more aptly characterized what the Viet Minh sought in Indochina.

How did Fall find the term Revolutionary Warfare? It is important to answer this question first because it contextualizes Fall’s definition and use of the term. French officers fighting the

\(^{986}\) As of 18 May 1964, a CIA memorandum describing the situation in South Vietnam demonstrated the difficulty finding a clear defining term so the analyst relied on "guerrilla-subversive" as a descriptive term. "Viewed from Hanoi, the guerrilla-subversive war to dislodge US forces and influence and establish Communist control in Laos and South Vietnam is doubtless going well. The time-tested technique of using terror against the populace, guerrilla warfare against anti-Communist armed forces, and subversion against governments friendly to the US is paying off for the Communists." See "CIA Memorandum: The Situation in Southeast Asia," 18 May 1964, National Security File, Country File: Vietnam, Box 53, Folder: Southeast Asia Memos, LBJP, LBJL.
Viet Minh in Indochina between 1946 and 1954 were responsible for developing western identifications of Viet Minh warfare. They created a framework known as *la guerre révolutionnaire* to describe the interdependence of political-social-military factors from their experience and Fall translated this as Revolutionary Warfare.\(^{987}\) However, there were major and critical differences between Fall's thought and those of French officers studying the Viet Minh. French officers developed their ideas after their defeat in Indochina. They sought to develop counterrevolutionary methods that copied Viet Minh tactics, such as subversion and intelligence-driven operations conducted by the Trinh Sat and Dich Van. These units were successful in their operations undermining French control, so French officers believed that they could take up Viet Minh tactics in warfare against French adversaries elsewhere with similar success. Moreover, officers promoting *la guerre révolutionnaire* feared that France’s enemies would copy the Viet Minh's efforts in other conflicts, especially in North Africa where France’s control over Algeria was contested by Algerian nationalists after 1954. In contrast, Fall learned from the Viet Minh and the French, but he did so without applying it to any purpose other than to build further knowledge of the Viet Minh's way of war in Indochina after France’s departure. Fall kept his focus on the Viet Minh while the French directed their focus and tactics on different threats elsewhere. This distinction was critical because the context and historical circumstances of colonialism in Indochina, let alone its diverse social and ecological environment, shaped this form of warfare, tailoring it to specific political realities after World War II. Revolutionary Warfare could be used anywhere, but it would be as different as the societies in which it was developed because of

differences in history and context. This is how Fall thought of revolutionary warfare and why his work contrasted that of French officers using lessons from Indochina for war in Algeria.

These French officers’ framework, however, was still flexible and non-dogmatic. Moreover, *la guerre révolutionnaire* was protean because different officers varied the term’s meaning depending on the value accorded to psychological indoctrination, or other social and political factors. What these officers shared in common, however, were the opponents from which they learned, the Viet Minh. Fall, like them, also learned from the Viet Minh’s methods while refining his knowledge from French theoretical development and taking up terminology they used. The combination of Viet Minh operations he knew of personally, and those he read about and studied through others’ experience, formed a well of thought from which Fall synthesized as much new knowledge as he could.988

Charles Lacheroy, Jean Hogard, and Gabriel Bonnet were foremost among many officers who contributed to *la guerre révolutionnaire*.989 Fall singled out Gabriel Bonnet’s work as a central influence, writing “Colonel Bonnet, a former professor at the French Higher War College, wrote a book which was to become the ‘bible’ of the new school of thought [of *la guerre révolutionnaire.*]”990 Bonnet’s *Les Guerres insurrectionnelles et révolutionnaires*, published in 1958, “was simply a history of insurrections and revolutionary wars from 3000 B.C. to Algeria” but its analysis of collective characteristics, historically shared among weak powers in conflict with stronger opponents, impressed Fall.991 Fall noted that the term originated with Mao Tse-Tung but “the French adopted the same term and Bonnet, in a book that is totally ignored in the United

990 Colonel Gabriel Bonnet, *Les Guerres insurrectionnelles et révolutionnaires* (Paris: Plon, 1958); For Fall’s reference to Bonnet, See Bernard Fall, “Laos, Viet-Nam, and Revolutionary Warfare,” pages 1-2, Series 1.09, Box T-1, page 2, undated, BBF, JFKL.
991 Ibid.
States, is likely to influence wars for decades to come because [in Bonnet’s book] it was for the first time recognized that guerrilla warfare and revolutionary warfare are not interchangeable and that the major danger the West is faced with today is not one of being unable to cope with the armed forces of a revolution but with its spirit. [emphasis in original] 992

The conception of warfare officers like Bonnet described formed an important step towards a new understanding of modern warfare. It was not an easy concept to grasp. According to French General Henri Navarre, the commander of French Union forces in Indochina in 1954 and author of the ”Navarre Plan,” this type of political-subversive warfare was “enigmatic.”993 Navarre described the Viet Minh way of war “as one never seriously studied, to my knowledge, in any military school!”994 What is remarkable about Fall's scholarship is that he identified the nature of Viet Minh efforts in 1953. The “school” contributing to his awareness, moreover, was an aggregate of experience from his time in the Maquis and French army, at Nuremberg, and through formal study with Amry Vandenbosch and other interaction with scholars like Ralph Bunche who served in the OSS during the Second World War.995

The phenomenon of warfare Fall and others recognized was not just guerrilla or jungle warfare. Moreover, it was difficult to account for warfare that went “beyond the twin deadlocks of conventional war and nuclear war.”996 This is perhaps one reason why French General Henri Navarre had a difficult time accounting for it during the First Indochina War. As Navarre learned with great regret, Revolutionary Warfare war was effective even against the French military. Fall

quoted a French officer who added insight into its authenticity: “Not even an atom bomb could have helped us; assuming that it would have hit one of their coolie trails, they would merely have bypassed ‘ground zero’ and hacked themselves a new path through the jungle.” In another officer’s description, by the time of Dien Bien Phu, the French were “like ‘des grumeaux dans la soupe’ (‘breadcrumbs in the soup’).” It is, perhaps, no wonder that French officers made concerted effort to devise improved tactics and operations against a type of political warfare that reduced their military power to crumbs and that appeared impervious to potential deployment of tactical atomic weapons in the jungles of Northwest Tonkin. In the years after Dien Bien Phu, French officers wondered at the operational planning of Viet Minh General, Vo Nguyen Giap, through which tens of thousands of porters were ordered to haul critical supplies and artillery to destroy the French position. Fall was also clearly struck with the operational success at Dien Bien Phu but recognized, however, that the years of Revolutionary Warfare leading to the battle were the key contributions to victory in the spring of 1954. In fact, Fall accorded the years preceding the battle as the central effort that effectively reduced the French position to “breadcrumbs in a soup” once the battle was engaged.

998 Ibid., 11.
999 Operation Vulture was the aerial support plan to aid the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu. According to historian, Fredrik Logevall, Operation Vulture “always, from its inception, had an atomic dimension. In early April, a study group in the Pentagon examined the possibility of using atomic weapons at Dien Bien Phu and concluded that three tactical A-bombs, properly employed, would be sufficient to obliterate the Viet Minh effort there.” See Fredrik Logevall, Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America’s Vietnam (New York: Random House, 2014), 499.
1000 Bernard Fall, “Indochina: The Last Year of the War,” Military Review, Vol. 36, No. 7, October 1956, BBF, JFKL, 9; Fall’s account of the battle stands as the standard in English after more than sixty years. See Kevin Boylan and Luc Olivier, Valley of the Shadow: The Siege of Dien Bien Phu (New York: Osprey, 2018), 266. Readers familiar with Mao Tse-Tung’s theory of protracted war may recognize the revolutionary phase to which Fall gave so much attention within a parameter of “equilibrium” found in Mao’s second stage. Fall did not directly frame his writing in terms of Mao’s three stages even though it is likely that he knew Mao Tse-Tung’s writings through Samuel B. Griffith’s translations originally produced in 1940. Griffith’s updated translated version of Mao’s writings appeared in 1961. See Samuel B. Griffith, Mao Tse-Tung on Guerrilla Warfare (New York: Praeger, 1961). It is undeniable that Fall was well-versed in Mao’s writing and especially as it was interpreted by
What was Revolutionary Warfare and what Viet Minh actions contributed to it? Was Revolutionary Warfare the best term to describe those types of socio-political processes? How did Fall defend its use, and argue that it effectively described the type of warfare pursued by the Viet Minh? Fall relied on Bonnet’s work describing Revolutionary Warfare as “a quasi-mathematical equation: ‘partisan war plus psychological war equals revolutionary warfare.’” Fall refined this further: “Revolutionary Warfare occurs when guerilla methods are used to further an ideology.”

Fall eventually broke this down into a formula: “RW=G+P where Revolutionary Warfare equals Guerrilla Warfare plus Political Action.” In perhaps the most illustrative description he provided, Fall wrote “the formulation for revolutionary warfare is the result of the application of guerrilla methods to the furtherance of an ideology or a political system. This is the real difference between partisan warfare, guerrilla warfare and everything else.” (emphasis in original) “Revolutionary” was used by French theorists, as well as Fall, because that was the term, in translation, Mao Tse-Tung used in 1936. In the context of Indochina, the Viet Minh’s communist ideology was not uncontested, but it was different than anything in Vietnamese history and replaced an entire colonial empire. This made it revolutionary.

