1. Introduction

If today a Vietnamese Catholic immigrant to Australia, the United States, or Canada were to be asked ‘Where in Vietnam do you come from?’ they would quite likely answer ‘Saigon.’ But this response often serves to conceal more than it reveals. For ‘Saigon’ in this context is as likely to mean the adjoining province of Đồng Nai as it is the city now known as Hồ Chí Minh City. More importantly, it is more likely than not that, whilst Saigon may have been their last residential address, their quê, or home area, lay well to the north. For the majority, either they themselves or their families had come originally from the North or North-central regions of Vietnam. In the period 1954-55, more than 650,000 Catholics fled from the north of Vietnam to the South, thereby more than doubling the population of the Church in the South in little more than a year, and bringing with them a distinctive social structure, and separately developed cultural and ecclesiastical perspectives, that were to fundamentally change the nature of the Southern Church.

The accords reached at the Geneva Conference on Indochina of May-July 1954 provided for the pro tem demarcation of Vietnam between North and South at the seventeenth parallel.¹ The North became known as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRVN), under the leadership of Hồ Chí Minh, whilst leadership in the South (which in October 1955 became the Republic of Vietnam, or RVN) was quickly assumed by the Catholic, American-sponsored Ngô Đình Diệm, a Catholic from the North-Central Province of Quảng Bình.²

¹ Whilst intended as a temporary measure until national elections could be held, the partition persisted until the establishment of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in 1976.
² The Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed on October 26, 1955. Whilst the DRVN and RVN were confined for practical purposes to ruling over the territory to the North and South of the seventeenth parallel respectively, the constitutions of both states asserted their sovereignty over the entirety of territorial Vietnam.
Article 14(d) of the accords provided for free movement between the northern and southern regions for a period of 300 days subsequent to the commencement of the accords. By the end of the open period, more than 810,000 residents of the north had taken the opportunity to move to the south. Over 75% of these refugees were Roman Catholics, drawn mainly, although not exclusively, from adjoining dioceses with the heaviest concentration of Catholics, Phát Diệm (in Ninh Bình province) and Bùi Chu (in Nam Định province). The bishops of these two dioceses, Thaddeus Lê Hữu Tử, and Pierre Phạm Ngọc Chi, had since the late 1940’s been implacable opponents of the Việt Minh. Each maintained a self-defence militia which had engaged in frequent combat with Việt Minh forces, who in turn regarded the Vietnamese Catholic Church as a colonialist and anti-nationalist entity. Many Northern Catholics fought not only for the Catholic militia, but also with the French. Consequently, when it became clear that the Việt Minh insurgency had succeeded in the North, many Catholics, fearing reprisals, fled in the face of the oncoming Việt Minh forces. Whilst this process had begun well before the implementation of the Geneva Accords, the protection given by the Accords – though far from complete – turned the flow of Northern refugees into a torrent.

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4 PTUDCTN to Prime Minister’s Office, July 15, 1955; PTTĐNCH 4041. Of these, 154,400 were repatriated soldiers and their families. The official transmigration period was originally due to end on May 15, 1955, but was extended to July 20. After that date, French forces were obliged to withdraw completely from their ‘beachhead’ positions in Hanoi and Haiphong. The numbers leaving the North had increased by December 31, 1955 to 887,861: PTUDCTN to PTT, January 21, 1956: PTTĐNCH, 4041. Speculation that the Diệm government had deliberately inflated the figure seems incorrect, as the same numbers were used by Lưông in confidential reports to Diệm. See pp. 107-8.
5 Some 140,000 Việt Minh supporters moved in the opposite direction, from South to North; see pp. 104-5. Diệm’s delegation to Geneva fought unsuccessfully to have Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu excluded from the Việt Minh controlled zone; Bernard B. Fall, *Việt-nam Witness 1953-66* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), 62.
6 The difficult relationship between the Việt Minh and Catholics in Liên Khu IV (Military District IV) in the period prior to 1954 only served to exacerbate these fears; see pp. 91-3.
The resettlement of these refugees, and their integration into southern society, became one of the most pressing responsibilities of the initial Diệm regime. The transmigration became known in the South as the ‘Cuộc Di Cu Vĩ Đại’ (Great Transmigration), whilst the refugees themselves became known as the ‘Bắc Di Cu Năm Mươi Tư’ (Northern Refugees from ‘fifty-four’).

The task of integrating the bắc di cu into southern society fell not only to the Diệm government. Given that the great majority of them were Catholics, the Church in the South also had to deal with the many issues that arose from the need to assimilate an incoming Catholic cohort which was bigger than the southern Church itself. At the time of demarcation in 1954, there were approximately 1,900,000 Catholics in Vietnam, of whom only 520,000, or 27.4%, lived in the two Southern ecclesiastical provinces of Saigon and Hue. By the end of the transmigration, they were home to some 1,170,000 (61.6%) of Vietnam’s Catholics.

The difficulties in digesting the sheer numbers of Catholic bắc di cu were compounded by the fact that they were heirs to a quite different ecclesiastical culture to that which had grown up in the South. The phenomenon of demarcation between the North (Dàng Ngoại) and South (Dàng Trong) is a recurrent theme in Vietnamese history. It is a

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7 The presence of this largely homogeneous, stridently anti-communist bloc also provided political and military opportunities to Diệm.
demarcation that has affected not only government, administration and politics. The distinctive historical patterns of development between the northern and southern regions of Vietnam have also led to differentiated social structures, ethnic compositions, patterns of trade and commerce, and even religious and ritual practice. Vietnamese Catholicism was also subject to the phenomenon of different historical development between northern and southern churches. By the time Hồ Chí Minh declared Vietnam to be a single, unified nation in September 1945, its Catholics were heirs to quite distinctive local traditions, cultures, histories, and social structures.

Whereas southern Catholics were largely accustomed to living in peaceful co-existence (since persecutions ceased in the 1860’s in Cochinchina, and the early 1880’s in Annam) in mixed communities with non-Catholic neighbours, many of their Northern co-religionists – particularly those from Phát Đ reversal and Bùi Chu – were accustomed to living in all-Catholic hố dao (Catholic sub-parishes, or hamlets), isolated from a threatening, non-Catholic world beyond. Whereas most southern Catholics could draw a ready line of demarcation between their religious and civic lives, these aspects of existence often became conflated for residents of the northern hố dao. And, whereas southern Catholics acknowledged they were subject to clerical leadership in the spiritual and ecclesiastical realms alone, clerical leadership in many northern Catholic hố dao sometimes took on aspects of an all-encompassing theocracy.

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9 It can be legitimately asserted that the Central region (Miền Trung) also has its own particular historical, social, and political characteristics.
Of course, there was also much that, as Vietnamese Catholics, they shared together, and which would have been readily recognizable to Northerner and Southerner alike. Moreover, they were all members of a universal Catholic Church, which provided for a commonality in such areas of religious life as liturgy, doctrine, sacraments, and ecclesiastical hierarchy, not only in Vietnam, but throughout the entire Catholic world.

And yet, there were sufficient differences between Northern and Southern Vietnamese Catholicism that, when the historical and political vicissitudes of the 1954-55 transmigration threw a significant portion of the Northern Church into immediate co-habitation with its southern counterpart, those differences became an occasional inhibitor to an easy assimilation, and a frequent source of mutual incomprehension. The task of melding ‘indigenous’ Southern Catholics and the bắc di cư into a single ecclesial body was always bound to be long and complex.

The sudden movement of such a vast body of people in such a short period of time inevitably produced transformative effects of profound social, political, economic and religious significance. Consequenrly, a substantial body of contemporary secondary literature was produced by the major participants: the governments of the DRVN and RVN, the United States of America, and the Catholic Church.

The authorities in the DRVN published significant amounts of material – mostly pamphlets, booklets, and articles in the state-sponsored Catholic journal Chính Nghĩa (Justice) - aimed at discouraging potential asylum-seekers from heading South, and to provide a politically palatable justification as to why so many had done so. The DRVN literature was careful not to directly criticize the bắc di cư themselves, either as citizens or as Catholics, referring to them instead by the formulaic phrase ‘Đồng bào bị

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12 For a bibliography of these DRVN-sponsored works, see Appendix I.
cuồng ép và dụ dỗ’ [compatriots who have been coerced and seduced]. Once the transmigration was complete, the bac di cut themselves ceased to be the target audience for this material; they were thereafter portrayed as the manipulated and misused pawns of Đế quốc Mỹ và Diệm tay sai [United States imperialism and its Diệm lackies].

The Diệm government in the RVN similarly produced a large body of literature on the transmigration, in both Vietnamese and English. Some, such as the booklet Nếu Bạn Là Người Di Tân Cút [If you are an evacuee], were aimed at incoming bac di cut, with the dual objectives of easing their transition into southern society, and shoring up their political support for the Diệm regime. Other, more substantial works targeted the southern polity, with a view to providing self-congratulations to the RVN government for its own perceived success in receiving and resettling the bac di cut, buttressing the support of the newly arrived against communist influence both in the domestic sphere and in the DRVN, and placating those sectors of public opinion who held misgivings as to the purportedly preferential treatment awarded to them. These works included Đặc Sản Kỷ Niệm Hai Năm Chính Quyền của Chính Phủ Ngô Đình Diệm [Special edition marking two years in power of the government of Ngô Đình Diệm] and Cuộc Di Cut Lịch Sử Tại Việt Nam [Vietnam’s historic Transmigration]. By late 1956 into 1957, RVN-sponsored material also sought to persuade bac di cut to accede to government plans to resettlement in such ‘third phase’ projects as Cái Sánh and the new settlements in the Central Highlands. The Diệm regime also produced a body of literature in

15 Nếu Bạn Là Người Di Tân Cút [If you are an evacuee] (Saigon: Press Office of Republic of Việt Nam, 1954).
English (and to a lesser extent French) which endeavoured to influence the international community – most particularly the United States – to provide ongoing financial, logistical, and diplomatic support. These included *Why Have 800,000 Refugees Left North Vietnam?*[^18] *Operation Exodus: the Refugee Movement to Free Vietnam,*[^19] *One Million Refugees: Victims of Communism from North Vietnam. The Story of the Most Extraordinary Movement of Modern Times,*[^20] and *Cai San: The Dramatic Story of Resettlement and Land Reform in the “Ricebowl” of the Republic of Vietnam.*[^21] The basic theme common to all of these works was that the bắc địch có had fled from what was portrayed as an evil and persecutory regime in the DRVN to find freedom (particularly freedom of religious practice) in the South; that they were welcomed as Đồng bào (compatriots) by the people of the RVN; and that, as a consequence of the efforts of the Diệm regime and its international partners, they had been successfully resettled and integrated into southern society. All of these assertions were founded on an element of truth, mixed with large measures of dissimilitude and exaggeration.

Much of the early secondary literature emanating from the United States focused, unsurprisingly, on the programme of aid, both government and non-government, which was intended to assist firstly in the evacuation of the bắc địch có from the North, and thereafter in their resettlement and integration into southern society. Some of this literature was in the nature of populist propaganda aimed at shoring up support

amongst the American public for this and other forms of assistance to the RVN. Most notable in this regard were the works of Dr. Thomas Dooley, particularly *Deliver Us From Evil*, and John W. O’Daniel, *The Nation That Refused to Starve: The Challenge of the New Vietnam*.22 Another group of American works were aimed at analysing and evaluating the social, economic, political, and fiscal efficacy of the U.S. refugee aid programmes. Initially, these centred around the reports of the field teams from Michigan State University sent to the RVN to provide advice on various aspects of public administration, including the *Phủ Tông Ủy Diệt Tự Nạn* [Commissioner for Refugees](PTUDCTN). These included an initial report in September 1955 on the structure and administration of the PTUDCTN, and a June 1956 review of the initial report.23 In 1959, a symposium under the auspices of Michigan State University was held to mark the fifth anniversary of the Geneva accords, which brought together major participants from the United States, the RVN, and the Catholic Church. The proceedings of the symposium, which were subsequently published by MSU as *Viet-nam, the First Five Years; An International Symposium*, provide an invaluable source both for empirical data, and for subjective but informed assessments, as to the transmigration. This thesis draws considerably on those proceedings.24

The absence of any substantive accessible archival material from the Catholic Church (either in Vietnam or the Vatican) for this study constitutes a significant inhibition to fully evaluating the Church’s role in the transmigration, and even more crucially, in

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evaluating the effect which the **bác di cư** had on the Southern Church. However, there remains an extensive Catholic literature which covered the transmigration and its aftermath. This is largely to be found in the domestic Vietnamese Catholic press.

Whilst subject to the same censorship and political constraints which applied to all press in the RVN, some Catholic periodicals nevertheless maintained coverage of **bác di cư** issues. Most notable in this regard was the widely-circulated Redemptorist magazine, **Đức Mẹ Hàng Cứu Giúp** [Our Lady of Perpetual Succour], which itself moved from Hanoi to Saigon in 1954 as part of the transmigration. **Thằng Tiền** [Advance Directly] also provided some worthwhile coverage of **bác di cư** related articles. Some other notable Catholic periodicals, such as **Đạo Nhập Thể** [Faith Incarnated], **Tông Đồ** [Apostleship], **Hiệp Nhất** [Greatest Unity], **Tình Thân** [Spirit], **Trải Tìm Đức Mẹ** [Heart of Our Lady], and **Đức Mẹ Lavang** [Our Lady of Lavang] and the **bác di cư** newspaper **Xây Dựng** [Building], only came into existence after the resettlement period had concluded. Whilst not strictly speaking a Catholic journal, **Luyện Thép** [Forged Steel], the journal of the **bác di cư** university students from Nghệ An, notably Trường Bá Cần, a later priest-scholar, gives remarkable insights into the mentality and preoccupations of many of the **bác di cư**. In the early 1980’s, Cần went on to become the editor of the Catholic weekly **Công Giáo và Dân Tộc** [Catholicism

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25 The only church-based archives made available came from the holdings of the Columban Fathers in Ireland of the private papers of Archbishop John Dooley, Apostolic Delegate in Hanoi from 1951 to 1959. These, however, contained no material of real interest; his relevant correspondence and papers are most likely held in the Secretariat of State in the Vatican, and remain unavailable.