In addition to Gabriel Bonnet’s work, Fall read other officer-theorists’ work. He regarded Jean Hogard’s “Guerre révolutionnaire et pacification,” as another foundational text published in the March-April 1957 issue of Revue Militaire d’Information. Fall regarded this entire issue

Vietnamese, such as Truong Chinh. See Bernard B. Fall, Street Without Joy: The French Debacle in Indochina (Guilford, Connecticut: Stackpole Books, 1961), 400.
1001 Bernard Fall, “Laos, Viet-Nam, and Revolutionary Warfare,” page 2, Series 1.09, Box T-1, page 2, undated, BBF, JFKL.
of this journal as “A key study of the whole revolutionary problem.” More broadly, French theorists of *la guerre révolutionnaire* regarded Revolutionary Warfare as part of a larger historical arc of warfare in which communism served as a vanguard. According to historian Michael P.M. Finch, the “total war that the revolutionary war theorists described rested on a belief about the scale of a global subversive war which they contended had been underway since 1917, and for which France’s post-1945 colonial wars were the most tangible evidence.” Moreover, these theorists “relied upon the belief that the processes which led to the loss of control in Indochina could be applied anywhere: the global enemy who had built ‘bases’ in the colonies.... could do the same in the metropole.” As a result, they developed counterrevolutionary - counterinsurgency approaches that were stringent and expansive. Moreover, “these theorists were beholden to an escalatory logic which suggested that only greater levels of popular support and mobilization and more ruthless methods of pursuing the fight would guarantee the security not just of the empire, but of France herself.” This was a vision of total war undertaken by a national security state-system that Fall did not share, and, in fact, that he feared. An ‘escalatory logic’ with a subsequent mobilization using ever more ruthless methods of pursuing war might have applied to German demands for the Sudetenland, or other regions. The reason he did not share this vision of a national-security state centered, therefore, on the fact that he saw how a state could manipulate “pursuing its security” towards terrible ends, an experience he knew first-hand from German rationales, such as Lebensraum and other imperial justifications, that led to the Second World War.

1008 Ibid., 412.
1009 Ibid., 412.
It was terrifying to contemplate this taking place elsewhere, especially since civilians were invariably the ones who suffered the most. This was a foreboding acumen and sensitivity that Fall never lost, and it originated with losing his parents. This sensibility he possessed would critically shape the war he saw warfare in Vietnam as it developed into the Second Indochina War.

According to François Sully, France’s soldiers, particularly French officers who developed ideas of *la guerre révolutionnaire*, “were obsessed with the idea of proving that they could defeat an insurgency using guerrilla tactics they had learned from their defeat in Indochina.”\textsuperscript{1010} Providing a model for Jean Larteguy’s *The Centurions*, “many of these men, like the paratroopers of Colonel Bigeard, were not satisfied by a twenty-six-month tour of duty in Vietnam. As soon as their six-month leave in France was over, they re-volunteered for Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia. They were anxious to learn the secrets of guerrilla warfare.”\textsuperscript{1011} Fall was similar to these officers but only in the sense that he was committed to studying these "secrets in Indochina" after French defeat and to understanding how the Viet Minh developed them further after the First Indochina War.

Key differences existed between Fall and French officers developing *la guerre révolutionnaire*. As historian Peter Paret explained, theorists of *la guerre révolutionnaire* were not interested in "understanding the complex origins of the Indochinese War," but rather developed their theories to "gain insights that could be turned to operational use in other contexts."\textsuperscript{1012} In contrast, Fall was clearly interested in understanding the complex origins of the Indochinese War. Additionally, in opposition to the emphasis Fall accorded the Vietnamese people as the core of Revolutionary Warfare, French proponents of *la guerre révolutionnaire* believed that the “crowd

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\textsuperscript{1011} Ibid., 124.
was not influential, but rather existed to be influenced,” and the “sociological, economic, and political study of a host population was secondary to the attention given to techniques and methods advocated in French conceptions of modern warfare.”"¹⁰¹³ Fall’s view, in stark contrast, prioritized Vietnamese agency and emphasized the importance of Vietnamese civilians’ support creating legitimacy in governance. The importance of the Vietnamese “crowd” was not only influential to Fall, but it collectively formed a critical and active base for Revolutionary Warfare. In his descriptions of parallel hierarchies, Fall had already explained how political support among Vietnamese civilians -- ranging from flower girls to merchants and beggars -- were critical to the legitimacy of Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare and did much to keep the movement alive. The central importance of the Vietnamese people explains why Fall was so critical of US Foreign Assistance in his May 1958 article for The Nation "Will South Viet Nam be Next?" US assistance did not account for, and even ignored, what the Vietnamese needed in terms of aid. Fall’s writing could be read in a way that suggested US planners did not really care either. In contrast, Fall described how Vietnamese communists addressed the Vietnamese population’s importance.

The Communists have correctly identified as the central objective of a revolutionary war the human beings that make up a nation; while on our side, the securing of communication lines, the control of crops and industrial installations, and the protection of one small power group to the exclusion of all others seems to be overriding considerations. Thus, the population as such can only become an ‘object’ – something that gets shoved out of the way because it ‘impedes’ military operations; whereas the Communists build the civilian population right into their battle plan and make the utmost use of it, from the simple 10-year old who becomes a messenger to the hapless villagers who are rounded up to serve as bullet shields in an attack on an ARVN outpost."¹⁰¹⁴

¹⁰¹⁴ Bernard Fall, “Books by Fall,” Street Without Joy, p. 309., Series 1. 2, Box B-3, BBF, JFKL.
This description demonstrated the importance of Vietnamese civilians, but also their exploitation as fodder. Fall clearly knew how Vietnamese communists mistreated large sectors of fellow Vietnamese as a matter of policy. Land reform in 1953 and 1955 clearly indicated serious problems including fanaticism, mismanagement, and poor decision-making in numerous cases. Fall never failed to criticize idiocy and brutality, regardless of its ideological orientation. He pointed out failures in communist policy with as much severity as he called attention to American and South Vietnamese failures.

Revolutionary Warfare emerged as a broader strategic phenomenon changing the economic, social, and political fabric of Vietnamese societies. Moreover, it was unique to the post-war era of decolonization. According to historians John Shy and Thomas Collier, the denouement of European empire “under colonial and even domestic assault, and the rapid appearance amidst the imperial ruins of new successor states, often weak, are the main reasons why we see this new dimension of military theory where none was apparent in 1941.”\textsuperscript{1015} The era of post-war decolonization, thus, helps explains the context for Bernard Fall’s analysis of Revolutionary Warfare. Mao Tse-Tung clearly articulated revolution in the context of the People’s Republic of China, but Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare, and the ways Ho Chi Minh, Truong Chinh, Le Duan and others appropriated it for Vietnamese contexts were still in progress when Fall came to Indochina in 1953.

Despite the clarity he sought to provide in describing Revolutionary Warfare, Fall consistently returned to the importance of terminology because it played an important role distinguishing approaches to modern warfare. Bernard Fall differentiated guerrilla and revolutionary warfare, writing, “guerrilla warfare is nothing but a tactical appendage of a far vaster

political contest and that, no matter how expertly it is fought by competent and dedicated professionals, it cannot possibly make up for the absence of a political rationale.”

Fall gained this awareness from his knowledge of the formidable tactical skill of French paratroopers, Legionnaires, and the commitment of commando units like GCMA (Groupement de Commandos Mixte Aéroportés) which he admired and recounted in detail. Moreover, individuals like GCMA corporal, René Riessen, an individual who organized “Hrè tribesmen on the southern mountain plateau,” was a model of courage, innovation, independence, and skill on which special operation forces should be based. Riessen’s mission, Fall seemed to suggest, offered the single-best approach to countering Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare. Moreover, Riessen epitomized an advisor ‘going native’ learning several native highland dialects, marrying a Hrè woman, joining her tribe’s community, and organizing that community against Viet Minh operations in their region. Riessen’s case, however, was exceptional. In the absence of an adequate political rationale that Vietnamese could adopt, Fall explained that military-oriented operations and solutions were the only poor substitutes on which western governments could rely. Fall rhetorically asked, “Why is it that we must use top-notch elite forces…armed with the very best that advanced technology can provide, to defeat the Viet Minh? The answer is very simple: It takes all the technical proficiency our system can provide to make up for the woeful lack of popular

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1016 Bernard Fall, “Books by Fall,” Street Without Joy, p. 299., Series 1. 2, Box B-3, BBF, JFKL
1017 Fall provided perhaps the most extensive recounting of GCMA operations available in commercial publications. For his comments on GCMA and the Foreign Legion’s effectiveness, see Bernard B. Fall, Street Without Joy: The French Debacle in Indochina (Guilford, Connecticut: Stackpole Books, 1961), 267-286.
1018 For Fall’s comments on Riessen, see Ibid., 269 and 400. It is highly likely that Fall viewed the type of skill and approaches that René Riessen exemplified as the most effective method to counter Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare. Fall referred to Riessen numerous times throughout his scholarship and Riessen’s extraordinary personal narrative is found in: René Riessen, Jungle Mission, translated by James Oliver, (London: Hutchinson, 1957). Fall would later lecture at the U.S. Army Special Warfare Center and School on numerous occasions, forming a close relationship with Special Operations Center commandant, General William P. Yarborough in the early 1960s. See Chapters 8 and 9 planned for completion in 2019-2021.
1019 Riessen’s example preceded memorable accounts written by American advisors, in some cases, by over a decade. A representative example of an American account is David Donovan, Once a Warrior King: Memoirs of an Officer in Vietnam (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985).
support and political savvy of most of the regimes that the West has thus far sought to prop up.”

Fall clearly believed that greater emphasis on the types of approaches taken by René Riessen, because of the independence, flexibility, and relevance of his mission and capability to integrate into Vietnam’s ethnic heterogeneity, offered a better way to counter Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare.

The populations of Indochina were diverse so Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare, because of its dependence on mass support, did not function in the same way throughout the region, especially in Vietnam. Historian Shawn McHale noted this, writing “whereas in the north and center of the country, the Empire of Vietnam actually tried to shape events by taking over parts of the French colonial state and encouraging mass mobilization, in the South it had little impact.”

McHale added, “It is no surprise that the struggle for the Mekong Delta was characterized by shifting tactical alliances, ethnic, political, and religious conflict, and the most extreme range of beliefs of any part of Vietnam.”

Similarly, historian Keith Taylor observed that the geographical aspect “of Nam Bo [South Vietnam] is one of openness, vulnerability, possibility,” while for individuals “Nam Bo was a place of cultural and ethnolinguistic encounter…Nam Bo was the place with greatest prospect for incorporating new perspectives into a formation of Vietnameseness.”

This type of frontier-mentality, in terms of environment, identity, and community, made Viet Minh dominance elusive in the southern regions of Vietnam. This challenge existed because of ethnic and religious diversity that made consolidating Vietnamese

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1022 Ibid., 102.
identify along communist-lines difficult. A sense of shared “Vietnamese-ness” could not originate with communism. It was not easily transferable to Vietnam and, for many, was as foreign to Vietnam as French Imperialism was, except perhaps, for its idealized conceptions of communalism and cooperative society. It is for these reasons, among others, that “the Viet Minh faced legions of local competitors,” including powerful adversaries like the Hoa Hao and nationalist Vietnamese during the French Indochina War.\textsuperscript{1024} This was true despite the French military’s weaker economy-of-force position in the south when compared to the more formidable French military presence the Viet Minh faced in Tonkin in the north. These differences all contributed to the development of conflict after the First Indochina War that Fall identified in the south during his second visit to Vietnam in 1957 and that he had described at such length in articles published in 1958.

Bernard Fall’s work before 1957 generally focused on the development of Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare in the north whereas his later work increasingly centered on the development of Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare in the south.\textsuperscript{1025} After 1958, due to a worsening security environment, including continued assassination campaigns against government-appointed village officials, and isolated attacks that increased in frequency, Fall turned his full attention to what he believed was an emerging insurgency that began to use Revolutionary Warfare approaches, such as the political-oriented action of parallel hierarchies, against Ngo Dinh Diem’s government. In the south, Fall was also becoming increasingly concerned that Diem’s authoritarian responses to dissent, local farmers’ grievances stemming from


\textsuperscript{1025} Exceptions to this exist, especially Fall’s article, “The Political-Religious Sects of Viet-Nam,” \textit{Pacific Affairs}, Vol. 28, No. 3, September 1955.
problems with land reform, and communist infiltration all pointed towards a path of Revolutionary Warfare in development with only a few similarities to those used by communists to transform Vietnamese society in the north. These multiple challenges and regional differences within Vietnamese society, therefore, contributed to the development of Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare in the south in different ways than that achieved by the Viet Minh through mass mobilization and other means in the north years earlier. In 1958, Fall quickly recognized that these differences contributed to the development of a possible Second Indochina War and, for American policy-makers, North Vietnamese forces would pose different threats than those emanating from within South and Central Vietnam.

III – “Discontent with Existing Conditions”

After Fall found the term “Revolutionary Warfare,” literally the words he was looking for since 1953, he possessed a verbal framework to describe what the Republic of Vietnam and the United States confronted in the years after the French defeat in 1954. In late 1958, he concluded his article, “South Viet-Nam’s Internal Problems,” writing “South Viet-Nam in 1958 thus finds itself at a crossroad. It is now an independent state, and, given the limitations imposed upon it by its precarious economic and military position, it is a free agent...As Time magazine, once Ngo

1026 Fall wrote, “It is axiomatic in the field of revolutionary warfare that the potential insurgent takes his source of power from a population which has ‘become discontented with existing conditions which cannot be changed by peaceful and legal means.’ That is close to a perfect definition of what was to happen in South Viet-Nam not – contrary to some later appraisals – after 1960 or 1961, but starting in 1956.” See Bernard B. Fall, Last Reflections on a War (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1967), 197.
Dinh Diem’s staunchest supporter, remarked caustically, ‘put simply, Diem is still taking U.S. money by the millions, but less and less U.S. advice.’ This relative independence from outside pressure is both a political asset and a dangerous liability for South Vietnam.”¹⁰²⁷ Fall added, “[The government] must also consider the development of the economy and of the country’s political life in line with the needs of the majority of the population – and that population, for a long time to come, will be devoted to rice farming to an overwhelming extent.” He concluded “there are disturbing signs of loss of contact with the people in certain areas of the countryside, and there – as the Nationalist Chinese found out – is where wars may be lost in Asia.”¹⁰²⁸

Earlier, Fall had documented a multitude of problems undermining Diem’s popularity and, before that, the State of Vietnam during the First Indochina War. These problems, worsened by poor US assistance planning that remained unresolved, continued to multiply necessitating greater American financial assistance in 1958. Earlier in 1950, the United States had already committed advisors to Indochina establishing a Military Advisory Assistance Group (MAAG) to coordinate US aid in dollars and equipment in support of France’s effort.¹⁰²⁹ In 1956 and 1957, according to historian George Herring, this had grown to the point where the “United States assumed from France full responsibility for training the Vietnamese Army, and the Military Advisory Assistance Group in Saigon undertook a crash program to build it into an effective fighting force.”¹⁰³⁰ The most severe problem, Herring added, was “the continued task of assuring the Vietnamese that the United States is not a colonial power – an assurance that must be renewed on an individual basis by each new advisor.”¹⁰³¹ Fall viewed these problems as a cycle of factors that fed upon each other

¹⁰²⁸ Ibid., 188-189.
¹⁰³⁰ Ibid., 56.
¹⁰³¹ Ibid., 57.
as Diem’s questionable political legitimacy, a precarious and degrading security environment, perceived neo-colonialism, and a worsening economy plodded forward. Fall’s overall emphasis in 1958 was to call attention to these problems which, as his experience being blocked from employment in Phnom Penh by the US State Department had clearly indicated, earned him few friends in positions of decision-making power.

The problem of a growing insurgency in South Vietnam was real, however, whether government authorities believed him or not. Using methods like those he employed in 1953, when he had documented the lack of security in French-held territory by examining tax records, Fall used a similar approach during his trip in 1957. He described this, writing “I brought to the [South Vietnamese Government’s] chief of economic aid’s desk for the Indochina area a large-scale map of village chief killings in Viet-Nam which I had made in 1957-58 and which clearly pointed to the fact that the United States was in for an even worse Communist guerrilla threat than the French had been four years earlier.” The Vietnamese government’s response to Fall’s chart, and his knowledge of a similar trajectory of Revolutionary Warfare practices conducted earlier in the north, was non-committal. Despite showing his research, “Unbounded enthusiasm prevailed then. Diem had officially declared in July 1957 that ‘the guerrilla threat in South Viet-Nam had ceased to exist,’ and no one was going to challenge that assertion even as the grim statistics began to stare one in the face.”

The problem, Fall found, was that individuals in positions of decision-making power were unwilling to change the direction of US policy, despite his evidence and attempts to explain the reality of growing political danger in Vietnam. US leaders, like John Foster Dulles, had made it

1032 Bernard Fall, “Book Reviews by Fall,” page 2, Series 1.08, Box BR-1, BBF, JFKL.
1033 Ibid., 3.
known to Fall that they would block his access to Indochina and downplay his scholarship because of his criticism. As a result of Fall’s articles in 1958, it is clear that high-level officials in diplomatic channels in Vietnam and Washington D.C. were aware of Fall’s work but, more importantly, that they were troubled by it as well. High-level officials demonstrated this awareness in an illuminating case, particularly as it related to Fall’s criticism of US aid and Ngo Dinh Diem’s political standing. Among the many prominent advisors to the RVN President, “one of Diem’s earliest and staunchest backers was Wesley R. Fishel, professor of political science at Michigan State University where Diem had lectured once while visiting the United States in the 1930s.”

Fishel had been a key member of the Michigan State University Advisory Group, an organization financially underwritten by the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) with important jobs, including assisting in the development of the Republic of Vietnam’s administration and in training its police and civil guards. Due to their long-standing relationship, Fishel, along with Edward Lansdale, were among the few prominent American advisors who Diem would heed in the late 1950s before their relationships soured with the eventual end of the Michigan State University group’s relationship with Diem in 1962. Amid the growing tension between them, due in part to a worsening security environment in South Vietnam, Wesley Fishel wrote Ngo Dinh Diem to describe problems the United States government observed in South Vietnam.