26 As at March 1954, there were thirteen principal Catholic newspapers or Journals; **Đức Mẹ Hàng Cứu Giúp**, **Đời Sống**, **Thời Mới**, **Trải Tìm Đức Mẹ**, **Phúc Ẩm**, **Nghĩa Bình Thánh Thê**, **Sông**, **Đời Học Sinh**, **Bàn Trừ**, **Chiến Sĩ**, **Liên Minh Thành Tim**, **Hướng Đạo Công Giáo**, and **Đạo Bình Đức Mẹ**: Trần Quang Chu, **Giáo Phần Huế**, 150 Năm Thành Lập [150 Years of Establishment of the Diocese of Hue] 3 vols. (Hue: Archdiocese of Hue, 2000), 3:122. Hanoi based publications were closed down after re-occupation by the DRVN government, whilst new journals sprang up in the RVN.

27 Others, such as **Linh Mục** [The Priest] and **Sacerdos**, did not.

28 I was able to access most of these via the library and archives of St. Joseph’s Major Seminary, Hồ Chí Minh City. Others were located in second-hand bookshops in the same city.

29 I located a collection of **Luyện Thép** in the library of **Công Giáo và Dân Tộc** magazine, where at that time, Fr. Cần was still editor.
and the Nation}, in which role he has sometimes re-visited the role of the transmigration in Vietnamese Catholic History. Whilst Côn Giao và Dân Tộc is a state-sanctioned journal under the auspices of the Mật Trận Tổ Quốc [Fatherland Front], it had remarkable license (at least for a period of time) to deviate from the state-sanctioned position on the causes and effects of the transmigration.

Foreign Catholic writers of the era, including such influential Catholic journalists as the Jesuit Francis Corley, tended to contextualize the refugee movement within the polemic of the Church’s universal conflict with Communism. On the one hand, the bạc diệt were portrayed as miserable victims (and Catholic victims at that) of a humanitarian crisis caused by Communist aggression; on the other, they were resolute protagonists who would provide a significant element within an effective bulwark against its spread in East Asia. The tone of Church-sponsored literature was not dissimilar to that produced for propaganda purposes by the United States. This is hardly surprising, given the commonality of their policy objectives at the time.

Subsequent secondary literature often contextualizes the transmigration and its aftermath as a form of historical bridge connecting the first and second Indochinese Wars (1946-54 and 1959-75 respectively), whereby it is portrayed either as a postscript to the former (as in Lancaster’s Emancipation of French Indochina, Devillers and Lacouture’s End of a War, Dalloz’s The War in Indochina, Hammer’s Struggle for Indochina, and O’Ballance’s The Indochina War), or a prelude to the latter (e.g., Duiker’s Sacred War, Honey’s Genesis of a Tragedy, Luce’s Vietnam, the Unheard Voices, Joiner’s The Politics of Massacre, and Kahin’s Intervention).30 In a

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chronological sense, Lacouture’s *Vietnam: Between Two Truces*, Buttinger’s *Dragon Embattled*, and Fall’s *The Two Viet-Nams* and *Viet-Nam Witness*, at least situate the transmigration in the context of both its historical antecedents before 1954, and its subsequent consequences thereafter.\(^{31}\)

Of the authors who survey the First Indochina War, O’Ballance’s *Indochina War*, which is essentially a military history, portrays the Northern Catholics (particularly those of Phat Diem and Bui Chu) as targets of Viet Minh hostility, and unstable allies of the French; their exile to the South is portrayed as a simple consequence of military defeat. Lancaster provides a more political account of how the initially cordial relationship between large sections of the Vietnamese Catholic church, and the incoming government of the DRVN, unravelled over the period 1945 to 1954, and ended in military conflict. Lancaster, like Buttinger and Fall, provides a useful continuum in describing the fate of the Northern Catholics, both before and after the transmigration. This provides an important background as to their reasons for departure, and their situation in the RVN subsequent to their arrival in the South. But as general political and military histories, they do little to address the bac di cut Catholics as a religious community. Lancaster, however, does deal helpfully with the

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social dimension of resentment by native Southerners to the bácdicóu, as does Charles Joiner in *The Politics of Massacre*.  

Lacouture, in *Vietnam: Between Two Truces*, provides a somewhat jaundiced view of Vietnam’s Northern Catholics, portraying them as subservient victims of clerical politicking.  

This is at least useful in providing an indication of how the bácdicóu were viewed, by a strand of popular sentiment, in the RVN, and amongst some foreign observers.

The analysis of Vietnam’s Catholics by Thompson and Adloff in *Minority Problems in South East Asia* provides a different perspective in that they are considered, not in the primary context of Vietnamese military and political history, but rather of Christian minorities throughout South-East Asia.  

Their description of the Catholic’s complex relationship with the Việt Minh provides valuable historical background, but concludes prior to the Geneva Accords.

To the best of my knowledge, no published monograph has made an historical analysis of the 1954-5 transmigration and its aftermath its central theme.  

Some recent articles, such as that of Christopher Kaufmann on the work of the Catholic Relief Service (CRS), and Ed Weisner and Ronald Frankum, on the role of the United States Operation Mission (USOM), examine United States operations in Vietnam in the

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33 Lacoutoure, *Vietnam: Between Two Truces*, 104-5.  
35 Lamenting the lack of either archival documentation or modern analysis of the transmigration, the historian Phạm Kim Vinh, writing in 1987, claimed to have heard that Diệm’s Commissioner for Refugees, Bùi Văn Lương, was intending to write memoirs; Phạm Kim Vinh, *Việt Nam Từ Do Tự Ngọ Dinh Diệm đến Luu Vong [Free Vietnam, from Ngo Dinh Diem to Exile]* (California [Long Beach?]: PKV Bookshelf, 1987), 41. But Lương died in the United States in about 2001, and to the best of my knowledge, he wrote no memoirs, nor any surviving account of the transmigration after the MSU Conference of 1959.
context of the transmigration, without having it as a primary focus. Again, these articles provide useful material on the process of evacuation and resettlement of the _bặc đi cư_, but in the context of what was done to them or for them, rather than by them.

Treatment of the transmigration, and of the role of the _bặc đi cư_ in Vietnamese society, remains similarly scant within Vietnam itself. In recent years, state-sanctioned histories of the evolution of Vietnamese Catholicism have become a growth area, yet the implications of the sudden transmigration of more than 650,000 Catholics – an event of the greatest possible importance within that history – receives little attention. To the extent that this historiography examines the reasons for the transmigration, it usually reverts to the _cưỡng ép và dụ dỗ_ formula referred to above. The fact of the transmigration, and the preponderance of Catholics within the _bặc đi cư_, is acknowledged; but no analysis follows as to what happened to them and their Church on arrival in the South, nor of how they in turn changed the nature or practice of Vietnamese Catholicism.

One of the few circumstances in which the reality of the _bặc đi cư_ as an identifiable group within Vietnamese society is recognized and dealt with is in consideration of the contemporary political problem of ensuring their support for, or at least co-operation with, the current Vietnamese government. Two recent works on the Catholic _bặc đi cư_

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in Đồng Nai province provide a respectful and sympathetic account of their experience, but with a view to the neutralization of any lingering political animosity.  

The political aspects of both the transmigration and the role of the bắc di cư in Southern society are the principal preoccupations of most English-language historiography pertaining to the period. Several authors deal with the transmigration itself through consideration of whether the United States government was its principal precipitating agent (Burchett, *North of the Seventeenth Parallel*; Kahin, *Intervention*; Jacobs, *America’s Miracle Man*). This point is dealt with hereafter at length hereafter. In essence, the contention that the transmigration is essentially a consequence of American agency and actions will be rejected, and other causative factors suggested.

The subsequent role of the bắc di cư within southern society is almost invariably analysed in terms of their mutual inter-dependence with the Diệm regime. Their over-representation in politics, the senior ranks of the military, the civil service, academia and the professions – but most of all, as the immediate and exclusive cadre of trusted confidantes of the President – is almost invariably the leitmotif of any discussion of the role of the bắc di cư in the RVN. This is certainly so in the works of Neese (*Prelude to Tragedy: Vietnam, 1960-65*), Shaplen (*The Lost Revolution: The Story of Twenty Years of Neglected Opportunities in Vietnam and of America’s Failure to Foster Democracy*).

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40 See pp. 123-5.
There), and Joiner (The Politics of Massacre: Political Processes in South Vietnam).\footnote{Harvey Neese & John O’Donnell, Prelude to Tragedy: Vietnam, 1960-65 (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2001); Robert Shaplen, The Lost Revolution: The Story of Twenty Years of Neglected Opportunities in Vietnam and of America’s Failure to Foster Democracy There (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); Joiner, Politics of Massacre. See also Robert Scheer, ‘Genesis of United States Support for the Regime of Ngo Dinh Diem’, and ‘Behind the Miracle of South Vietnam,’ both in Marvin E. Gettleman et al., eds, Vietnam and America: A Documented History (New York: Grove Press, 1985), 118-32 and 137-53 respectively. Joiner at least situates the bâc di cù’s plight within the history of Vietnamese regionalism; an important distinction, given that many other accounts view their role as simply motivated by their intense-anti-communism, which in turn sprang (according to this line of argument) from their political affiliation; Politics of Massacre, 30, 68-9, 162.} Given the resentment this over-representation provoked, and its consequences in terms of the assassination of Diệm and the fall of his regime, this should not be regarded as surprising. Indeed, the political and military implications of the presence of the bâc di cù as an identifiable group with occasionally disproportionate influence in the southern polity is worthy of detailed comment and analysis.

However, this restrictive historiographic approach presents two problems. First, it too often treats the bâc di cù as passive recipients of the actions of others, rather than as active agents in the determination of their own fate. They are viewed as objects in an historical narrative in which Lansdale and the CIA, or thereafter Diệm and the Ngô clan, are the principal subject, causing the northern Catholics first to flee their quê [home area] for the South, and thereafter to become a de facto bulwark against internal and external threats against the regime. Whilst this is an understandable characterization when writing about the Vietnam War, and the role of the United States within it, it does little justice to the bâc di cù, effectively denying them any form of independent agency in which they are credited for having contributed to the shaping of their own history, and the determination of their own fate. It is proposed to redress this situation in this dissertation, in which the bâc di cù form the central subject, rather than
being merely part of the peripheral context. Any work which deals with the history of Vietnam in the 1950’s and 1960’s will inevitably have the war, and its geo-political causes and consequences as a necessary and omnipresent part of its narrative. The events described in this thesis have the conflict between the northern and southern regimes as an essential background element to its historical context. Yet this is not a dissertation about the Vietnam War. It is fundamentally a study of a national Church, and how, within a given historical context, ecclesiastical micro-cultures intersect, compete, and coincide.

Perhaps even more importantly, dealing with the **bác đi cắt** solely within the context of their effect on the polity of the RVN isolates this admittedly important sphere of their existence from other, no less noteworthy aspects. For example, what was their effect on the economic foundations of the RVN, and on its practices in land ownership and management? What consequences did the transmigration hold for its demographic structure, or its and cultural and linguistic life?

Even church histories of twentieth-century Vietnam written from a Catholic perspective do little do address these broader implications of the **bác đi cắt**. Gheddo’s *Cross and the Bo Tree*, as perhaps the seminal work on war-time Vietnamese Catholicism, deals with the **bác đi cắt** at length and with considerable insight, but almost entirely in the context of their relationship with the Việt Minh in the pre-transmigration phase, and the Diệm and post-Diệm administrations in the subsequent period.42 Vietnamese church historians similarly situate the **bác đi cắt** within a political polemic; either of antagonism towards Vietnamese Communism (the Redemptorist Phan Phát

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Huôn, the Dominican Bùi Đức Sinh, (writing under his own name and as ‘Một Giáo Sư Sử Học’ [A professor of history]), and to a lesser extent, Nguyễn Thế Thoại, towards Diệm, Nguyễn Văn Thiệu, and the political elite of the RVN (mainly those associated with the dissident Catholic movement, the so-called ‘lời thề ba’ [Third Way], such as Trần Tám Tính). Huôn, in particular, lays great emphasis on the fate of the bắc diệt as evidence of the DRVN regime’s implacable hostility towards the church. Breaches of the Geneva Accords by the Việt Minh, for example, receive extensive coverage, whereas little attention is played to the role of the bắc diệt in the Church in the RVN. It is as if the internal, church-based ramifications of the role of the bắc diệt on Southern Catholicism itself are an inappropriate subject for historical discourse. Whereas these historians of the Vietnamese church discuss at length the tensions between the French missionaries and ‘indigenous’ Vietnamese Catholics in the early twentieth century, and the open conflict between the Vietnamese Church and the DRVN, there is an almost total absence of any discussion as to internal relationships within the Church in the South. It would have been of great interest had these church histories dealt in detail with such issues as the effect of the numerical


45 Many of the numerous histories of the period generated by the Việt Kiều (Vietnamese diaspora) community also tend to contextualize the transmigration within an anti-communist polemic, in the same manner as Huôn. Moreover, many of them, ironically, rely largely on non-Vietnamese primary and secondary sources. A notable exception is Lê Xuân Khoa’s Việt Nam 1945-1995: Chiến Tranh, Tị Nạn; Bài Học Lịch Sử [Vietnam 1945-95: war, refugees, historical lessons] (2 vols. Bethesda, MD: Tin Rồng, 2004), which not only deals with the transmigration dispassionately and at length, but also relies largely on Vietnamese sources.
dominance of the emigré church within its southern host, the relationship between the indigenous church hierarchy and those imposed on it from the North, the interaction within day to day parochial life of the two Catholic groupings, and the consequences over time of domination by the bắc di cut of senior clerical positions within the Southern Church. Perhaps they were not considered significant, or inadequate source material inhibited such analysis. But perhaps such a discussion did not suit the didactic purposes of these authors.

Again, this study seeks to redress that situation. It assesses the complex range of motivations, and agents of influence, which led to the transmigration. It seeks to show that the bắc di cut retained significant autonomous agency in both their decisions to leave the North, in their patterns of resettlement in the South, and their manner of interaction with both southern society and the Southern Church. It examines how, in so doing, the bắc di cut relied heavily on their pre-existing patterns of social and ecclesiastical organization and leadership. This gave them both cohesion and resilience, but at the same time left them resistant to change and external influence.

Their own religious self-perceptions, forged both by their history of persecution and the phenomenon of the transmigration itself, provided a sense of separateness – perhaps even of spiritual elitism – which the resettlement policies of both the RVN and the Church helped to perpetuate. Finally, this study seeks to examine how that sense of separateness had an efficacy beyond the polity, the economy, and military strategy, and impacted directly upon the Southern Church in general, and the Archdiocese of Saigon in particular.

Given that their most obvious identifying factor was their membership of (in a Vietnamese context) a religious minority, the ecclesiological and socio/religious
aspects of the bôc di cut in the RVN is perhaps the area most in need of re-examination. It is widely conceded that their presence had a significant effect on southern society, in which the Catholic bôc di cut constituted little more than 6% of the population; how much more, then, was their influence on a Southern Church where, within a year, they comprised more than 55% of the Catholic population.

This numerical transformation, extraordinary though it is, fails to convey the full consequence of the presence of the bôc di cut for Vietnamese Catholicism. They constituted not only a significant population cohort, but also a self-administering ecclesiastical entity, complete with an independent clerical hierarchy, ritual practice, historical narrative, and micro-culture. Their presence provided an extraordinary opportunity for Church growth within the RVN, whilst at the same time constituting a significant challenge to their Southern counterparts. An examination of both the causes and the consequences of this Church growth lie at the heart of this thesis.

The activities of the bôc di cut bishops and priests, operating outside of their territorial jurisdiction during the 1954-6 period raise significant theological, ecclesiological and canonical issues which have far wider implications within the Catholic Church. How did they appropriate Christianity’s scriptural foundations and historical narrative to explain their predicament and differentiate themselves from the wider community around them? What were the sources of authority and legitimacy for their ecclesiastical leadership when operating in an irregular environment? And what were the ultimate outer parameters of priestly leadership of their lay communities? What, indeed, does ‘pastoral’ leadership imply, and how far can it be expanded beyond the strictly spiritual needs of the church community? Any endeavour to answer these questions of necessity goes beyond a mere recounting of the bôc di cut story, and into an examination of scriptural tradition and Canon Law. But ultimately, this remains a
study of the Vietnamese church, and how it was reshaped by the Transmigration of 1954-5.
2. The Development of Vietnamese Catholicism.

(a) Early background

Christian evangelization in Vietnam began in earnest at the start of the seventeenth century.\(^{46}\) Prompted by the missionary impulse of the Catholic Reformation, and encouraged by the commercial and colonial ambitions of the maritime European powers, missionaries entered Vietnam in the hope of spiritual conquests. Initially staffed and sponsored by Portuguese Jesuits under the auspices of the padraodo, the Vietnam mission was fortunate to have had amongst its early evangelists the French Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes (1591-1660), whose linguistic and catechetical strategies greatly enhanced the mission, and saw a rapid growth in the numbers of adherents, with de Rhodes claiming 208,000 Catholics by 1640.\(^{47}\) This growth continued when, by the later seventeenth century, clerical control passed from the Jesuits to the French Missions Étrangères de Paris (MEP), with the North-East ecclesiastical Province eventually allocated (including Thái Bình, Haiphong and Quảng Ninh) to the Spanish Dominicans from the order’s Philippines Province.\(^{48}\) Even in this early phase, church growth in the North was stronger than in the South; the number of southern Catholics in was estimated in 1665 at 50,000, against estimates of northern Catholics of 108,000 in 1640, and 195,000 in 1685.\(^{49}\) By the start of the nineteenth century, the discrepancy was even greater; 260,000 Catholics in the North, served by 12 missionaries and 106

\(^{46}\) There is some evidence of a missionary presence towards the end of the sixteenth century, but it was neither permanent nor effective.

\(^{47}\) Peter C. Phan, *Mission and Catechesis: Alexandre de Rhodes and Inculturation in Seventeenth Century Vietnam* (New York: Orbis, 1998), 57. The estimate is almost certainly an exaggeration. There was no active Protestant evangelization in Vietnam until the nineteenth century; hence the terms ‘Catholic’ and ‘Christian’ can here be used interchangeably.

\(^{48}\) The Spanish assumed control of the North-east province in 1698; Bùi Đức Sinh O.P. *Lịch sử Giáo Hội*, 377.

\(^{49}\) As to the 1665 figure, see Nguyễn Văn Chức, *Việt Nam chính sử* [Official Vietnamese History] (Falls Church VA: Alpha, 1992), 574. As to the 1640 figure, see Phan, *Mission and Catechesis*, 57.
Vietnamese priests, against 60,000 in the South, served by 6 missionaries and 15 Vietnamese priests.\textsuperscript{50}

However, the process of expansion was inhibited by the onset of persecution against the nascent Christian communities and their spiritual leaders. The Christian mission began at a time when Vietnam was divided between North and South, under the effective authority of the seigniorial houses of the Trònh and Nguyễn respectively, from 1620 until 1789. Both Trònh and Nguyễn lords periodically outlawed the practice of Christianity, and pursued its adherents.\textsuperscript{51}

The continuation of sporadic anti-Catholic persecutions, often sponsored by the Nguyễn monarchs from Minh Mạng (1820-1840) onwards, threatened Catholic communities throughout Vietnam during much of the nineteenth century. For example, in the period from 1851 to 1856, more than 3,500 Vietnamese Catholics were executed, and more than 50,000 killed in skirmishes with lào [non-Catholics]; 100 Catholic villages were razed, 115 Vietnamese priests and ten missionaries were killed, as well as some one hundred sisters from the indigenous women’s religious order, the Lovers of the Holy Cross [Đồng Mênh Thánh Già],\textsuperscript{52} In both North and South, anti-Catholic antagonists, motivated by religious and political animosity, joined in state-sanctioned attacks on the Catholics in their midst. This provoked two significant reactions. First, many Catholics clustered together in small aggregated communities for the purpose of

\textsuperscript{50} Louis-Eugène Louvet, \textit{Les missions Catholiques au 19\textsuperscript{e} siècle} [Catholic Missions of the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century] Second of two volumes (Lyon: de Brouwer, 1894), 207. Jacob Ramsay quotes contemporary figures for West Tonkin (the North of Vietnam, less the Dominican areas of the North-East) of 180,000 at the start of the nineteenth century, and 200,000 in 1825; “Missionaries, Priests, and Mandarins: Catholicism and the Nguyen in Vietnam’s South, 1820-1862” (PhD Thesis, ANU, 2004), 11.

\textsuperscript{51} Though never in so systematic and comprehensive fashion as in, for example, seventeenth-century Japan. Even the monarchs of the Tây Sơn rebellion (who reigned from 1789 to 1802) intermittently pursued Christians.

self-defence. The result was that villages came to be identified as wholly Catholic entities [làng Công Giáo, or in French, Chrétientés].\textsuperscript{53} Second, Catholic communities under threat of attack, would seek both protection and, on occasions retaliation, by asking their clergy, and through them the foreign missionary bishops, to ensure the intervention of the French military and civil authorities on their behalf.

These two developments served to further isolate the Catholics from the mainstream of Vietnamese society. The first made them appear as an enclosed, suspicious and extrinsic minority, operating outside of the mainstream of Vietnamese national life, and unwilling to mix with the làng majority who, in some areas, came to be regarded by Catholics as both a spiritual and physical threat. The second made them appear dependent upon an external and hostile colonial military power, hence rendering them susceptible to allegations of being traitors to the national interest.

Religious considerations compounded these socio-political problems. From the time of the Chinese Rites controversy in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries onwards, Vietnamese Catholics came to be effectively prevented by the Church hierarchy from engaging in devotional and ritual practices associated with ancestor worship (seen as vital to the moral and ethical structure of the nation), the veneration of national heroes (such as Trần Hưng Đạo and the Hai Bà Trưng), and most importantly, of ritual obeisance to the king.\textsuperscript{54} The convergence of religious and

\textsuperscript{53} Ramsay defines a Chrétienté as a congregation, which may have existed within a village or hamlet; “Missionaries, Priests, and Mandarins”; 28. Whilst this may have been true in Cochinchina (of which Ramsay writes), in the North it bore a specific meaning of a religiously-based geographic unit, a hamlet or village. Ramsay notes the difference in Northern and Southern patterns of social and ecclesiastical organization; ibid., 111.

\textsuperscript{54} The Chinese rites controversy was based on a series of Roman edicts which effectively prohibited Christians from participation in such Sino-Vietnamese ritual practices as ancestor worship, ritual veneration of the Emperor, and other cultic practices; see David E. Mungello, ed., The Chinese Rites Controversy – Its History and Meaning (San Francisco: Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History, 1994); Ray R. Noll, ed., 100 Roman Documents Concerning the Chinese Rites Controversy (San
political considerations, particularly strong in the nineteenth century under the Nguyễn monarchs, rendered this a dangerous divergence by Catholics from national obligations of devotional and ritual practice.

Moreover, whilst indigenous priests made up the vast bulk of the Vietnamese clergy (in 1939, 80.8%; see Table 2.1), the Episcopal hierarchy which controlled the Vietnamese church was until 1932 composed entirely of either Spanish or French bishops, the latter of whom had little hesitation in resorting to French assistance when under threat, or otherwise using their position to promote French national interests. This again rendered the Catholics susceptible to allegations of being extrinsic and antipathetic to the national interest. But by 1949, the missionaries who remained represented only 19% of the total clergy, or 336 out of 1,430. In both North and South, many of the foreign clergy worked in the large cities, often serving substantially French colon congregations.

State persecution of Catholics effectively ended with the advent of French colonialism. This began in the South, with the Treaty of Saigon in June 1862 ceding three of the six southern provinces (Biên Hòa, Gia Định and Định Tường) to the French, with a further provision that:

The subjects of the two nations of France and Spain may practice Christian worship in the Kingdom of Annam, and subjects of this kingdom, without


55 Strictly speaking, there was no Vietnamese Episcopal hierarchy until November 24, 1960, when it was established by Pope John XXIII by his decree Venerabilium Nostorum. Prior to then, the Bishops were given titular sees, and were vicars apostolic in their respective dioceses, answerable to Propaganda Fide, the dicastery for Evangelization, in Rome. “Một Giáo Sư Sư Học,” Giáo Hội Công Giáo, 3:302. As to the implications of this distinction at Canon Law, see p.94.
distinction, who are desirous of embracing and following the Christian religion, may do so freely and without constraint...\(^\text{56}\)

**TABLE 2.1**

PROPORTIONS OF FOREIGN AND VIETNAMESE CLERGY, 1949.\(^\text{57}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIOCESE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>LOCAL</th>
<th>FOREIGN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Province of Hanoi</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiphong</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bắc Ninh</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hưng Hóa</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lang Sơn</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phát Diệm</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bùi Chu</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thái Bình</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanh Hóa</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vĩnh</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>1,252</td>
<td>1,036</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Province of Huế</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huế</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qui Nhơn</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kontum</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>321</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Province of Saigon</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saigon</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vĩnh Long</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nam Vang(^\text{58})</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>193</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NATIONAL</strong></td>
<td>1,766</td>
<td>1,430</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{57}\) Compiled from *Missioni Cattoliche*, 274-87.

\(^{58}\) The diocese of Nam Vang was largely located in Cambodia. It is unclear how many of these Catholics were located in Vietnam; all are included for the purpose of this table. See Also John F. Cady, *The Roots of French Imperialism in East Asia*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 272.
Despite this provision in the treaty (and subsequent treaties) as to religious freedom, to which King Tự Đức [1847-1883] was an extremely reluctant party, popular anti-Catholic sentiment in both North and South continued to provoke further hostilities and persecution. Some of the worst conflicts involving Catholics, and the highest Catholic casualty rates, came during the period from 1862 until the total colonization of Cochinchina (Southern Vietnam) by France in 1867, and the declaration of Annam (Central Việt Nam) as a French protectorate in 1883.59 French occupation of Cochinchina effectively stopped even civilian attacks against Catholics by 1867,60 although some of the worst massacres of Southern Catholics, such as those at Đất Đỏ, Phước Lễ, Long Kiên and Long Điện in the Bà Rịa area, where more than 400 Catholics were burnt alive, occurred in the three months immediately prior to French occupation in March 1862.61

By contrast, French colonization of Tonkin and Annam was not completed until 1885. Once again, a rearguard action known as the Scholars Movement [Phong Trào Văn Thần], which in turn gave rise to the ‘Support the King’ [Cân Vương] campaign, led to a continuation of bloody battles with Catholics in the North and North-central regions through until the late 1888 when the deposed King, Hảm Nghi, was captured and forced into exile. It is estimated that 60,000 Catholics were killed between 1862 and 1885, including twenty missionaries, and thirty Vietnamese priests.62 The effect of

59 Louvet, Missions Catholiques, 2: 491-3.
60 There were some isolated assassinations in the South in the period 1867-72, but these were sporadic, and apparently unorchestrated; “Một Giáo Sư”, Giáo Hội Công Giáo, 3:500-2.
62 Nguyễn Gia Dé et al., eds, Trấn Luc. (Montreal: Publisher unknown, 1996), 427. For details of Catholic losses in particular northern Catholic villages, see ibid., 421-4. An 1877 memorandum from the
these final periods of anti-Catholic persecution on Catholics in Annam was generally less widespread than in Tonkin, with the notable exception of Bình Định province, where 24,000 were killed.\(^\text{63}\) In 1850, there had been 380,000 Catholics in the North (Tonkin) and 120,000 in the South (Annam and Cochin China).\(^\text{64}\) In 1889, after the persecutions had concluded, there were an estimated 572,200 Catholics in the North, compared to only 111,205 in the South.\(^\text{65}\)

(b) The Church in the South

The era of persecution and its aftermath affected the Church in the North and South in different ways. Even at the commencement of the Nguyễn dynasty in 1802, the Church in the South was smaller than that in the North. However, the ferocity of the persecution in the South, particularly in the immediate pre-colonial era, effectively wiped out a number of the wholly Catholic villages, such as Đất Đô, Long Điền and Phước Lệ referred to above. Those Catholics living unobtrusively in the wider lòng community were less likely to be molested; this scattered group already formed a greater proportion of the Catholic population in the South than in the North. In addition, many of those southern Catholics who did live in Catholic villages and who survived the persecutions were subsequently dispersed into the wider community, as their làng công giáo were dissolved either by external attack, official edict, or the

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French Colonial Under-secretariat refers to eighty villages burnt in Nam Định within a few weeks, and several hundred Christians massacred, whilst in the north-central provinces of Nghệ An and Quảng Bình, 115 villages were burnt and upwards of 3,000 Christians killed; Tuck, *French Catholic Missionaries*, 179-80.