Fishel outlined four key issues in the Diem-US relationship: weakness of leadership; slowing of democratic development; the security situation; and administrative reform and

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Although they had been colleagues for years, Fishel criticized Diem at length. Fishel, demonstrating honorable candor, explained that the security situation in South Vietnam was an especially serious concern, writing “I have been carefully questioned by my friends in Washington concerning the ‘deterioration’ in internal security in Vietnam. Among other things which I have been asked are the following: Is the security crisis genuine? Or is it faked because you want more American aid, much as the French were accustomed to stage a ‘crisis’ just as the U.S. Congress was about to pass on Mutual Security aid to France/Indochina between 1950/1954?”

Fishel’s point was significant because US policy in 1953 increasingly bound the United States to France because of France’s importance to European defense. France, President Eisenhower believed, leveraged their much-needed support for NATO to obtain greater financial assistance for anti-communist operations in Indochina. Fishel suggested therefore: if “crises” had been staged to gain US support “between 1950/1954,” these manipulative efforts carried with them dire consequences because the United States increased its involvement in Vietnam because of such crises. Moreover, Fishel’s concern to obtain the truth of the security situation involved Fall.

“In this connection, M. Bernard Fall is preparing a sharply critical article on Vietnam. In New York the other day he boasted publicly that when he wrote about the deterioration of security in The Nation magazine some two years ago [“Will South Vietnam Be Next?”] – and I had contradicted his interpretations and his facts at the time – he had been right and I had been wrong! Now he intends to prove that your government is about to fall; that the people oppose you; that corruption is rife in your regime; that your ‘government en famille’ is destroying all possibility of democratic growth in Vietnam; that his map of terrorist activity in Vietnam which he published in Pacific Affairs in 1957 was correct; and that, furthermore, he has once more secured from Confidential French files similar evidence of terrorist activity in Vietnam today, which he now plans to publish. It is a matter of some

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1038 Ibid.
pain to us who are your friends that your enemies are better able to secure detailed information about what is happening in your country than we are!\textsuperscript{1040}

Fishel’s admonitions effectively verified Fall’s claims in “Will South Vietnam Be Next?” and “South Vietnam’s Internal Problems.” Fishel had other problems with Diem. In the subject area of “Administrative reform and organization,” Fishel added “There is also considerable criticism in the State Department, for instance, of the continuing failure of provincial chiefs, district chiefs, and so on, to get close to the population; there is also much criticism of your seeming reliance on ‘repression’ in trying to solve the problems of government in the field. (In particular, the reputedly ‘brutal’ activities of the Vietnamese marines have been severely criticized.)”\textsuperscript{1041} Fishel concluded by reminding Diem to send answers to multiple questions associated with these four troubled sectors discussed in his letter. “Otherwise,” Fishel warned, “you must continue to expect articles such as that which appeared in the New York World Telegram (by Mr. Colegrove) the other day, and those which \textit{Time} magazine has published in recent weeks. You may also be interested to know that M. Fall is in contact with Joseph Alsop, with whose writings you are quite familiar.”\textsuperscript{1042} Fishel’s comments are revealing because Fishel and Fall had worked together earlier. Fishel, in fact, had personally supplied Fall with significant resources for the completion of Fall’s study for the Institute of Pacific Affairs during Fall’s 1957 research trip in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{1043} This was research Fall completed that led to the very publication of “Will South Vietnam Be Next?” in \textit{The Nation} in May 1958. The support Fall gained from Fishel clearly suggested previous good will

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{1041} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1042} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1043} Bernard Fall, \textit{The International Position of South Viet-Nam 1954-58}, p. iii, Series 1.05, “Papers and Reports by Dr. Fall,” Box P-01, BBF, JFKL. See Fall’s acknowledgements expressing his gratitude to Fishel and his staff for providing documentation and their assistance.
\end{footnotesize}
among them and undeniable backing for Fall’s research. After all, Fishel’s resources contributed to conclusions Fall made that were critical of Diem’s administration and US assistance enabling it. It is possible that Fall’s outspoken criticism of US assistance and Diem’s policies in 1958 angered Fishel, but he did not criticize Fall in his letter to Diem, except to say that Fall “had publicly boasted” about his facts in New York. This was probably true and more than likely, a vindication on Fall’s part.

Bernard Fall was adamant that Ngo Dinh Diem’s decision-making, especially his decision to remove Vietnamese villagers’ elected officials in 1956 and replace them with government-appointed ones, created conditions through which the National Liberation Front (NLF) would begin to form. The nascent NLF was further incentivized by authoritarian decrees, including Ordinance 6 and the Denunciation of Communist policy represented in decree 10/59. International justice scholar, Richard Falk, in an article evaluating the US Role in Vietnam in International Law, added, “Bernard Fall, among others, points out that the uprising of peasants against Saigon arose as a consequence of Diem’s policies that preexisted the formation of the Vietcong and was accomplished without any interference on the part of Hanoi.”

Fall was also concerned about changes to the RVN constitution, particularly Article 98 which claimed: the “right to decree a temporary suspension of virtually all civil rights to meet the legitimate demands of public security and order and of national defense.” This was a response and decree that troubled Fall greatly, but not as much as Diem’s apparent lack of sympathy for rural Vietnamese farmers. On this point, Fall claimed the “Diem regime misunderstood its people to the last.”

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minority-status, and his antipathy towards the majority Buddhist population in Vietnam in general, but especially towards the Hoa Hao and the syncretic Cao Dai, undermined his legitimacy with those non-Catholic parts of the population. His decision to get rid of village leaders, selected by Vietnamese farmers and their families, only contributed to further loss of legitimacy among villagers “in the countryside,” where, far more than cities, “wars may be lost in Asia.”

Fall concluded, the Republic of Vietnam in Saigon “slowly but surely created an unassailable position of total weakness.” Moreover, the Viet Minh were not going away. “‘International Vandalism’ in the form of Revolutionary War is going to be with us for a long time to come. We might as well reconcile ourselves to its existence… and settle down to study its rules, so that we might be in a better position the next time when we have to face its grim realities.”

After years of study, Bernard Fall would work even harder to understand Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare. In late 1958, it was clearly evolving into a series of grim realities that the Republic of Vietnam and the United States would confront. In the years to come, it would also evolve into a grim reality that the people of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam would be forced to endure.

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1047 Ibid., 188-189.
Conclusion

After developing an understanding of Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare, Fall’s priority was sharing that knowledge with others. He did not write publications just for concerned civilians, instead, he communicated what he knew with American troops deploying to Vietnam or already stationed in the country and his information could be alarming. In one case, according to François Sully, “In the Iron Triangle, baffled American Commanders learned from Fall that on April 1948, a company of French Tunisian Troops had been decimated by the Viet-Minh exactly at the same place.”

Fall clearly believed that historical awareness enabled better preparation for the present. He did this because he knew that troops endured the consequences of policy-decisions made in safer places. Sully often commented on how “Fall loved to be out with the troops,” and “was full of admiration for the Marines fighting in the mud of Quang Tri Province” and in other places in Vietnam.

Fall was also grounded as a middle-class oriented non-elitist. According to Sully, “while he was in Vietnam, Fall practically lived on herb-scented ‘soupe chinoise’ and on army c rations…he was one of the few correspondents who could wolf down a cold can of lima beans with chlorinated water and call it a good meal.”

Fall never forgot the big picture behind his work telling Sully, “The tragedy of this war is that on our side there is absolutely no accumulation of knowledge. Every American officer sent to Vietnam rediscovers the country. French books and army manuals on Indochina which could be invaluable to the US Army now, have never been translated in English. Do you know that American Intelligence specialists in Saigon never had a Vietnamese meal? On the other side, the Viet-Cong is merely perfecting and improving the tactics

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1050 “Sully comments on Bernard Fall,” François Sully Papers and Photographs, *Newsweek* Files, Feb-March 1967, UMass-Boston, Series II, Subject Files, Box 2, Folder 31, p. 6,10.
1051 Ibid., 2.
1052 Ibid., 8, 10.
invented by the Viet-Minh. For them, it is the same war. They don’t have to reinvent it every twelve months as we do.”

Fall understood this operational side to the war and he also understood the geopolitical implications of the cold war. His research was important for several reasons because it ranged along a spectrum from tactical to strategic, but also because it ranged along a cultural continuum as well. Foremost was his prioritization of Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian agency in the First and Second Indochina Wars because these conflicts contributed to the broader international struggle ongoing in the 1950s and 1960s when he conducted his research. His study of war in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, demonstrated how these societies were not mere proxies in a war among superpowers. Instead, he showed how individuals and organizations, like the Viet Minh and Pathet Lao, directed much of the way war unfolded by using the political dynamism of Revolutionary Warfare.