\(^\text{63}\) Nieên Giâm 1964, 227. Bùi Đức Sinh provides an estimate of 25,000 killed from a total Catholic population of 41,000; hence more than 60% were killed; \(\text{; Lý Nhật Giáo Hội, 412.}\) There were also some isolated but severe attacks in Thừa Thiên – Hue province.


\(^\text{65}\) Ibid., 195-6, quoting Launay, *Atlas des Missions de la Société des MEP*. 
flight of the inhabitants. The cumulative effect of this pattern was that Catholics in the South became even more widely dispersed, so that they were far more likely to be living in common with the rest of society, and less likely to be concentrated in all-Catholic villages, than their northern and north-central co-religionists. Many of what are now referred to as ‘ancient’ Catholic parishes in such southern dioceses as Hồ Chí Minh City, Xuân Lộc, and Bà Rịa-Vũng Tàu, actually date from the 1860’s onwards (see Table 2.2), although Catholic communities in some cases pre-existed the establishment of the parish by many decades.

### TABLE 2.2
PARISHES IN THE DIOCESES OF SAIGON, XUÂN LỘC AND Bà RỊA (AS AT 2000 BOUNDARIES) ESTABLISHED PRIOR TO AND AFTER 1954.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saigon</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xuân Lộc</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bà Rịa</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This does not mean that the church did not exist in the South, or that no Catholics resided there; rather, that the concentrations of Catholics needed to establish a viable parish were not present. This pattern of dispersal had a significant effect on how southern Catholics lived out their faith in comparison to the Catholics of the North and

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67 Some such villages did survive in the South, in areas such as Vĩnh Long, but in nowhere near the numbers to be found in the North and North-Central regions.
69 For example, in the city of Saigon (not contiguous with the Archdiocese), there were estimated to be 23,000 Catholics out of a population of 360,000 at the time of the French annexation in 1862; Vũ Thành, “Đạo Công Giáo dưới triều Vua Tự Đức” [Catholicism under King Tự Đức], in Nguyễn Gia Đẹ, Trần Lực, 397.
North-central regions. First, they faced the imperative of peaceful co-existence with their non-Catholic neighbours; not something to be taken for granted, given the history of animosity, distrust, and persecution that had marked much of *giáo-lưông* [Catholic – non-Catholic] relations in the nineteenth century.

Second, the French colonial administration in Cochinina after 1862 actively courted the co-operation of the Church. It subsidized the construction of churches, and the fares and stipends of French missionary priests, brothers and sisters.\(^{70}\) It partially ‘sub-contracted’ the provision of education, health and welfare services to the Catholic Church. In turn, the Church discouraged its clergy from considering themselves as de facto civil administrators, a role so often assumed by their counterparts in the *hợp đạo* of the North. Instead, their role was to cooperate with the colonial authorities who in many ways acted as their political and fiduciary sponsors.\(^{71}\)

The fact that very few priests in the South presided over communities in wholly or even largely Catholic areas meant that they could not have assumed this dual civic/spiritual role, even if they had been inclined to do so. Whilst tensions between the French colonial administration and the Catholic Church gradually weakened this relationship, for most Southern Catholics, civil governance was clearly distinguishable from religious authority, and the local polity seldom correlated with Catholic parochial life.

Third, and perhaps most significantly, the relative dispersal of Catholics throughout the South meant that the critical mass of followers required to ensure the convergence of secular and religious existence was achieved in very few localities. Consequently,


\(^{71}\) This symbiotic relationship broke down over time as a consequence of mutual disenchantment between the Episcopal hierarchy and the colonial administration.
whereas religious, political and economic life often melded into one another for the Catholics of the North, they remained clearly distinguishable for their southern counterparts.


The ratio of priests to Catholic laity was actually higher in the South than in the North (see Table 2.3), yet this does not indicate a more clericalized church. Rather, it points to two other factors. First, higher concentrations of priests, often based in large religious institutes, or involved in the Church’s central administration, were located in urban areas. These made up a higher proportion of the Southern Church, which prior to 1954 did not have the high concentrations of rural Catholics as in the Red River Delta in the North, or the North-central coast. Second, when parishioners are dispersed
across a wide area requiring the clergy to travel to them (as generally in the South), more priests are required to serve their needs than when their community is gathered in a single, geographically proximate unit (as was the case in much of the North). This meant that most southern priests were fully stretched in meeting the spiritual needs of their dispersed flock, and were far less likely to be engaged in the micro-management of concentrated aggregations of Catholics in single village communities.

**TABLE 2.3**
**RATIO OF CATHOLICS PER PRIEST, 1939, 1949 AND 1964**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIocese</th>
<th>1939</th>
<th>1949</th>
<th>1964</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Province of Hanoi</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi</td>
<td>1,174</td>
<td>858</td>
<td>2,679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiphong</td>
<td>1,071</td>
<td>1,161</td>
<td>6,089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bắc Ninh</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>5,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hựng Hóa</td>
<td>1,088</td>
<td>971</td>
<td>2,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lang Sơn</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phát Diệm</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>2,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bửi Chu</td>
<td>1,698</td>
<td>1,014</td>
<td>5,323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thái Bình</td>
<td>1,689</td>
<td>1,509</td>
<td>6,818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanh Hóa</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>1,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinh</td>
<td>926</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>1,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Province of Hue</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hue</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quế Nhơn</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kontum</td>
<td>908</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>628</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

This was reflected in the nature of the five southern dioceses. Unlike the Northern Church, where boundaries of the ten dioceses have remained stable since 1939, dioceses in the ecclesiastical provinces of Saigon and Hue underwent considerable change during the latter half of the twentieth century, making statistical comparisons far more difficult than in the North. Whereas there are presently sixteen southern dioceses, there were only five at the start of the transmigration in 1954.73

### TABLE 2.4
THE SOUTHERN CHURCH AS AT 1949 74

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIOCESE</th>
<th>YEAR EST.</th>
<th>LAITY Total</th>
<th>PRIESTS Total</th>
<th>LEADERSHIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Huế</td>
<td>1850</td>
<td>60,305</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quế Nhon</td>
<td>1844</td>
<td>69,230</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kontum</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>25,255</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sài Gòn</td>
<td>1659</td>
<td>104,921</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinh Long</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>42,329</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Archdiocese of Saigon covered a vast area of 48,522 square kilometres, encompassing not only metropolitan Saigon, but also thirteen other provinces.75 Many dioceses were subsequently formed either in whole or part from the territory of Saigon;

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73 The Dioceses of Hue, Qui Nhon and Kontum constituting the ecclesiastical Province of Hue, and Saigon and Vinh Long forming the Province of Saigon. The Province of An Giang fell into the predominantly Cambodian diocese of Nam Vang (Phnom Penh); “Một Giáo Sư”, Giáo Hội Công Giáo, 3:30.

74 Compiled from Missioni Cattoliche, 274-87.

75 Đồng Nai Thường, Bình Thuận, Bà Rịa, Biên Hòa, Thủ Đấu Một, Tây Ninh, Gia Định, Chợ Lớn, Gò Công, Tân An, Mỹ Tho, and parts of Sa Dec and Long Xuyên; “Một Giáo Sư,” Giáo Hội Công Giáo, 3:33.
Cần Thơ (1955), Long Xuyên (1960), Mỹ Tho (1960), Đà Lạt (1960), Xuân Lộc (1966), Phú Cường (1966), Phan Thiết (1975), and Bà Rịa (2005). Saigon was not a primarily urban diocese; in 1900, there were only eight parishes in Saigon city, and in 1954 (before the transmigration), twenty one. In 1939, after the diocese of Vĩnh Long was split off, there were 82,375 Catholics, served by 119 priests (39 missionaries and 80 local clergy), spread across 58 parishes and 152 sub-parishes. By the start of 1954, the number of Catholics had grown to 136,910, (3.42% of the total population of 4 million) served by 182 priests (147 diocesan, 37 religious). In the period subsequent to the transmigration, the Archdiocese of Saigon was to see an explosive growth in the number of Catholics, which transformed the Archdiocese.

The French MEP bishop, Jean Cassaigne, who had been Bishop of Saigon since February 1941, resigned in September 1955, at the very height of the Church’s effort to resettle the bàc di cu. He was replaced on November 30, 1955, by the first Vietnamese Bishop of Saigon, Simon Nguyễn Văn Hiền. Bishop Hiền was a native of Nhu Lỳ in Quảng Trị province, nearby to the Bến Hải River that separated North from South under the Geneva Agreement, and served in the Diocese of Hue until his appointment to Saigon. He transferred to the suffragan diocese of Bà Rịa upon its establishment in 1960.

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76 Công Giáo và Dân Tộc. Công Giáo sau qua trình 50 năm, 145. The Diocese of Bà Rịa – Vũng Tàu, established in 2005, was in turn broken off from Xuân Lộc.
77 As to the 1900 figure, see Bùi Đức Sinh, Lịch Sử Giáo Hội, 415; as to 1954 figure, see “Một Giáo Sứ,” Giáo Hội Công Giáo, 3:306
78 ‘Một Giáo Sứ,’ Giáo Hội Công Giáo, 3:33. Figures are not provided for the total population, so the Catholic ratio cannot be calculated. However, immediately prior to the formation of Vĩnh Long Diocese, there were 128,375 Catholics in a population of 2,700,000, a ratio of 4.75%; ibid., 3:30. Missioni Cattoliche calculates the Catholic population as at 1949 at 104,921 Catholics, with 132 priests, including thirty five foreign missionaries; 286-7.
79 ibid., 3:226.
81 Allegedly as a consequence of pressure exerted by Diệm, who had wanted the position to be given to his older brother Thục; Ellen J. Hammer, A Death in November: America in Vietnam, 1963 (New York:
The Archdiocese of Hue was diminished by the persecutions during the Văn Thàn and Càn Vương movements, although it had been largely replenished by the start of the twentieth century. Most Hue Catholics had settled in largely Catholic villages in the coastal hinterland, in parishes such as Đất Đô and Tam Tòa to the North, and Nước Ngọt and Lạng Cô, in Thừa Thiên province to the South of the city of Hue.

About a third of the Archdiocese fell to the north of the seventeenth parallel, and hence within the territory of the DRVN after the Geneva Agreement. This included the northern part of Quảng Trị province, and all of Quảng Bình to its north. Quảng Bình was the quê (homeland) of the Ngô Đình clan, including Ngô Đình Diệm, the President of the Republic of Vietnam from 1955 until 1963, and his older brother Ngô Đình Thục, Bishop of Vinh Long and later Archbishop of Hue. Ten thousand of Hue Archdioceses’ Catholics, thirty three of eighty three parishes, and 155 of its 376 sub-parishes, fell within this zone; but with most of its Catholic adherents fleeing to the southern part of the Archdiocese, this small central strip effectively became a ‘no-mans’ land’ for the Church, without effective ecclesiastical administration, from 1955 until 1975. The southern part of the Archdiocese encompassed the province of Thừa Thiên. In many ways, the Archdiocese shared a religious culture and tradition more bound to Vinh to its immediate north than to the other dioceses of the South.

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82 “Một Giáo Sư,” Giáo Hội Cộng Giáo, 3:44
83 An historian of the Archdiocese estimates that 4,000 square kilometres, out of a previous area of 12,227 square kilometres, was lost; Trần Quang Chu, Giáo Phần Huế, 150 Năm Thành Lập [150 Years of Establishment of the Diocese of Hue]. 3 vols, (Hue: Archdiocese of Hue, 2000), 3: 134.
84 Trần Quang Chu, Giáo Phần Huế, 3: 110. By 1938 statistics, it was estimated that 40% of Catholics in the Archdiocese fell within this zone; ibid., 140. Many Catholics in this zone had fled prior to 1954, as much of the area fell under Việt Minh control from 1945 onwards.
In 1939, the Diocese had 77,815 Catholics in a population of 820,000 (9.5%) across eighty three parishes and seven sub-parishes, served by 124 priests (including twenty six French missionaries). At the start of 1954, it was estimated that there were 78,503 Catholics in a population of 800,000 (9.81%). This included 174 priests (fifty nine members religious orders), serving 60 parishes. Jean-Baptiste Urrutia MEP had been Bishop of Hue since February 1948, and remained in that position until retiring in November 1960, when Bishop Thúc was appointed.

The diocese of Kontum was formed in 1932, then comprising the provinces of Kontum, Pleiku, and Buôn Mê Thuột, together with a small part of neighbouring Laos. It was of a fundamentally different nature from the other southern dioceses, in that until 1954, it was primarily a mission to the ethnic minorities residing in the mid-southern tablelands. By 1939, it had 24,525 Catholics (25,255 in 1949), of whom 19,192 (78.3%) were members of ethnic minorities, particularly the Bahnar, Sedang, Jarai and Rhade. They were served by twenty seven priests, of whom thirteen were French MEP, and fourteen were Vietnamese. By the start of 1954, the number of Catholics had grown to 29,528, served by forty seven priests. The Church in Kontum

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85 “Một Giáo Sứ,” Giáo Hội Công Giáo, 3:63. Missioni Cattoliche cites a Catholic population as at 1949 of 60,305, a decline of 23.2% on the 1939 figure. It is possible that war and famine, together with the excision of the northern section of the Archdiocese, accounts for this fall. But it seems unlikely, particularly given the rise in 1954 to 78,503.

86 ibid., 3:243. The decrease in population being explained by the cutting off of the Northern sector as outlined above.

87 ibid., 3: 243; including forty four missionaries.


89 Công Giáo và Dân Tộc, Công Giáo Việt Nam, 271.


91 “Một Giáo Sứ,” Giáo Hội Công Giáo, 3:43. Of the fourteen Vietnamese priests, three were members of the Bahnar minority; ibid. By 1949, there were thirty four priests, including seventeen missionaries.

92 Ibid., 3:237. A breakdown of the ratio between members of dân tộc thiểu số [ethnic minorities] and the ethnic majority (kinh) for early 1954 is not provided, but there is no reason to suppose that it differed markedly from the 1939 figure. Statistics as to Catholics as a proportion of the overall population in
was heavily reliant on lay catechists from the ethnic minorities, catechizing and conducting prayer services in the various minority languages; in 1939, there were 244 lay catechists, of whom only nineteen were from the ethnic majority (kinh). The resettlement of many báéc di cut in the diocese led not only to a vast increase in the Catholic population, but also a realignment of the ratio of ethnic minorities to kinh, the latter increasing from 21.7% to 53.3% of the Catholic population after the transmigration. The French MEP Paul Seitz was consecrated Bishop of Kontum on October 3, 1952, and remained in the position until 1975.

The diocese of Qui Nhơn was amongst the areas worst affected by the deprivations of the Văn Thành and Cân Vụtong movements; certainly the worst affected of all southern dioceses. Between 1884 and 1886, the Catholic population of the Diocese was reduced from 41,000 to 15,000. Until 1957, it consisted of the provinces of Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa and Ninh Thuan, covering an area of 34,000 square kilometres. In 1939, there were 68,233 Catholics (69,230 in 1949) in a population of 2.4 million (2.84%) served by twenty nine missionaries and eighty Vietnamese priests in fifty five parishes. By the start of 1954, there were 76,150 Catholics from a population of 2.7 million (2.82%), served by 118 priests in 67 parishes. Its bishop since January 1944 had been the French MEP Marcel Piquet;

Kontum Diocese in 1939 and early 1954 should be treated with extreme caution; the variation as to total population between 1939 (700,000) and early 1954 (300,000) is totally unrealistic, given that the diocese underwent no boundary changes during this period.

93 Ibid., 3:43.
95 He was one of the last foreign missionaries to be expelled after DRVN forces occupied the RVN in 1975.
97 In 1957, the southern part of the diocese was removed to become part of the new diocese of Nha Trang.
98 “Môt Giáo Sứ,” Giáo Hội Công Giáo, 3:41. In 1949, a total of 115 priests including twenty seven missionaries.
99 Ibid., 3:233.
when the new diocese of Nha Trang was formed to the south of Qui Nhơn in July 1957, Bishop Piquet transferred to become its inaugural bishop.  

The Diocese of Vĩnh Long, established in 1938 in the Mekong Delta region to the South of Saigon, bore some resemblance to the Red River Delta dioceses of the North, in that it was based around primarily agrarian communities with high concentrations of Catholics in a limited number of villages (such as Mắt Bạc, Cái Mòn, Cái Nhum, Chà Và, etc.), in turn within a relatively small area. It was comprised of the provinces of Vĩnh Long, Trà Vinh, and Bến Tre, together with some of the city of Cần Thơ. In 1939, there were 45,318 Catholics in a population of 860,000 (5.2%), with 47 Vietnamese priests and 3 French missionaries in thirty five parishes and 106 sub-parishes. By early 1954, there were 50,185 Catholics in a population of one million (5.57%), served by sixty eight priests. Its inaugural bishop, Pierre Ngô Đình Thục, served there until November 1961, when he returned to become the Archbishop of Hue. 

The remaining part of southern Vietnam, principally the province of An Giang, fell within the Cambodian-based diocese of Nam Vang (Phnom Penh). In 1939, the diocese had a Catholic population 94,846 from 4.5 million (2.1%), served by 106 priests (twenty five of them French MEP) in fifty three parishes. 61,923 of these Catholics

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102 Nguyễn Thế Thọai, Công Giáo Trên Quê Hương, 2:333.
103 “Một Giáo Sứ”, Giáo Hội Công Giáo, 3:33. Nguyễn Thế Thọai quotes, without attribution, figures of 60,000 Catholics from a population of 550,000; Công Giáo Trên Quê Hương, 2:333. In 1949, 42,329 Catholics with sixty one priests, all Vietnamese.
105 Công Giáo và Dân Tộc, Công Giáo Việt Nam, 342.
106 Which then included Châu Đốc and Long Xuyên.
lived in Vietnamese territory. By 1954, there were estimated to be 120,000 Catholics in a reported population of 4.5 million (2.66%) in forty nine parishes.

(c) The Church in the North


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108 It is unclear as to what proportion of the total population, the priests, or the parishes were located in Vietnam; the only differentiated figure provided is as to the Catholic population; ibid., 3:33.

109 ibid., 3:229. The totally stable total population figure between 1939 and 1954 (4.5 million), and the reduction in the number of parishes in a time of growth in the Catholic population, both seem suspect. Moreover, no 1949 figures are provided in Missioni Cattoliche.
The early French colonial period in Vietnam coincided with a mood within the universal Catholic church of hostility and suspicion towards other faiths; a mood which particularly characterized the pontificates of Pius IX (1846-78) and Pius X (1903-1914). In this worldview, non-Christian society was a danger from which Christians had to be protected lest they fell back into pagan practice; ‘neophytes’ in mission lands were judged particularly vulnerable to this possibility, even when their families had been Christians for several generations.

In the North, this spiritual isolationism was compounded by a fear of physical attack from the **löông**; the period of persecution, whilst concluded by the turn of the twentieth century, was still a much fresher memory than in the South, and much of the central region, and the complex web of political, religious and social issues which had caused the conflict in the first place remained largely unresolved. Indeed, the advent of French colonial annexation, whilst suppressing physical attacks, only served to exacerbate resentment against a Catholic minority which was regarded as being generally in league with the colonial oppressors.

It was in these circumstances that the French bishops in Tonkin moved to further consolidate and isolate the Catholic communities under their jurisdiction. In his 1997 work on the Catholic village of **Lưu Phượng** (which adjoins the Cathedral Parish of Thời Điện), Nguyễn Hồng Dương wrote:

In a pastoral letter of August 24, 1893, to the dioceses of the North-West Province[^110], the Archbishop of Hanoi, Pierre-Marie [Gendreau] Đặng, instructed that ‘in any village with a Catholic population, you must establish a Catholic **giáp** especially for service, and the organization of funerals’.[^111] In the

[^110]: i.e., the dioceses of Hanoi and Vinh; Thời Điện was at that time a part of the Archdiocese of Hanoi.
[^111]: The term ‘**giáp**’ is difficult to define with precision. It carries the implication of a confraternity, or mutual assistance group, possibly with a spiritual or religious basis, but also suggests some form of residential proximity, like a neighbourhood.
same letter, the Archbishop wrote that, rather than sharing the property of the village, there should be a separation of Catholics and non-Catholics...

The separation of Catholic and non-Catholic ‘giáp’ relied on the principle *gián tổng luật, giáo* [identify and separate the non-Catholics and Catholics]. In the above villages, including Lưu Phượng, when a number of people decided to follow Catholicism, they would adopt the guidelines established by the synod of clergy, and split off to form their own *giáp*. Before the establishment of the *giáp*, the Catholic believers would be scattered throughout the non-Catholic population. But after the *giáp* was formed, the Catholics came together to reside and earn a living in a particular zone. The aim of this aggregation was to create a small community living in proximity to each other, so that the laity could support each other to keep the faith, with advantages for religious activities, and enabling the avoidance of contact with traditional religions and beliefs, which Catholicism prior to the Second Vatican Council regarded as ‘đạo rôi’ [confused religions; i.e., paganism].

Dương contrasted this self-imposed segregation of Northern Catholics with the situation in the South:

In the South, the situation in the villages was much less disciplined, because there were far less Catholics. Consequently, it was impossible to have special Catholic *giáp*, but the issue of ‘identify and separate the non-Catholics and Catholics’ was still recurrent. A number of clergy, such as the Franciscan José Carcaca came to the South, not to evangelize, but to locate pre-existent Catholics scattered through various places, and gather them together in small groups, or as small parishes. Thủ Đức parish (Hồ Chí Minh City) was established in 1879, but never had a *giáp*. The establishment of parishes [in the South] relied on gathering Catholics and concentrating them in districts belonging to parishes already in existence.

The process of aggregation of Northern and North-Central Catholics into wholly or largely Catholic villages or hamlets [*làng công giáo*], already more advanced than in the South, now took on a new impetus. Duncanson described them thus:

Henceforward, the compact, as far as possible self-sufficient parish became the unit of Catholicism in Vietnam, and its evolution was undoubtedly one of the

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successful consequences of the secular character of the French mission. Like the similar though less numerous xù khuôn (on which it may have in part been modelled), the Chrétienté offered the converts mutual support against bullies, extortionate moneylenders, and the bailiffs of absentee landlords, in a land where the government could not yet be counted on to keep order or uphold the law, and it afforded that organization for mutual defence against both brigandage and abuse of authority which other Vietnamese, especially in Cochinina, sought in occult sects or the Chinese in secret societies.113

This is not to say that the process of aggregation subsumed the entirety of the Northern Church. In the cities, particularly in Hanoi, Catholics were spread throughout the urban areas, and were strongly represented amongst the Francophone middle classes, and in the professions, civil administration, and academia. In the countryside, too, not all Catholics were gathered into Catholic settlements in the manner that the bishops had wished; some continued to live dispersed amongst the lãng in a manner similar to the majority of their southern counterparts. However, most followed the wishes of their church leaders. Even today, the remnants of largely or wholly Catholic settlements can be seen scattered throughout the North; in the surrounding environs of Hanoi, such as Hà Tây and Hà Nam; in Bắc Ninh, Trung Hòa, Thái Bình, Thanh Hòa, and many other places.114 But there were three dioceses in which the aggregation of Catholics became particularly marked: Phát Diệm, Bùi Chu, and Vinh.

Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu

The best known aggregations of Northern Catholics were those in the dioceses of Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu.115 The two areas adjoin one another in the lower Red River Delta, separated by the Dày River. Because of this proximity, they are often wrongly treated


114 Although lãng công giáo did exist in these dioceses; in Thanh Hóa, for example, see Adams, Nina Shapiro, “The Meaning of Pacification; Thanh Hoa Under French Rule, 1885-190” (PhD Thesis, Yale University, 1978), 101.

115 Biographies of the bishops of Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu as at 1954 are provided in the following chapter.
by commentators as a generic, unitary entity; sometimes even their name is conflated in Vietnamese down to ‘Bùi Phát’. However, this conceals significant differences in the religious development of the two dioceses.

**TABLE 2.5**
THE NORTHERN CHURCH AS AT 1949

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIOCESE</th>
<th>AREA (SQ. KM.)</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>LAITY</th>
<th>PRIESTS</th>
<th>LEADERSHIP</th>
<th>Missionaries</th>
<th>Administration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>1679</td>
<td>194,973</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>French MEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiphong</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>126,566</td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Spanish OP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bắc Ninh</td>
<td>24,700</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>58,283</td>
<td>87</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Spanish OP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hưng Hòa,</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td>68,000</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>French MEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lang Sơn</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>4,964</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>French OP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phát Diệm</td>
<td>1,787</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>99,904</td>
<td>162</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Vietnamese Cistercian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bùi Chu</td>
<td>1,271</td>
<td>1848</td>
<td>183,476</td>
<td>181</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Vietnamese Secular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thái Bình</td>
<td>2,270</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>116,200</td>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Spanish OP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanh Hóa</td>
<td>11,138</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>60,443</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>French MEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinh</td>
<td>24,500</td>
<td>1846</td>
<td>167,469</td>
<td>212</td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>French MEP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phát Diệm diocese covers an area of about 1,700 square kilometres; it comes almost entirely within the province of Ninh Bình. In 1949, the church claimed that 30.2% of the population of the diocese was Catholic, the highest of all of the dioceses of Vietnam. The actual concentration of Catholics within the diocese was even more marked. The vast majority of Phát Diệm Catholics fell within two separated areas. The smaller of these is in the North-west of the diocese, in the current-day district of Gia Viễn, where a number of wholly or substantially Catholic villages such as Đong

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116 For example, a bắc di cư parish, formerly a settlement camp, in District three of Hồ Chí Minh City, bears the name ‘Bùi Phát’.

117 Compiled from *Missioni Cattoliche*, 274-87.

118 A very small section in the north-west comes within the province of Hòa Bình.

119 Compiled from *Missioni Cattoliche*, 274-87:
Chữ and Mười Giáp can still be found. The larger area, in the south-east of the
diocese, is the district of Kim Sơn, where the Cathedral Parish of Phát Diệm is located.

Map 5. Ninh Bình Province. Ninh Bình is almost contiguous with the diocese
of Phát Diệm, save that the North East corner of the diocese takes in part of
Hòa Bình province. From Lê Phước Dũng (ed.), Tạp Bản Đồ Hành Chính
Việt Nam [Vietnam administrative atlas] (Hanoi: NXB Ban Do, 2005), 37.