Fall took Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian autonomy seriously and he understood how local decision-making was fraught with conflicting agendas. Generally, his primary academic concern focused on how power functioned in Indochina, whether communist, nationalist, religiously-motivated, or from other ideological motivations. This was knowledge he gained from meeting with nationalists, such as State of Vietnam Prime Minister Nguyen Van Tam in 1953, religious leaders, such as Cao Dai leader Pham Cong Tac also in 1953, but also Vietnamese communists, Pham Van Dong and Ho Chi Minh who he interviewed in 1962. Additionally, Fall did not center his scholarship on elites, cities and capitals but, rather, emphasized how war affected people fighting and enduring war, especially in rural areas. The dedication to his book *The Two*

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1053 Ibid., 6.
Viet-Nams spoke volumes: “To the Valiant and Long-suffering Vietnamese – North and South.” It showed who Fall had in mind when he worked to find solutions to war in Indochina and it clearly indicated that Fall’s sympathies were with civilians. On the French and American side, Fall’s empathy extended to soldiers, particularly those from vulnerable and working-class parts of society, writing “This is a war paid by the poor and fought by the poor. Nowhere in Vietnam have I seen the sons and scions of the US establishment. At least French generals were sending their sons to die in Indochina for the flag, even if they did not believe in the cause.”¹⁰⁵⁴ He knew that there was a great deal of social conflict involved in sending soldiers abroad to fight. It was clear to him that soldiers deserved sound arguments backed with evidence that could explain sufficiently why they should be deployed. Subjecting vulnerable members of American society for the draft without honest appraisal as to why they should be sent to Vietnam was a problem, in his view. Moreover, it was morally negligent when questionable evidence was used to justify escalating intervention in Vietnam.

Politically, Fall was opposed to communism, but he moved beyond his personal politics and ideological inclinations to recognize and describe how Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare functioned. He knew it was politically powerful among rural Vietnamese at local levels and, when connected across large areas of Indochina, tilted political and social control in Vietnamese communists’ favor. He also recognized and condemned the political fanaticism communist ideology fostered in cadres who often targeted even Viet Minh supporters who failed to toe the ideological line with sufficient fervor. Fall understood the impulse and desire for freedom from colonialism, but he could not accept the autocratic methods that communism often employed.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Ibid., 11.
Broadly applied to other contexts, his research of Revolutionary Warfare showed that it
did not rely exclusively on communism for ideological fuel. Fall recognized that revolutionary
warfare did originate with Mao Tse-Tung’s thought, was adapted by Vietnamese to conditions
unique to their historical context, and that it worked within a larger framework of Mao’s three
stages of modern warfare. However, he knew that it shared characteristics found in other conflicts.
He saw some of its qualities during his time as a member of the Maquis fighting against Nazis,
Vichy sympathizers, and others supporting fascist ideology. The Revolutionary Warfare he
studied was uniquely Vietnamese, but it was also a form of warfare that relied on forms of
nationalism and Vietnamese legacies of patriotism, in addition to communist ideology, for its
substantive content. It relied on understanding people in the cultural and historical context in
which they lived. Fall’s focus was on Indochina, but the greater significance of his work is the
applicability of his research of Revolutionary Warfare -- as a dynamic political-focused framework
-- to other contexts, not just in the history of warfare in Vietnam. The broader implications of his
thought demonstrate that dedicated individuals might coalesce to control society, provided that
sufficient numbers of others either buy-in, or are otherwise compelled, to join. In the right
conditions, if ideology is shared by enough of a population, and if their commitment to a cause is
absolute, the use of Revolutionary Warfare may defeat even the strongest military forces deployed
against it. The utter destruction of Vietnam during the Second Indochina War, moreover, showed
that overwhelming force indicated a form of weakness that undermined the United States’ own
conception of itself. This was something Fall, as a military man and believer in the principles of
the United States, did not want to see. Fall’s demand for greater understanding of Vietnamese
Revolutionary Warfare was part of his solution, but so was honest assessment of national security
priorities.
In terms of why the wars in Indochina were fought, Fall believed that North Vietnam did not pose a geostrategic threat to the United States, even if it was unified and controlled by Communists. When questioned about the domino theory, Fall replied in a 1965 *Meet the Press* roundtable, “I don’t think we have to lose South Vietnam any more than we have to lose Europe because we lost Czechoslovakia… the domino theory could have been invoked for that matter when we lost China.”

Even though he was highly critical of the Viet Minh and the DRV as an administration, he was respected by Vietnamese leaders and allowed to interview Pham Van Dong and Ho Chi Minh in 1962. A cynical view may perceive Fall’s opportunity to interview these leaders as part of a broader propaganda effort, but close readings of the materials that resulted from those interviews suggest otherwise. Journalists, many of them prominent as American nightly news broadcasters, sought Fall’s perspective on Indochina because, in their view, he was ideologically objective and backed his analysis with evidence.

Many others, both American and French, also believed this was true. Fall’s contribution to scholarship on the wars in Southeast Asia matters most because of his ability and timing to collect information as it appeared but, especially, because it was honest. This latter quality was only possible when one was honest with oneself:

“The most essential requirement of winning a revolutionary war is the courage to face the truth that the problem exists at all. This is harder than one thinks. There is always a tendency to camouflage the problem as ‘banditry’ or ‘mob-action’ – until one awakens one morning to find that the ‘chief bandit’ now sits in the President’s chair in the capital and that the ‘Mob’ is defeating one’s finest regular troops on a battle-field not exactly suited to their heavy equipment. To lie to others (and be found out) may simply be embarrassing.

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1056 Bernard Fall interview with Walter Cronkite, (1965), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V76LDCW86l0. For additional works by journalists who referenced Fall, see “Literature Review” in this dissertation.
1057 Paul Mus, Jean Lacouture, and Philippe Devillers are a sample of French scholars who respected Fall’s work.
To lie to oneself about the terrifying possibilities of Revolutionary Warfare may well be fatal.”\textsuperscript{1058}

Fall also knew that assessing the subject of political legitimacy among Vietnamese was central to realistic appraisal of war in Indochina. Fall’s later research during the Second Indochina War continued to evaluate what he had called “Competitive Control” between the National Liberation Front, the Republic of Vietnam, and American forces. He continued to base his research with knowledge from his days as a research analyst for the War Crimes Commission during the Nuremberg Trials and from his experience as a guerrilla fighter with the Maquis during the Second World War. Fall wanted to know the following: who did the Vietnamese see as authentically credible as a political administration? What was the extent to which the ideological content of their political views mattered in validating that authenticity? What was the reason behind Vietnamese communists’ commitment?\textsuperscript{1059} Fall told his friend François Sully, “Thanks to the RAND Corporation field researchers, the US has by now a fairly good idea of why twenty thousand Vietcong turn themselves in to the government every year. What interests me, is to discover why the 260,000 Vietcong who do not defect continue the fight against considerable odds.”\textsuperscript{1060}

The motivation for those individuals to continue fighting were reasons Fall could relate to as a former member of the Maquis during World War II. One reason was simply survival. Another, closely related reason, was survival of the Vietnamese communist cause against American forces that were portrayed as imperial and Vietnamese allies who were perceived as lackeys of an imperial project the United States picked up after France’s defeat. When Fall referred

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{1059} Ibíd., 231.
\textsuperscript{1060} François Sully Papers, “Sully comments on Bernard Fall,” \textit{Newsweek} Files, Feb-March 1967, Series II, Subject Files, Box 2, Folder 31, p. 5.
\end{flushleft}
to the 20,000 Vietcong who rallied to the government during the Second Indochina War, it is undeniable that they resembled what Fall saw in defectors to the French during the First Indochina War. During that conflict, Fall wrote to his wife that defectors “came because we have better food, medicine, and no French bombers to worry them. The Viet-Minh merely sheds its weak sisters on us.”

The RAND study, to which Fall referred to in his exchange with Sully, was the “Viet Cong Motivation and Morale Project,” that began in 1964. This study, according to Mai Elliot, a researcher who worked for RAND in Vietnam, was extended beyond 1964 to become RAND’s largest research program in Vietnam. The extension of the program occurred because RAND social scientists “were shocked to discover what really sustained the [National Liberation Front] insurgency: the grievances the peasants held against the Saigon government and the ardent aspirations they had for education, economic opportunity, equality, and justice for themselves and their descendants.”

The National Liberation Front were motivated to such degrees that that food, medicine, and protection against American bombers could not provide enough incentive to rally in the large numbers that Chieu Hoi program planners hoped would turn. In contrast, massive numbers of Army of Republic of Vietnam soldiers deserting their positions, numbers that

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1062 Mai Elliot, RAND in Southeast Asia: A History of the Vietnam War Era (Santa Monica, RAND Corporation, 2010), 53.
1063 Ibid., 53, 59. Elliot’s work is the most comprehensive study of this program currently available. See especially, Chapter 2 “What Makes the Viet Cong Tick?” pages 45-90. The “Viet Cong Motivation and Morale” research program was modeled on Lucian Pye’s study of insurgency in Malaya and was intended to answer a Robert McNamara question “Who are the Viet Cong and what makes them tick?” (Elliot, 51, 53) A member of the Department of State Policy Planning Council, Robert H. Johnson, suggested that the study be considered, and it was developed and led by Guy Pauker, a Southeast Asia Specialist in the RAND Social Science Department, John Donnell, and Joseph Zasloff. It began in 1964 but was later taken in a different direction by Lou Goure late that year to support Air Force requests to understand better its air operations’ effects. This focus centered on psychological effects of operations upon Vietnamese as a result of operations conducted by air-based platforms such as AC-47 gunships and B-52s. On this early program planning, see pages 45-53.
“reached an all-time high in 1968,” provided a counterpunch to NLF soldiers coming to the government side.\textsuperscript{1065}