Even now, the population of Kim Sơn is more than 75% Catholic; it was close to 90%
Catholic before the transmigration.¹²⁰ Much of Kim Sơn, which is a low-lying, wet-rice
growing area, was previously marshlands reclaimed under a scheme implemented by
Phật Diệm’s first parish priest, Trần Lục (commonly known as ‘Cụ Sáu’, or ‘Mister
Six’).¹²¹ Nearly all of Phát Diệm’s Catholics resided in agricultural, fishing and craft

¹²⁰ Interview with Vũ Ngọc Châu, Head of the People’s Committee, Kim Sơn district, September 2003.
¹²¹ Monsignor Lục was also responsible for the construction of Phát Diệm's remarkable Sino-Vietnamese
style Church, which whilst finished in 1899, was only raised to Cathedral status in 1924.
villages; Phàt Diệm itself was only a small village, and the two principal urban centres within the diocese, Ninh Bình and Tâm Điểm, lay outside of the area of Catholic concentration, and held only small Catholic populations. In 1939, Phàt Diệm had a Catholic population of 110,744, purportedly falling by 1949 to 99,904 before reaching 111,000 in 1954.\footnote{Compiled from Công Giáo và Dân Tộc, Công Giáo Sầu Quả Trình, and Missioni Cattoliche. That the middle figure comes from Missioni Cattoliche may explain the apparent discrepancy. On the other hand, it may indicate the influx of refugees from Việt Minh controlled areas.}

The entire diocese of Bụi Chu, which nowadays covers 1,073 square kilometres, lies within the province of Nam Định. Not all of Nam Định, however, is in Bụi Chu; the city of Nam Định, and most of the north-west part of the province, is in the Archdiocese of Hanoi. Even more than Phàt Diệm, most of the Catholic population of Bụi Chu live in small agricultural and fishing villages; the diocese lacks any significant urban centre. But unlike Phàt Diệm, nearly all of the districts with large concentrations of Catholics are adjacent to one another.\footnote{Namely Nam Trực, Trực Ninh, Xuân Trường, Giáo Thư, and Hải Hậu.} In 1939, some 24.5\% of the population of the diocese were Catholics.\footnote{“Một Giáo Sứ,“ Giáo Hội Công Giáo, 3:176. Missioni Cattoliche does not provide a new total population figure for Bụi Chu, hence a computation on the 1949 figures is not possible.} In 1939, Bụi Chu had a Catholic population of 183,476, and 209,000 in 1954.\footnote{Compiled from Công Giáo và Dân Tộc, Công Giáo Sầu Quả Trình.}

Phàt Diệm was established as a diocese in 1901; until then, it had formed part of the Archdiocese of Hanoi. As such, it falls within the North-West Ecclesiastical Province of the Vietnamese Catholic Church, which was founded by French MEP clergy, whereas Bụi Chu, established as a diocese in 1844, falls within the North-East Province, which was under the control of Spanish Dominicans.\footnote{The boundary between them being both the diocesan and the provincial boundary.} This led to significant differences between the two dioceses in areas such as ritual, devotional prayers, and
parochial organization.\textsuperscript{127} For example, in the period prior to the Second Vatican Council, every Vietnamese diocese had its own prayer book. So, whilst the Tridentine liturgy, particularly in the Eucharist, may have imposed the same Latin texts throughout the Catholic world, the devotions and rituals which formed such a significant part of ‘domestic’ Catholic life differed from diocese to diocese. Those practised in Phát Đệm were quite different to those used in Bùi Chu. Other differences also mark out the micro-cultures of the two dioceses. For example, the architectural style of most of the older churches in Phát Đệm diocese are either French or Sino-Vietnamese in inspiration, whereas those in Bùi Chu often harken back to Spanish influences.

Similar considerations affected the clerical structures of the two dioceses. The \textit{Société de Mission Étrangères de Paris} was a clerical missionary society, with no canonical status as either monks or friars. They therefore lived as parochial clergy, and had as one of their stated aims the development of an indigenous parish clergy who, rather than becoming members of the Society, would become diocesan (or secular) clergy with stability in the diocese, accountable only to the diocesan Bishop.\textsuperscript{128} In Phát Đệm, this had the effect of ensuring that the clergy came under the effective control of the local diocesan authorities. Phát Đệm diocese had no French bishop since 1935, its second Bishop, Jean-Baptiste Nguyễn Bá Tông, consecrated in 1933, was the first Vietnamese-born Bishop.\textsuperscript{129} By 1939, only one of its 112 priests was a foreign missionary, and two of 159 by the start of 1954.\textsuperscript{130}

\textsuperscript{127} As to particular Dominican devotions, see “Một Giáo Sư,” \textit{Giáo Hội Công Giáo}, 2:356.
\textsuperscript{128} ‘Stability’ is a canonical term meaning permanence of residency and ministerial service.
\textsuperscript{129} He served for two years as auxiliary bishop to Bishop Marcou, before assuming control of Phát Đệm diocese in 1935.
By contrast, the Spanish Dominicans who administered Bùi Chu were friars, living in common in accordance with the rule of St. Dominic, rather than as diocesan clergy. Whilst the Dominicans also sought to attract indigenous clergy, they recruited some local men into the Dominican order, rather than as parochial clergy for the diocese. By the start of 1939, of the 140 priests in Bùi Chu, seventy three were diocesan clergy, the remainder Dominican friars. But with the consecration in that year of Dominic Hồ Ngọc Cân as the first Vietnamese, non-Dominican bishop of Bùi Chu, most of the foreign Dominicans left, so that by the time of the transmigration, the clergy of Bùi Chu were wholly Vietnamese and diocesan. However, Spanish Dominican culture and practice remained a potent presence.

Some writers have sought to characterize the ‘Spanish Catholicism’ to be found in Bùi Chu and the other Spanish-Dominican provinces of the North-West as qualitatively different to that in the French-controlled dioceses throughout the rest of Vietnam; ascribing to it such terms as ‘harsh’, ‘unremitting’ and even ‘fanatical’. Bernard Fall recounts of Ngô Đình Diệm:

To a French interlocutor who wanted to emphasize Diệm’s bonds with French culture by stressing ‘our common faith’, Diệm was reported to have answered calmly ‘You know, I consider myself rather as a Spanish Catholic’, i.e., a spiritual son of a fiercely aggressive and militant faith rather than of the easygoing and tolerant approach of Gallic Catholicism.

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131 Ibid., 3:176. Of the remaining Dominican friars, forty worked not for the diocese, but for the Pontifical Seminary at Quan Phuông; ibid.
132 As in many ways it does to the present.
133 Fall, Two Viet-Nam, 236. Given that Diệm had never resided for any significant period in a Spanish-controlled diocese, the story is probably either apocryphal, or designed to indicate his distance from the French colonial regime. In any case, the suggestion that Gallic Catholicism, at least as practised by the MEP missionaries in Vietnam was lax, is a caricature. There were however, significant cultural and ecclesiastical differences between the French and Spanish models.
Map 6. Nam Định Province. Nam Định is almost contiguous with the diocese of Bùi Chu, save that the North East corner of the province (including the city of Nam Định) lies in the Archdiocese of Hanoi.


Whilst it is certainly true that Catholicism in the four Dominican dioceses of the North-East had their own particular cultural characteristics, there is little empirical evidence to suggest that the fervour of their faith transcended that of their fellows across the Đáy River in Phát Diệm. In the period from 1945 to 1954, the two dioceses operated as essentially as autonomous entities with both temporal and spiritual jurisdiction in the absence of effective government presence there outside of the church, hence earning them the epithet 'theocracies'.
Vinh and the North-Central region.

There is inevitable confusion in terminology when the dichotomy of ‘North’ and ‘South’ Vietnam is conflated with the trichotomy of ‘North’, ‘Central’, and ‘South’. The North [Đàng Ngoài] represented the traditional heartland of the Việt people, as against the South [Đàng Trong], the frontier region of southern expansion resulting from the Nam Tiến [March Southwards] of the fifteenth to the eighteen centuries. This duality was also found in the North-South division of control between the Trịnh and Nguyễn Lords in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. And, from the Geneva Agreement in 1954 through until thống nhất [reunification] in 1976, the North-South divide represented the de facto political division of the Vietnamese nation.

Yet in many ways, this bipartite division represents an artificial construct, superimposed upon the more natural cultural and historical division between Bắc Kỳ [the North], Trung Kỳ [the Centre], and Nam Kỳ [the South]. This division was given political status in French colonial times under the guise of Tonkin, Annam and Cochin China respectively. The Catholic Church in Vietnam also recognized the efficacy of the North, Central and Southern divide; from 1844 onwards, the dioceses of Vietnam were grouped into three ecclesiastical provinces of Hanoi, Hue and Saigon.

The Diocese of Vinh is centred on the provinces of Nghệ An and Hà Tĩnh, and the Northern part of Quảng Bình. It is geographically, economically, and culturally discrete from the Catholic concentrations in the Lower Red River delta. Covering an area of 24,000 square kilometres, its Catholic population as at 1939 of 166,364 (167,149 in 1949) constituted 10.0% of the total, served by 219 priests, twenty six of them French MEPS. By the start of 1954, Catholic numbers had increased to 180,000

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135 Joiner, Politics of Massacre, 30.
(unchanged at 10.0% of the population), served by a diminished total of 195 priests.\textsuperscript{137} The decrease is presumably accounted for by expulsions and departures from Việt-Minh controlled areas, most particularly of MEP missionaries. Much of the area of the diocese is characterized by poor soils which make wet-rice farming marginal or impossible; economic conditions in the North-central coastal strip have always been difficult.

The area is known for producing national figures of note, such as Phan Bội Châu, Hồ Chí Minh, Võ Nguyên Giáp, and Ngô Đình Diệm; it is also known as a crucible of political ferment, through such events as the Nghệ An Soviet of 1930-1, and the 1956 Quỳnh Lưu uprising, the latter being a rebellion by Catholics in an area just north of the city of Vinh against DRVN policies and practices, most particularly relating to the land reform campaign.\textsuperscript{138} Most of the diocese of Vinh had been occupied by Việt Minh forces since 1945; as will be seen, relations there between the Việt Minh and the Church were particularly difficult.\textsuperscript{139}

This stridently independent character of the North-central coast also marked the Catholic Church in the diocese of Vinh. It was if anything more strongly influenced by the MEP than those dioceses further to the north, although by the time of the transmigration, the line of French Bishops dating back to 1846 had been broken by the appointment in 1951 of Jean Baptiste Trần Hữu Đức as the first Vietnamese, non-MEP bishop.\textsuperscript{140} As with other dioceses, Vinh Catholics had their own particular prayers and devotions, as well as their own pantheon of martyrs and heroes from the period of the

\textsuperscript{137} ibid., 245.
\textsuperscript{139} French forces occupied Đồng Hới and the adjacent parts of Quảng Bình province.
\textsuperscript{140} “Một Giáo Sư,” Giáo Hội Công Giáo, 3:245. The diocese had been vacant for five years since the death of Bishop Eloy in July 1946.
persecutions, which in turn had their own local resonances. This strong local identity was carried over to the transmigrated Church of Vinh in the South; it retained one of the strongest and longest-lasting separated entities amongst the bắc di cưt dioceses operating in parallel with their Southern territorial counterparts.\textsuperscript{141}

However, the Church in Vinh also shared some important characteristics with dioceses such as Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu.\textsuperscript{142} First, it was an almost entirely rural Church; the proportion of Catholics in the principal urban centres of Vinh and Hà Tĩnh was relatively low.\textsuperscript{143} Second, and more significantly, most of these rural Catholics lived together in aggregations of wholly or largely Catholic villages. As in the North, the structure of these village-based parishes had a profound influence not only on the spiritual lives of their inhabitants, but on their economic, political and social existence as well; influences that were to be carried over into the transplanted bắc di cưt parishes in the South.

\textit{Other Northern Dioceses}

It should not be supposed that most of the Catholics in the North lived in the three dioceses of greatest concentration, namely Phát Diệm, Bùi Chu and Vinh. Whilst these three dioceses had proportions of Catholics greater than elsewhere in Vietnam, they did not constitute the majority of the membership of the North Vietnamese Catholic church; in 1949, Catholics in the three dioceses accounted for only 41.8\% of the

\textsuperscript{141} For example, the Diocese of Vinh still retains a separate diocesan centre in Hồ Chí Minh City. The diocese of Thanh Hóa, to the immediate north of Vinh, can also be regarded as a North-Central entity, although it in many ways shares more in common with the lower Red River delta dioceses to its North than with Vinh. See Nguyễn Thế Thảo, Giáo Xã Trên Quê Hương, 2:386.

\textsuperscript{142} Though it shared much in common with the church in Quàng Trị in the northern parts of the Archdiocese in Hue.

\textsuperscript{143} This remains the case today. The diocese is centred not in Vinh City, but in the village of Xã Đoài, about fifteen kilometres to the north-west.
Catholic population of the ten northern dioceses. Dioceses such as Hanoi, Thanh Hóa, Thái Bình and Haiphong did not have the same proportion of Catholics as the theocracies, but their overall numbers meant that they were still significant contributors to the northern Catholic population, and ultimately, to the flow of bàéc di cơ from North to South in 1954-5.

The Archdiocese of Hanoi, the oldest of Vietnam’s dioceses, was founded in 1679, and was under continuous MEP patronage until Joseph-Maria Trinh Như Khuê was appointed as the first Vietnamese Archbishop of Hanoi in August 1950. As at 1949, the Archdiocese of Hanoi had, at 194,000, the highest Catholic population in Vietnam. However, as with its southern counterpart, Saigon, the Archdiocese covered a geographic area far larger than metropolitan Hanoi; it included the provinces of Hà Tây, Hà Nam, Hùng Yên, and parts of Hòa Bình and Nam Định. Although there was a significant number of middle class, Francophone Catholics attached to the parishes of the capital, the majority of the Archdiocese’s Catholics lived in làng Công Giáo in the rural areas. At that time, the Archdiocese also had the highest number of priests (210) and foreign missionaries (fifty five) of any diocese in Vietnam (see Table 2.1); most of the latter served in metropolitan Hanoi; for example, the Quebecois Redemptorists staffed a parish, and St. Sulpice Fathers the diocesan seminary.

The dioceses of Hưng Hóa (based on the present-day provinces of Lào Cai, Yên Bái, Sơn La, Lai Châu, Điện Biên and parts of Hà Tây, Vĩnh Phúc, and Hòa Bình) and Lạng Sơn (based on the present-day provinces of Lạng Sơn, and part of Hà Giang, Tuyên Quang, and Bắc Kạn), occupied the region near the North-west border with China. Christian evangelisation in both dioceses produced scant results; Lạng Sơn had

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144 Compiled from Missioni Cattoliche, 274-87.
145 Compiled from ibid., 276
146 Niên Giam 1964, 425-6.
the lowest Catholic population ratio in Vietnam, at 1.4% in 1949. Höng Hóa, established in 1895, was an MEP diocese, whilst Lạng Sơn, established in 1915, was in the custody of French Dominicans. At the time of the transmigration, both had French bishops; Jean Maizé MEP in Höng Hóa, and André Jacq OP in Lạng Sơn. However, Việt Minh control of much of the dioceses had for many years constricted their effective Episcopal oversight of the dioceses.

Bắc Ninh, founded in 1885, is based on the provinces to the immediate north and north-east of Hanoi. It fell within the North-East ecclesiastical province, and hence was controlled by the Dominicans, but since September 1950 had an indigenous Bishop, Dominic Hoàng Văn Đoàn, together with eighty priests, including twelve Spanish Dominicans. Here too, the Catholic population was small at 4.5% of the 1939 total, rising to 4.9% in 1949.

The diocese of Haiphong was also in Dominican control, but with a Vietnamese Dominican Bishop, Joseph Trưởng Cao Đài OP, from January 1953. Formed at the same time as Hanoi in 1679, it also shared with Hanoi the characteristic of having most of its Catholic population based in làng công giáo (principally in the province of Hải Dương), outside of the major city of Haiphong on which it is based. The Catholic population accounted for 6.6% of the 1949 total.

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147 Ibid., 279-80.
148 From the Dominican’s Province of Lyon, in France, as distinct from the Spanish in the North-East Province.
149 As to the situation of Bishop Maizé, see “Archives des MEP – Maizé”, archivesmep.mepasie.org/recherche/notices.php?numero=3272&nom (accessed January 20, 2007). The Cathedral and compound was abandoned on November 2, 1950, and Bishop Maizé and his officials moved to Sơn Tây, a town closer to Hanoi; see Nguyễn Thế Thảo, Cổng Giáo Trên Quê Hương, 2:320.
150 Compiled from Missioni Cattoliche, 275
Thái Bình, to the North and East of Bùi Chu, had a Catholic population of 8.24% as at 1939, the highest ratio in Vietnam after Phát Đím, Bùi Chu, and Vinh. Founded in 1936, its second Bishop, the Spanish Dominican Santos Ubierna OP, was still bishop of the diocese as at 1954, assisted by eighty three priests, of whom nineteen were Spanish Dominicans. Most Thái Bình Catholics lived in làng công giáo, which were in effect an extension of the Catholic heartland of Bùi Chu. But 1949, its Catholic population had risen to 116,200.

Thanh Hóa, to the South of Thái Bình, spanned the area from the Red River Delta dioceses in the north to Vinh in the North-Central region, with a Catholic proportion of only 4.3% in 1939, purportedly falling to 3.6% in 1949. Formed in 1932, its foundation bishop, the French MEP Louis de Cooman, was still in place as at 1954, but after a period of house arrest, he returned to France on March 24, 1954. The diocese was under effective occupation by Việt Minh forces from the late 1940’s onwards, and his capacity for effective oversight of the diocese, including its seventy one priests (as at 1954), was limited.

(d) Strategies, Structures and Organization in the Northern and Southern Churches.

By the start of the twentieth century, the discrepancy in development between the Northern and Southern churches necessitated different modes of development, which in turn produced differing micro-cultures in such areas as catechetical and evangelical...

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151 As to the 1939 figure, see“Một Giáo Sứ,” Giáo Hội Công Giáo, 3:139; as to the 1949 figure,MISSIONI CATTOLICHE, 285. The sudden fall seems suspicious.
152 Nguyễn Thế Thoại, Công Giáo Trên Quê Hương, 2:328.
153 “Rapport Annuel des Évêques, 1951, Viet Nam, Thanh Hoa,” [Annual Episcopal Report for Thanh Hoa Diocese, 1951] http://archivesmep.mepasie.org/annuaire/vietnam/rapports-eveques/1900-1999/1951-07.htm, accessed January 20, 2007. No figures are available as to how many of the priests of the diocese as at 1954 were foreign missionaries; however, at 1939, the figure was forty three out of ninety six.
strategy, parish structure, and parish governance. In the South, the Church had for much of the nineteenth century relied on a catechetical method similar to that employed by Alexandre de Rhodes in the North in the seventeenth; namely, to send a team of lay catechists to spend some weeks in a private house, seeking out those who might be interested in Christianity, and then putting between ten and thirty neophytes through a course of intensive catechesis, followed by the sacrament of baptism.\textsuperscript{154} It was hoped that this would then sustain them in their faith when they returned to their own homes, which in the majority of cases would be far removed from a church, a priest, or regular celebration of the sacraments. Small groups would sustain their spiritual lives by house prayers and devotions, with periodic visits to often distant churches to receive the sacraments. For this purpose, a team of lay Vietnamese catechists was maintained by the Southern dioceses, with a number allocated to each priest.\textsuperscript{155}

By contrast, the Church in the North depended largely on more stable structures; a Church building would be erected in a given place, and Catholics encouraged to reside around it. Whilst lay catechists (and religious sisters) were employed in the North as in the South, they were expected to have stability in a given locale, rather than being employed in mobile squads. These small Catholic communities were termed \textit{họ đạo} (sub-parishes), and each was identified by both a locality name and/or a religious patron. Each parish was comprised of several \textit{họ đạo}; sometimes a considerable number. For example, at the start of the twentieth century, the Parish of Bảo Đáp, in Bùi Chu diocese, was comprised of thirty five \textit{họ đạo}.\textsuperscript{156} \textit{Họ đạo} in the North were

\textsuperscript{155} In the diocese of Saigon in mid-nineteenth century, the average was four catechists per priest; Vũ Thành, “Đạo Công Giáo,” 406.
\textsuperscript{156} Nguyễn Hồng Dưỡng, “Tìm hiểu tổ chức xã, họ đạo của Công Giáo ở Miền Bắc từ Thế Kỷ XVII đến đầu Thế kỷ XX” [A Study of the organization of parishes and sub-parishes in North Vietnam from the Seventeenth to the start of the Twentieth Century], \textit{NCLS} 4 (2000), 31.
further broken down into small neighbourhood blocks know as dâu dạo. Düong described this structural pattern as ‘a form organized in a military method, an organizational model created by foreign missionaries in Vietnam; their establishment also relied on the traditional form of the Vietnamese village’.  

More general studies of northern Vietnamese village structures confirm Düong’s latter observation; the pattern of dâu dạo, hô dạo and xâ dạo replicate the traditional pattern of ngõ, xóm and xã as the basic geographic units of the rural North. As such, the Catholic mode of organization was far from extrinsic or superimposed, but instead simply represented a ‘Catholicisation’ of familiar, pre-existent forms of Vietnamese social organization.

As individual hô dạo developed and expanded, they could combine together to form a parish (xâ dạo, or giáo xã) and have their own permanent, stable clergy. Until then, clergy would attend at the Church or chapel of the hô dạo to dispense the sacraments intermittently; as priests became more numerous, curates (assistant priests) within a parish would be allocated to different hô dạo, ensuring that a permanent clerical presence was a far more prominent characteristic of the northern Church than in the South. Even these terms differentiated the northern church from its southern counterpart; what were called hô dạo in the South were more akin to xâ dạo in the North; widespread groupings of Catholics dispersed over a large geographical area.

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157 Ibid, 32.
158 Ibid., 32
160 Haas’s assertion that the lăng cống giáo were ‘different from the centuries-old, organically grown Vietnamese village with a history of its own’, is not sustainable, as it makes no allowance for Catholic adaptation of pre-existent forms; Haas and Nguyễn Bảo Công, Vietnam – The Other Conflict, 11-12.
162 Ibid., 31; Ramsay, “Missionaries, Priests, and Mandarins,” 111. Yet another set of terms was employed to identify parishes, sub-parishes, and other localized Church structures in the Dominican-controlled dioceses of the North-east; Düong, “Tìm Hiểu Tô chức Xứ”, 31-2.
This sense of Catholic identity in the Northern làng công giáo was further consolidated via Catholic sodalities, or lay associations, which proliferated in the North, as elsewhere in the Catholic world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some of these were officially recognized and sanctioned by the Church hierarchy and came with an ostensible spiritual, devotional or pastoral purpose. Others were more secretive, unauthorized fraternal associations of mutual aid amongst fellow Catholics. In this latter category, the most important in Northern Vietnam was the giáp, the unofficial, almost covert groupings which Nguyễn Hoàng Dương identified in his study of the parish of Lưu Phượng. These fraternities (they were male bodies) consolidated the sense of communal Catholic identity; not only in geographic proximity to one another, but in a sense of mutual inter-dependence which the giáp fostered. As with other cultural norms employed in Northern Catholic villages, giáp represented a convergence between universal Catholic customs and structures, and those to be found in rural societies of Northern Vietnam. Unofficial and secretive mutual aid societies, often formed to ease existence in hostile religious environments, can be found in many parts of the Catholic world. Similarly, Giáp were to be found throughout the rural north of Vietnam, not simply in Catholic communities. In the village of Lưu Phượng, for example, Catholic giáp [giáp dạo] run in parallel with non-Catholic equivalents [giáp luồng]. But because these particular giáp were open only to Catholics, this axiomatically meant the exclusion of non-Catholics. As members of the giáp were encouraged to live close to one another around the church of the họ đạo, these

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163 For example, one such association of considerable importance, particularly in Dominican dioceses, was the Nhà Đức Chúa Trời [Household of God]. For a discussion of this organization, and its multitude of official roles and offices, see Nguyễn Thế Thảo, Công Giáo Trên Quê Hương, 2:279-80.

164 See pp. 40-1 above.

165 For example, the Catholic fraternities of the Knights of Columbus in the United States, or the Knights of the Southern Cross in Australia, had similar beginnings and original aims.

166 Phan Huy Lê, Traditional Village, 76-89.

167 Nguyễn Hồng Dương, Lưu Phượng, 82.
communities became effectively wholly Catholic, the desired result of the Church’s policy in the North (according to Đỗ Thống) of physical, geographic separation of Catholics from non-Catholics. Catholic giáo were continued amongst bắc di cư communities after migration to the South, which perhaps exacerbated the separated nature of their existence within southern society.

It is therefore unsurprising that, within the micro-societies of the Northern Catholic heartland, socially segregated along religious lines at the behest of the Catholic hierarchy, the demarcation between ecclesiastical and civil leadership began to blur. Organizational structures used by the missionary Church to administer parishes proved readily adaptable to the Vietnamese social and administrative milieu. Indeed, the offices of lay leadership within a parish so paralleled those of the traditional Vietnamese village that there was often a convergence between civil and parochial office within Catholic settlements. As a diocesan history of Bùi Chu noted:

> Every họ đạo also has a number of associations, with men customarily known as trùm [chief] and câu [deputy chief] at its head, and a secretary and some other functionaries, in exactly the same manner as civil organizations. Each also appoints a number of zealous men to reinforce and look after the spiritual needs of catechumens, and to prepare them when they seek permission to receive the sacraments, and also to make arrangements with the clergy to provide the sacraments to them.

This parallel between civil and ecclesial organization was most marked in the diocese of Vinh, which employed a different organizational structure to the dioceses further north. These terms are still used in communities of bắc di cư from Vinh diocese.

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168 Ibid., 31.
169 Ramsay, Missionaries, Priests and Mandarins, 28.
170 Quoted in Nguyễn Hồng Đỗ, “Tìm hiểu tổ chức xã,” 33. As to the convergence of civil and religious governance in the Catholic village of Lưu Phượng, see Nguyễn Hồng Đỗ, Lưu Phượng, 99-104, 123-8.
gathered in the South. The lay committees which administered the *ho đao* also appropriated civil terms; in the North, they were called *ban chấp hành* [administrative committees] or in Vinh, *ban chức việc* [operations committees]. The *giáp* within the *ho đao* also had a separate organizational structure, separate from, but parallel to, that of the *ho đao*; it was not uncommon for the *hào mục*, *kỳ mục*, or *chức sắc* [village notables or elders] in a Catholic village to occupy the positions of leadership in the *ho đao*, the *giáp*, and the civil administration all at the one time. As Dương observed:

> The holders of civic positions in Catholic villages were drawn from these parish dignitaries. They participated in village management functions such as the division of public lands, the auction of ponds and lagoons, markets, the repair of roads, etc; the integration of life and faith was one of the successes of Catholicism at that time. It is possible to say that the traditional Vietnamese village had a great influence on the model of organization, roles and functions of organizations within Vietnamese Catholic parishes and their sub-units.

This is not to say that the *ho* and the *làng* [village] were regarded as the same juridical entity; to the contrary, both church and state adamantly maintained the importance of their distinctiveness. But when geographic aggregations of Catholics, brought together at the direction of their church, excluded all or most non-Catholics from their midst, the effect was to create a multitude of small theocracies. ‘Luật vua thua lệ làng’, runs the Vietnamese saying; ‘The law of the King loses out to the customs of the village’. And when village custom was determined by the homogeneity of its religious affiliation, then religion permeated all aspects of the villager’s lives. Catholicism became these villages’ principal *raison d’être*. The church building became the focal point of the village, replacing the *dinh* [communal house]. Catholic festivals, drawn largely from the universal Roman Calendar, supplanted or appropriated many local *lễ hội*.

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171 For instance, the head of the Parish Council of Hòa Phước Parish, in Bà Rịa diocese, a parish comprised largely of *bác đi cư* from Vinh, interviewed for the purpose of this study in 2006, referred to himself as the *trùm đạo*.

172 Dương, “Tìm Hiểu Tổ chức Xã”, 35. The nature of these religious offices also paralleled the nature, function and structure of functions in civil village leadership; as to these latter, see Lê, *Traditional Village*, 91.
Participation in Catholic liturgies and devotional practices similarly supplanted the traditional rites devoted to local deities or civic heroes.