In terms of utilizing military might to achieve American strategic goals, Fall described this, writing “I cannot say that I have found anyone who seems to have a clear idea of the end – of the ‘war aims’ – and if the end is not clearly defined, are we justified to use any means to attain it?”\textsuperscript{1066} He added, “what changed the character of the Viet-Nam war was not the decision to bomb North Viet-Nam; not the decision to use American ground troops in South Viet-Nam; but the decision to wage unlimited aerial warfare inside the country at the price of literally pounding the place to bits.”\textsuperscript{1067} “What America should want to prove in Viet-Nam is that the Free World is ‘better,’ \textit{not} that it can kill people more efficiently. If we could induce 100,000 Viet Cong to surrender to our side because our offers of social reform are better than those of the other side’s, \textit{that} would be victory. Hence, even a total military or technological defeat of the Viet Cong is going to be a partial defeat of our own purposes – a defeat of ourselves, by ourselves, as it were.”\textsuperscript{1068}

Fall’s most pressing fear, “the creation of a new ethics to match new warfare,” centered on an unwillingness among decision-makers to ensure that principles of warfare, established by institutions such as the United Nations, were protected in the conduct of warfare. This was particularly true since the Hague and Geneva Conventions on land warfare and the treatment of prisoners of 1949 were signed by South Vietnam in 1953, the United States in 1955, and North Vietnam in 1957.\textsuperscript{1069} Fall’s concern on this mattered certainly dated back to 1951 with his

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{1065} Ibid., 210.
\item \textsuperscript{1066} Bernard B. Fall, “This isn’t Munich, It’s Spain,” Ramparts, 1965, quoted in Bernard B. Fall, Last Reflections on a War (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1967), 236.
\item \textsuperscript{1069} Bernard Fall and Marcus Raskins, Editors, \textit{The Viet-Nam Reader: Articles and Documents on American Foreign Policy and the Viet-Nam Crisis} (New York: Vintage Book 1965), 368.
\end{footnotes}
frustration over the release of Alfried Krupp to support German rearmament in the early cold war. Fall saw that direct links to Nazi Corporatism, personified by Alfried Krupp, could be dismissed easily for political expediency, a problem since other non-Nazi individuals could direct German rearmament after 1951 as well as Krupp. Krupp’s release signaled a willingness to forget about Nazi corporatism, only to turn around and fully endorse the development of a military-industrial complex under the pretext that the political aims and ideological goals of its creators were benevolent and anti-autocratic. The aerial destruction of Vietnam after 1965 demonstrated to Fall that these political aims and ideological goals were bending in a dangerous direction. The power of the American military-industrial-complex, as a blunt instrument, was far more powerful than anything previously existing and such power created an illusion of righteousness Fall perceived as alarming and deadly for the Vietnamese.

These were trends that Fall’s entire personal and professional life prepared him to identify. Mistakes in decision-making leading to intervention was one problem, enabling the type of warfare taking place in Vietnam, such as indiscriminate bombing through unobserved fire missions, was another. Fall most clearly described this in response to a statement Secretary of State Dean Acheson made in December 1965 in which Acheson remarked, “The end sought by our foreign policy…is, as I have said, to preserve and foster an environment in which free societies may exist and flourish. Our policies and actions must be decided by whether they contribute to or detract from achievement of this end. They need no other justification or moral or ethical embellishment.”\textsuperscript{1070} Fall’s concern that “justification or moral or ethical embellishment” could be dismissed was foremost. Additionally, Fall was troubled by what exactly constituted “free

\textsuperscript{1070} Bernard B. Fall, “This Isn’t Munich, It’s Spain,” in \textit{Last Reflections on a War} (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1967), 233
societies” in Acheson’s claim. “Free societies,” as Fall clearly knew as a faculty member at Howard University, was deeply contested in the United States to the point that laws, such as the 1965 Voting Rights Act and other legislation, were required to protect the constitutional rights of many of its citizens. In response to Acheson’s statement, Fall quoted a French priest, Cardinal Feltin, who had written a letter to military chaplains accompanying French troops conducting operations in Algeria in October 1960.

“There cannot be a morality which justifies efficacy by all means, if those means are in formal contradiction with Natural Law and Divine Law. Efficacy, in that case, goes against the very aim it seeks to achieve. There can be exceptional laws for exceptional situations…there cannot exist an exceptional morality which somehow takes leave of Natural Law and Divine Law.”

Cardinal Feltin’s quote spoke to Fall because of his experience surviving the Nazis’ destruction of Natural Law that formed the basis for German aggression in World War II. The Nuremberg Trials, to which Fall had contributed, attempted to reestablish Natural Law as a foundation for how future wars might be conducted according to internationally agreed values and values established through Natural Law. The actions Fall witnessed in Vietnam were violations of the Nuremberg Legacy and undermined American principles, as Fall saw them. He was not alone in calling attention to this. Others, such as General Telford Taylor, with whom Fall worked in Nuremberg in 1947 and 1948, also believed American actions in Vietnam were subverting core principles and central values. Fall’s concern that the United States was applying a large proportion of the US military-industrial complex’s power to war in Vietnam was clear in 1965. He, along with Marcus Raskins, collected information and published their concerns and views for

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1071 Ibid., 236.
1072 See “Say I Slew Them Not” in Chapter II of this dissertation.
as many readers as they could reach in *The Viet-Nam Reader*. As a former guerrilla fighter and soldier, Fall knew that Germany’s military power during World War II was immense, but the United States’ overwhelming capacity to destroy in Vietnam, or anywhere, was far more powerful than that wielded by any other country.

Marcus Raskins and Fall recognized “the importance of power in international politics” but also that “without the context of law and morality for the use of power, we are reduced to the law of the jungle. Power, where it is used without wisdom and only in the name of one nation, will result in the ultimate corruption of the good ends that that nation originally might have wished to achieve – and the corruption of that nation itself. In the world of nuclear weapons, irrational men, frightened nations, rampant technology, and permanent revolution, it is the foolish nation which attempts to arrogate to itself the role of world policeman or moral arbiter without recourse to what others think do, want, or need.” By the time *The Viet-Nam Reader* appeared in 1965, Fall had observed and recounted the development of Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare for over a decade. Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare grew in importance in his eyes because of its survivability in the face of massive power controlled by the US military and directed by American policy-makers. In the years leading up to the Second Indochina War, and in its earliest stages in the mid-1960s, Fall would do everything he could to help others understand that resolving conflict in Vietnam, short of nuclear destruction which was no solution at all, required far more strength, willpower, integrity, and skill than anything in the United States’ military arsenal. It would take a

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1075 Bernard Fall and Marcus Raskins, Editors, *The Viet-Nam Reader: Articles and Documents on American Foreign Policy and the Viet-Nam Crisis* (New York: Vintage Book 1965), xv.
kind of power found in Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare in Indochina. That, for Americans, would not be easy to find.
Appendix I – Aid to France and Indochina

The total estimated “expenditure of anti-communist governments for military purposes in Indochina between 1946 and 1954 was $11,763,359,714.00.”\textsuperscript{1076} The United States directly contributed $4.169 billion of this total amount by June 30, 1954, while total French appropriations to Indochina were equivalent to approximately $7.594 billion of this total amount.\textsuperscript{1077} It is useful to contrast these figures with the amount of U.S. aid distributed to France through the Marshall Plan. Historian Irwin Wall calculated that of U.S. financial assistance to France through “Marshall Plan aid proper to France from 1948 to 1951 was $2.75 billion.”\textsuperscript{1078} Economist, Benn Steil reports that France received $2.706 billion in Marshall Plan Aid between 1948 Quarter 2 to the conclusion of aid in 1952.\textsuperscript{1079} To give these numbers fuller context, the total amount of U.S. Marshall Plan financial assistance for all sixteen recipient European recipients, including the West German bizone and French zone, totaled: $13.211 billion between 1948Q2 and 1952H1 (Half Year).\textsuperscript{1080}

In the data provided below, it is useful to call attention to data listed on page 260, “United States Aid and Loans to France and Indo-China*.” Historian, Philippe Devillers claims that U.S. assistance in direct aid for operations in Indochina totaled $4.169 billion between 1948-1954. Devillers also reveals U.S. military assistance to France that was not directly allocated to

\textsuperscript{1077} Ibid., 259-260.
\textsuperscript{1080} Ibid., 450.
operations in Indochina. In a combination of loans and aid, France received $9.754 billion through FY1954. He breaks this total amount into “end-item military equipment (4.004 billion USD) and Economic Cooperation Administration Mutual Security Agency aid (2.821 billion USD),” along with several other categories.\textsuperscript{1081} On top of direct aid for operations in Indochina, Devillers suggests that much of the aid in the $9.754 figure for France, was directed, or at least available, to support French military operations in Indochina.

U.S. Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles’s records corroborate parts of Fall’s contention that aid for French operations in Indochina exceeded Marshall Plan Aid to France. According to Dulles’ documentation, the total financial support for French operations in Indochina was cited as $2.426 billion and included military assistance, economic and technical Assistance and other financial support for French and Associated States forces between Fiscal Years 1950 and 1954. This amount represented a U.S. contribution of “about one-fourth of the total cost of the 7½-year war in Indochina.” “With the greatly increased tempo of U.S. assistance in the fiscal year 1954, United States assistance came to represent about two-thirds of the current material and financial burden of the war.”\textsuperscript{1082} The problem with Dulles’ accounting is that he did not include U.S. assistance for France’s operations in Indochina between Fiscal Years 1946-1950. Additionally, as noted above, Marshall Aid financial support for France’s military was potentially diverted to support French operations in Indochina.

In any case, it is clear that significant resources were used for France’s war in Indochina. As Irwin Wall notes: “Money is fungible. Depending on how one looks at it, the United States financed a significant part of French modernization, or all of the cost of the vain attempt by France to hold on to its colonial empire. It did not do both.” Wall concluded, writing “American support was in fact the condition for the pursuit of the French war in Indochina.”

Note: Please see the following figures below. All data is from Allan B. Cole, (Ed.), *Conflict in Indo-China and International Repercussion: A Documentary History, 1945-1955* (Ithaca: The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University and the Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University Press, 1956). Pages 259-261.

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Military Expenditures by France and Associated States in Indo-China*  
1946-1954

General Data:

From 1945 to 1951, French appropriations for military expenses in Indo-China constituted 10.6% of national budgets and 33.5% of military budgets.

In billions of 1954 francs (1 franc = $0.28 5/8, or 350 francs to 1 dollar), expenditures were estimated as follows, but a more refined estimate by the U.S. Embassy in Paris amounted to an additional 130 billion francs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>French Military Budget for Indo-China</th>
<th>Associated States Military Budget</th>
<th>Totals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>102</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>131</td>
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<td>177</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>258</td>
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<td>321</td>
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<td>1,402</td>
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<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2,528</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Addition according to U.S. Embassy estimate

130  
2,658 billion francs

Estim. total French appropriations for military purposes in Indo-China, equivalent to

$7,594,285,714

Estim. total U.S. aid through France and directly to the State of Vietnam before June 30, 1954**

$4,169,284,000

Estim. total expenditure of anti-communist governments for military purposes in Indo-China

$11,763,569,714

*Cost of the War in Indo-China, "International Financial News Survey, VII, No. 6 (August 6, 1954), 42. The data in the chart are based on figures published by Le Monde, July 21, 1954 and in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung, July 25, 1954. The information about the higher estimate reached by experts in the American Embassy in Paris was supplied by Mr. Deane R. Hinton of the Finance Division of that Embassy.

**See next page.
United States Aid and Loans to France and Indo-China*  
1948-FY 1954  
(amounts in thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Aid Programs</th>
<th>Amounts Received by France</th>
<th>Amounts for Military Use in Indo-China (Parentheses around sums included in left-hand column)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td></td>
<td>($400,000.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td></td>
<td>751,428.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td></td>
<td>517,142.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td></td>
<td>425,714.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total for four years</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,094,284.**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before Apr. 3, 1948</td>
<td>Econ.Co-op.Admin.</td>
<td>$309,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 3, 1948- June 30, 1953</td>
<td>E.C.A., Mutual Secu- rity Agency</td>
<td>2,821,000***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CY 1954</td>
<td>Weapons for French NATO forces</td>
<td>85,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CY 1954</td>
<td>Technical Assist.</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 1954</td>
<td>End-item milit.equip. &amp; off-shore procurement</td>
<td>4,004,000</td>
<td>(733,000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 1954</td>
<td>End-item milit.equip.</td>
<td>1,246,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 5,1950- June 30,1954</td>
<td>Econ.aid directly to State of Vietnam</td>
<td>96,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$7,579,400</td>
<td>$4,169,284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through FY 1954 Long-term loans</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,175,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total aid and loans to France:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$9,754,400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The three footnotes for this page appear on the next one, p. 261.
France: Facts and Figures, pp. 32-35. It is very difficult to distinguish between some of the aid to France for use in Europe and grants which were used for military purposes in Indo-China. Therefore statistics have been given for aid to France, and we may assume that some of the funds earmarked for Europe actually were diverted to Indo-China. In any case, the reconstruction of French economic productivity indirectly strengthened the French effort in Indo-China.

At several sample times, however, the actual aid to France in terms of equipment was less than had been provided in U.S. appropriations, because deliveries were in arrears. Also, the cease-fire resulting from the Geneva agreements in 1954 were expected to result in reduced American aid.

**The above figures in terms of francs are given in Philippe Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam de 1940 à 1952, 3d ed. rev. (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952), p. 472, n. 13. This author cites as sources: Inventaire financier de la France, 1952, pp. 23, 159, 218, 493, and: Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale, 1952, p. 1396. There probably is some duplication of the figure above for 1948 and the first figure in the column to the left, so the $400,000,000 is placed in parentheses, though probably less than $309,000,000 actually overlapped the aid to France before April 3, 1948.

***$500,000,000 of this figure for April 3, 1948-June 30, 1953 was officially reported as for expenditure in Indo-China. However, since this half billion dollars apparently is included in the probably more complete figures for 1948-51 in the right-hand column above, it is not here listed again.
Appendix II – Chart 1:

“Structure of the State Secretariat to the Ministry of the Interior”

Appendix II – Map 1:

“Vietminh Guerrilla Infiltration Behind French Lines – (Situation May 1953).”

Appendix II – Map 2: “The Feudal Sects in South Viet-Nam”

Appendix II – Map 3:


Fall provided the following statement to describe this map and data:

“The left-hand map, showing the geographic distribution of Communist complaints to the International Supervisory and Control Commission [ISCC] about alleged South Vietnamese violations of civil rights of ‘Former Resistance Members,’ is interesting not because of the number of complaints but because of their location. A perusal of the complaints, the writer has read them all, shows that they are sufficiently precise in their details to have been based upon information given to the Communist North Vietnamese authorities by Viet-Minh agents who have remained behind in the South after the armistice or who have been infiltrated into the area since. This is further confirmed when one compares these data with the right-hand map showing the actual location of recent rebel activities: all major areas of rebel activity also provide the major source of Communist complaints to the ISCC. The conclusion is inescapable that there must be some coordination between the rebels and the North Vietnamese Government.”

Appendix III – Bernard Fall, Edward Lansdale, and the 1955 Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, Binh Xuyen Crisis.

Debate between Fall and Lansdale concerned payments to the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen for their support for the Diem administration in 1955. Fall believed that Ngo Dinh Diem only received support from these groups through bribery, whereas Edward Lansdale attempted to portray payments to these groups as back-pay for services, thus reflecting sincere allegiance to the Diem administration. Fall described events in 1955, and again in 1963, after gathering more evidence concerning the issue of payments he considered to be bribes for the political religious groups’ support.

“Ngo Dinh Diem’s finest hour came, beyond a doubt, in the spring of 1955, when his chances of remaining in office seemed almost nil…the armed politico-religious sects were not as easy to oust…To be sure, the fact that exceedingly generous amounts of American currency were available to bribe key sect leaders was of some importance…In a succession of swift moves that left each sect chief wondering whether his sworn ally of yesterday had not sold him out for a substantial sum, Diem bought the Cao-Dai ‘General’ Trinh Minh Thé – mastermind of the messy Saigon street bombing of 1952 so well described in Graham Greene’s The Quiet American – for $2 million; another Cao-Dai ‘general,’ Nguyen Thanh Phuong, for $3.6 million (plus monthly payments for his troops); and a Hoa-Hao warlord Tran Van Soai for $3 million more. In all likelihood, the total amount of American dollars spent on bribes during March and April 1955, by Diem may well have gone beyond $12 million. By the time the greedy sect leaders found out that they had been outmaneuvered and began to fight back, theirs was a lost cause.”

Fall’s allegation that the dollar amounts exceeded 12 million USD was correct. In a March 16, 1955 memorandum from Edward Lansdale to J. Lawson Collins, then currently serving at the rank of Ambassador, Lansdale explained how Ngo Dinh Diem “needed 15,000,000$ urgently to

provide funds for Cao Dai troops, whose support he needed to retain in the present situation.”

Fall, therefore, was correct in his assessment that large amounts of funds were used to ensure Cao Dai support. Historian Jonathan Nashel noted that Fall’s statement, as quoted above, was deleted in subsequent editions of *The Two Viet-Nams*, in which it first appeared in 1963, and was replaced with Fall’s following footnote: “In a communication to this writer in 1964, General Edward Lansdale stated that no bribes were given, but merely ‘back pay’ due the sect troops and paid in cash to their leaders.” Nashel explained Lansdale’s role in providing funds, writing “there is a great deal of evidence that Lansdale was busy employing such other means to support this regime [the Republic of Vietnam] as financing alliances between Diem and his former opponents to help solidify the president’s political base. Lansdale vigorously denied that he did such sordid things, but the Pentagon Papers tells a different story.” Nashel added, “Lansdale’s covert intelligence organization, the Saigon Military Mission (SMM), was authorized by the CIA to ‘secretly reimburse Thé Lien Minh’s forces [former Cao Dai General Trinh Minh Thé’s guerrilla forces, known as the Quoc-Gia-Lien-Minh], which moved into Saigon and acted as Diem’s palace guard in October 1955.’ The fact that Lansdale worked through secret channels to pay these groups indicated that these funds were reasonably considered bribes since official pay would not have required secrecy.

Nashel adds another point to consider regarding this issue. “At the time... Lansdale continued the polite fiction that these sworn enemies of Diem’s rule simply put down their guns for the good of the South Vietnamese nation.” Fall clearly believed this was not true. Later

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1087 Ibid., 59.
1088 Ibid., 61.
evidence suggests that the nature of payments to the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen did not reflect the allegiance of these groups to the South Vietnamese government, but rather, that they were payoffs to retain their support. However, the nature of Diem’s request for funds through Lansdale is subject to interpretation. On March 16, 1955, Lansdale wrote to J. Lawton Collins:

“At President Diem’s request, I saw him early this morning. He said he needed 15,000,000$ urgently to provide funds for Cao Dai troops, whose support he needed to retain in the present situation. This money would be used as an advance to pay the troops of General Phuong and General Thé while they were awaiting full-integration; he therefore needed the money only as a loan for a short time. The President has exhausted all his own funds except for 200,000$. When asked whether he had previously requested this money, the President said that he had mentioned it to Mr. Fishel, but that it had not been the subject of an official request.”

It is not clear why the amount of 15,000,000 USD was not the subject of an official request and why Diem was requesting these funds from Lansdale and Fishel verbally, instead of through written channels. More broadly, Fall and Lansdale had a cordial, but almost passive-aggressive relationship. It is most likely that they first learned of each other at the time of the crisis between the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen and Diem’s administration mid-1955. It is clear that they corresponded through at least 1965, but they had contested interactions through 1966. Nashel described this, writing “Lansdale and Fall’s relationship was often marked by differing visions of American power. During a 1966 lecture at the Far East Training Center in Hawaii, Fall said – and in front of Lansdale – ‘The Americans have an emotional hangup on the word ‘colonialism.’ That’s why this place here [Hawaii] wasn’t called a colony but a territory, right? Of course, it’s six of one, half dozen of another.’ Lansdale, in turn, in a letter to a friend, pointedly noted: ‘On

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1090 “Fall Correspondence with Lansdale,” May 22, 1965, Edward Lansdale Papers, Box 37, Folder 916, Hoover Institute, Stanford University.
Indo-China, I feel strongly that any listening we do to the French (and Bernard Fall in particular) be done with a highly critical ear. The French went from a glorious defeat to a glorious defeat (Indo-China to Algeria), while being highly articulate on how to win a war. It’s a bad habit, a contagious one, and all too easy for Americans to catch.”

This type of cynicism towards Fall was questionable, especially since Fall had made his views as a “Frenchman” known to Lansdale. In a letter to Lansdale from May 22, 1965, Fall wrote, “I happen to be among the Frenchmen who believe that the whole West will sink or swim together, and that, hence, an American success in Viet-Nam will help everybody. For that reason, I have done over the past few years a great deal to make American operations more effective, and have a few Defense Department mementoes to show for it, of which I am quite proud.”

Fall’s lectures at Fort Bragg, among other places, could attest to the accuracy of this statement.

The problem with Lansdale’s criticism, moreover, was that Fall consistently offered solutions to achieve political legitimacy in South Vietnam after 1955. Fall’s criticism of Ngo Dinh Diem’s actions during the sect crisis in 1955 was that Diem relied upon bribes to retain Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen support and that these groups revolted once those payments were rescinded. Lansdale had been at the center of those payments. Even though he criticized Fall in 1966, and certainly in the years before then, it is apparent he was coming around to a position similar to Fall on the issue of political legitimacy. Lansdale made his position in 1964 clear: “In a revolutionary or people’s war, such as the war in Viet Nam, where the enemy is embedded within the population, the lasting quality needed for a win is the voluntary action of the population in

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1092 “Fall Correspondence with Lansdale,” May 22, 1965, Edward Lansdale Papers, Box 37, Folder 916, Hoover Institute, Stanford University.
joining together with the government forces, and with the American influence coming from respect and trust earned by the spirit in which individual American give their help.” After 1965, the increased reliance on military action in South Vietnam showed that Lansdale’s idealism, at least as portrayed in his article, was increasingly unrealistic.

By 1964, Fall and Lansdale shared similar views regarding the role of the military in Vietnam. Fall, an advocate for addressing grievances through political channels, did not see how an overly militarized intervention could solve war in Vietnam. Lansdale appeared to share this view: “The most urgent military need is to make it the number one priority for the military to protect and help the people. When the military opens fire at long range, whether by infantry weapons, artillery or air strike, on a reported Viet Cong concentration in a hamlet or village full of civilians, the Vietnamese officers who give those orders and the American advisers who let them ‘get away with it’ are helping defeat the cause of freedom. The civilian hatred of the military resulting from such actions is a powerful motive for joining the Viet Cong.” Lansdale added, “Observers who are most experienced in insurgent warfare believe that the Viet Cong will not be defeated until A.R.V.N. catches the spirit of civic action and practices it all through the ranks.”

Lansdale’s article reflected thoughts that Fall advocated in articles from 1958, such as “Will South-Vietnam Be Next?” and “South Viet-Nam’s Internal Problems.” The implementation of political changes to address political grievances in 1958, however, would have provided far greater chance for success than their implementation in 1964.

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1094 Ibid., 84.
1095 Ibid., 85-86.
Appendix IV – Photographs

“Bernard Fall with C Company, 1/9 Marines, February 20, 1967,” USMC Photo, “Ground Units in Vietnam” USMC Archives, USMC History Division, Quantico, Virginia. This is open-source material.
Bernard Fall with Rubber Tree, undated, approximately late 1966. Photo credit: François Sully, François Sully Papers and Photographs, Series IV. Photographs, Subseries C: Prints (miscellaneous). University of Massachusetts Boston. University Archives and Special Collections. This is open-source material.
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Fall’s papers, which contain unpublished essays, book reviews, professional correspondence, notes, and drafts of published papers, are collected at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, Massachusetts. This collection also contains Bernard Fall’s research materials including maps, French, US, Republic of Vietnam, State of Vietnam, and limited Democratic of Vietnam government publications, journals Fall collected, Vietnamese posters, news clippings from 1950-1966, and other materials.

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Acknowledgments

I am fortunate to have a great number of people and institutions to thank. My professors at the University at Albany, SUNY, have made my life and work better. First, my thanks to Dr. Richard S. Fogarty, my committee chair and advisor since day one. Rick has guided me through the entire process of earning a doctorate and helped me in many ways, from writing to thinking through historical problems. Rick gave me a great deal of his time, especially in reviewing drafts of this dissertation, but also through every year I worked with him. I could not have had a better mentor. My other committee members, Dr. Ryan Irwin, Dr. Michitake Aso, and Dr. Brian Nussbaum each challenged me in many positive ways that have made me a better historian, writer, and thinker. Ryan expanded my understanding of history as an art and a science and he provided me with much appreciated support to pursue opportunities that would have been impossible without him. Mitch opened my eyes to Vietnamese Studies, Southeast Asia and its history in ways that will motivate me far into the future. The growing number of Southeast Asia-related books on my shelves are just one reflection of the many positives that stem from working with Mitch. Brian helped me see intersections between International Relations Theory and history in new ways. His class on political violence and insurgency was a highlight during my time at Albany. Thanks to each of you.

There are other faculty and staff in the history department who helped me achieve the goal of completing a doctorate. I wish to acknowledge several professors who guided me to become a better historian: Dr. Christopher Pastore, Dr. Kendra Smith-Howard, Dr. Richard Hamm, and Dr. Susan Gauss, now at the University of Massachusetts-Boston: thank you. Dr. David Hochfelder, the graduate director during much of my time in the program, helped me on numerous occasions.
I also want to thank Irene Andrea and Jamie Winn for all their help. My cohort was one of the best parts of my experience at Albany. They, and other friends in cohorts before and after my group, made the department a positive environment in which to study and work. Thanks to all for the camaraderie, informal discussions, and general good-will you shared.

This dissertation would not have been possible without extensive time conducting archival research. Numerous institutions and organizations provided financial research assistance through grants and fellowships and I am grateful for the generous support from each of the following: The Smith Richardson Foundation for a World Politics and Statecraft Fellowship, The Lyndon B. Johnson Foundation for a Moody Research Grant, the United States Marine Corps Heritage Foundation, the Dirksen Congressional Center, a General and Mrs. Matthew B. Ridgway Research Grant through the United States Army Heritage and Education Center, a Marjorie Kovler Research Fellowship through the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, a grant provided by the Eisenhower Foundation for research in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, an ABC-CLIO research grant, and the United States Commission of Military History for support to travel and present research in Beijing, China. At the University at Albany, SUNY, a Joseph E. Persico Fellowship and the Dr. Jagadish Garg Doctoral Award provided generous support for my research, along with fellowship awards from the University at Albany, the Graduate Student Employee Union, and the University at Albany History Department. Thank you to all.

My greatest thanks go to my family for their support. My mother and father, Mary and Wes Moir, have provided me with everything, most importantly their time and encouragement. Many thanks to my brother, Dan, and to my extended family and family in-law as well. My wife, Beth, and our sons, Lawson, Liam, and Phoenix have supported me in every way. The opportunity
to pursue a doctorate would not have been possible without them. They made this goal a great chapter among the many others we have constructed together so far.

In closing, as historian David Bell writes, “Identifying with individuals in the past is central to the writing of good history, and to the experience of reading it.”¹⁰⁹⁶ If this is so, I have succeeded as far as the first six words of Bell’s statement are concerned. I identify with Bernard Fall as a scholar-soldier and as one who believes in developing foreign and domestic policy according to objective facts and not merely on what one “wishes to them to be.” As to whether I have written good history, that is for the reader to judge. As to all mistakes of omission or commission made within this work, those are entirely mine.