Just as the fundamental structure of the Catholic villages, and the nature of their positions of leadership, were derived from pre-existent northern Vietnamese forms, so too the nature of the northern Catholic village as having a religious foundation was not unique. Relationships within villages were not predicated solely on economic relationships, geographic proximity, or ties of kinship. As Phan Huy Lê noted in his study of the traditional northern village, it was common spiritual pre-suppositions, the need to fulfil communal ritual and devotional obligations, and the sense of mutual spiritual interdependence (most particularly in relation to the veneration of ancestors) that gave the community of a village its sense of identity. Lê contrasted this to the situation in the southern and South-central villages (âp and xóm respectively), where organization was based on models imposed by feudal authorities, largely for the purpose of levying taxes.

Of course, the ‘new dispensation’ of missionary Catholicism also applied to the more scattered, sparsely-settled Catholics in the South. Catholics living in mixed communities, or as minorities amongst luang, were also called on by their Church to participate in Catholic practices, and abjure certain non-Catholic practices, particularly pertaining to prayer and ritual. Yet their situation was fundamentally different to that of their co-religionists in the ‘closed’ Catholic communities of Phát Diệm, Bùi Chu, and other Catholics regions of the North. They did not live within the confines of

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174 Ibid., 66
175 This is not to say that religious enclaves did not exist in the South. Two indigenous syncretistic religious sects, the Cao Đài in the South West, and the Hòa Hảo to their South, both existed in high concentrations, but limited geographic regions, in a similar demographic pattern to the Catholics in the North.
a wholly Catholic micro-society. Hence their faith, whilst no less strongly held, was less pervasive in its non-spiritual implications. Similarly, the fact that Vietnamese society around them did not share their religious beliefs was merely a reality to be encountered, rather than an omnipresent source of threat, persecution, and heresy, as it was often thought of in the North in the wake of the Cần Vương persecutions.

These considerations differentiated the roles of Catholic clergy in the North and South respectively. In the homosex of the North, the convergence of civic, economic and religious society, the lack of exposure to external, non-Catholic influences, the relative absence of civil government outside of church influence, the weak presence of Vietnam’s central authority within the village, and the parallel of village and parish organizational structures meant that whoever held authority within the parish was likely to hold it within the village. And in a Catholic village, the figure of authority in excelsis was the parish priest.

Consequently, the priests in the Northern xã đạo or homosex often took on the role of de facto civic leaders, organizing village activities, including agricultural production, land distribution, and other economic activities. They acted as arbitrators of disputes, mediators with colonial authorities, organizers of self-defence, and invokers of French protection against hostile luông from the outside world. Duncanson described their role as mediators with the French administration:

...the Chrétiéntés were encouraged in the autarky desired by their priests, and in practice – though not in law – were often administered in questions affecting land, in the payment of taxes and performance of obligatory services, through their parish priest, with whom alone the authorities – very often, that is, the French authorities over the head of the Vietnamese – would deal, as they would with the notables of a xã or with the headman of a bang.176

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176 Duncanson, Government and Revolution, 90-1.
Their self-appointed jurisdiction took them well outside the realm of spiritual and ecclesiastical leadership, and into that of virtual theocratic rule. Nguyên Hồng Dương described the breadth of their role and status:

Outside of liturgical matters, the priest would, via the parish council, know the material and spiritual reality of the lives of his parishioners, and would intervene in both of these spheres. For example, the priest would supply rice (or money) for those parishioners whose economic life was lacking. He would be called in to resolve conflicts between members of the parish, and to reconcile them to one another. Through the parish council, the priest had a hold over the life of every members of the parish, especially those who were not living the faith properly, by admonishing them and setting them right.

When the parish was close to [contiguous with] the village, many functions of the Parish Council were close to those of the Council of notables [of the village], so that the priest, when necessary, in intervening with this group, often intervened in the economic, social, and sometimes the political aspects [of the village].

For example after the Ngự Hầm canal was dammed, the parish priest of Phát Diệm decided that only Catholic residents would be allowed to take up ground near the dyke. In order to have the material basis for building a church at Phương Nghi, the Parish priest intervened to ensure that all of the villages in the sub-parish did not have to submit taxes for three years. In the time of the Parish Priest of Phương Thượng, Rev. Anton Nguyễn Thế Vinh, a road was built two metres wide running from the church to the Ấn River.\(^{177}\)

Few Southern clergy emulated this role of secular potentate. Almost all of the considerations referred to above as the basis for northern clerical authority simply did not exist for the majority southern Catholics. This does not mean to say that southern Catholics did not respect their priestly leadership, nor that such leadership was anything other than assertive and demanding. But for southern Catholics, the parameters of that leadership, and of the clerical role in general, were fairly clearly

\(^{177}\) Dương, Lâu Phường, 164-65.
defined, and despite some symbiosis between southern clerics and the Cochinchina colonial authorities, confined to matters in the spiritual and ecclesiastical realm.

Consequently, when the de facto partitioning of Vietnam in 1954 threw southern and northern Catholics into immediate proximity, they brought to this enforced relationship a very different understanding of what it meant to be Catholic, what it meant to deal with non-Catholics, and what it meant to be subject to clerical leadership.
3. Prelude to Departure

(a) Church leadership

The process of disentanglement of the Vietnamese Church from its European roots involved not only an estrangement between the majority of Vietnamese Catholics and the French colonial regime, to whom they had previously been viewed as subservient and dependent by many non-Catholic Vietnamese. It also involved a process of transfer of control within the Vietnamese Church from foreign missionaries (particularly the MEP) to an indigenous leadership. By the time of the transmigration, this process had borne considerable fruit. Of the ten functioning northern Bishops in early 1954, six were Vietnamese, with jurisdiction over approximately 77.3% of northern Catholics. This process of ‘indigenization’ of the Vietnamese episcopal hierarchy was to have far-reaching consequences at the time of 1954-5 transmigration. The rift between the Vietnamese Church and the nascent nationalist state was an essentially internecine struggle between competing Vietnamese nationalist entities, rather than the Church acting as clients of French colonialism, as it had so often been portrayed.

The partial victory of the local church over foreign control had come about as a consequence of considerable struggle in the pre-World War II years between the missionary bishops and the colonial administration on the one hand, and the indigenous Catholic laity and clergy, considerably aided by the intervention of the Holy See, on the other. Relations between the two had soured throughout the early part of the twentieth century. In part, this was because of the paternalistic attitudes of many French missionaries towards the local clergy and laity. This manifested itself at one

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178 Based on 1949 census figures, compiled from *Missioni Cattoliche*, 274-87.
179 Gheddo, 25-7.
level in small but cumulatively significant social practices; French clergy refusing to eat meals with local counterparts; a French bishop referring to his native priests as ‘peasants’; French clergy arranging for police harassment of local catechists who had displeased them, and so on.\textsuperscript{180} Whilst these irritants served to further sour relations between foreign missionaries and the local clergy and laity, the more significant cause of dissention lay in the opposition of the French bishops, in alignment with the colonial regime, to the appointment of a local Vietnamese Episcopacy.\textsuperscript{181} In this, the local clergy won the strong support of Rome which, pursuant to the policy of localization set forth in the encyclicals of Popes Benedict XV (\textit{Maximum Ilud}, 1919) and Pius XI (\textit{Rerum Ecclesiae}, 1926), gave strong backing to the replacement of foreign missionary bishops by Vietnamese clergy.\textsuperscript{182} Efforts to raise the standards of seminary education for Vietnamese candidates for priesthood, and the sending of an elite few to Rome for training, had increased the pool of viable local candidates to assume leadership roles. With support from above (the Vatican) and below (the majority of both lay and clerical Vietnamese Catholics), the development of a local Catholic leadership was to prove unstoppable.

The appointment to the Vietnamese Episcopacy of Jean-Baptiste Nguyễn Bá Tôn (Phát Diệm, 1933), Damien Hồ Ngọc Cân (Bùi Chu, 1935), Pierre-Martin Ngô Đình Thực (Vĩnh Long, 1938) and Jean-Marie Phan Đình Phùng (Phát Diệm, 1940), saw their elevation to the status of national celebrities, not only amongst Vietnamese


\textsuperscript{181} Nguyễn Thế Thảo, \textit{Công Giáo Trên Quê Hương}, 2:352

\textsuperscript{182} These were affirmed by Pius XII in \textit{Evangelii Praecones} (June 2, 1951); Phan Phát Huồn, \textit{Việt Nam Giáo Sứ}, 2:202-3. As to the process of introducing an indigenous Vietnamese episcopate, see Keith, “Annam Uplifted.” Roman support for the local clergy found form in the appointment in 1925 to the Imperial Court in Hue of an Apostolic Delegate (akin to a Nuncio) in the face of opposition from the French missionary bishops and the Colonial Administration. See Nguyễn Thế Thảo, \textit{Công Giáo Trên Quê Hương}, 2:309-10.
Catholics, but also in the wider community.\(^{183}\) This had two vital consequences for the development of Vietnamese Catholicism, particularly during the period of the 1954-5 transmigration. First, the four bishops, and such successors as Thaddeus Lê Hữu Tụ and Pierre Phạm Ngọc Chi in Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu respectively, were seen as icons of national pride; evidence of the capacity of Vietnamese to assume positions of stature and significance, made more piquant by the opposition of their colonial ‘masters’. No other religious figures of their era assumed such quasi-political significance in the quest for national autonomy. Through them, the Church could now be seen in a truly Vietnamese incarnation, not as something borrowed from elsewhere.

At the same time, the parallel development of an inculturated Vietnamese Catholic identity in such areas as art, literature, music, architecture and journalism in the pre-war period accentuated the sense that Catholicism was now constituent of, rather than extrinsic to, the Vietnamese cultural and religious mainstream.\(^{184}\)

The local Vietnamese bishops themselves, in their public pronouncements, gave emphasis to this ‘Vietnamization’ of Catholicism, and the Church’s role in the furtherance of national aspirations. In the 1930’s, an era prior to the emergent dominance of the Việt Minh, there were many contestant voices in the cause of Vietnamese nationalism, amongst whom the Vietnamese bishops were seen as being in the forefront. They made substantial inroads into the proposition that the Church was a colonialist, externally beholden entity.\(^{185}\) This novel proposition, that the fate of Vietnamese Catholicism was bound to the national destiny, was to become an underlying theme of both the transmigrated Church, and the Diệm government which sponsored it. Moreover, the Vietnamese Bishop’s role in the development of

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\(^{183}\) Charles Keith, “Annam Uplifted” (pending publication).


\(^{185}\) Phan Phát Huốn, for example, holds up Bishop Tổng’s consecration as a sign that the Church was not irredeemably European; Việt Nam Giáo Sư, 2: 201.
Vietnamese pre-World War II nationalism carved out for them a role which transcended the spiritual domain; they were seen as having a legitimate role to play in secular affairs. This may well have fed into willingness on the part of the public (particularly the Catholic public) to heed and emulate their example when Bishops as Tũ và Chi left for the South in 1954. That bishops should provide leadership in an area which was not strictly within the spiritual domain was no longer seen as strange or ultra vires by a public who were by then accustomed to the local bishops exercising a welcomed role in national leadership.

Charles Keith has identified a more subtle, yet no less significant consequence, of the promotion of the Vietnamese bishops. Each attributed their promotion to the Vietnamese episcopate, over the objections of the French colonial administration and missionary bishops, to the intervention of Rome, and hence felt a deep gratitude for the support the Holy See had given them in their quest for local control of their own Church. In consequence, the emergent Vietnamese hierarchy developed a highly ultramontane character; that is, they were characterized by an abiding and overriding fidelity to the Papacy. This is a factor largely ignored by historians and commentators in their analysis of the attitudes and actions of the Vietnamese Church in the years leading up to the transmigration. Overstating the extent of American influence upon the leading actors in the transmigration has led to a commensurate under-recognition of Rome as an agent of influence in determining the actions of the Vietnamese Bishops.

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186 That several of these bishops had received clerical educations in Rome via the Propaganda Fide College also contributed both to their fidelity to Rome, and their familiarity with the culture, structures and personalities of the Vatican.

187 This situation has recently been redressed by Keith’s work.
The Vietnamese Episcopal Hierarchy had by early 1954 undergone considerable change since 1945. Of the four original Vietnamese bishops, only one, Ngô Đình Thục, was still alive.\textsuperscript{188} Whereas in August 1945 only two of the ten northern Bishops were Vietnamese, by June 1954, this had increased to six. In Hanoi, the French MEP Archbishop Chaize had been replaced in 1950 by a Vietnamese secular priest, Jose-Maria Trịnh Như Khuê. In the same year, Bishop Pierre Phạm Ngọc Chi became Bùi Chu’s second Vietnamese bishop, whilst Phất Diệm was up to its third, in Thaddeus Lê Hữu Tự.\textsuperscript{189} Bishops Tự and Chi were to be amongst the most prominent advocates of utilizing the opportunity to leave the North provided by the Geneva Agreement, and amongst the most prominent leaders of the transmigrated Church in the South.

\textit{Bishops Tự and Chi}

Anselm Thaddeus Lê Hữu Tự was born in 1896 at Di Loan, a Catholic district of Quảng Trị in North-Central Vietnam, the second of ten children from a long-standing Catholic family.\textsuperscript{190} After a lengthy period in the diocesan seminary at Hue, during which he was ordained as a deacon, he decided to become a Cistercian monk, and in September 1928 entered the monastery at Phương Sơn, in Thiệu Thiên Hue province, where he was also ordained as a priest shortly before Christmas 1928.\textsuperscript{191} By 1936, he was Abbott of the monastery, but in September 1936, the order asked him to establish a new monastery at

\textsuperscript{188} Phan Đình Phùng had died in 1944, Hồ Ngọc Cận in 1948, and Nguyễn Bá Tông in 1949.

\textsuperscript{189} In addition, 1950 also saw the appointment of Vietnamese bishops to the northern dioceses of Bắc Ninh (Damien Hoàng Văn Đôn) and Vinh (Jean-Baptiste Trần Hữu Đức), followed in 1953 by Joseph Trưởng Cao Đài as Bishop of Hải Phòng.


\textsuperscript{191} Priests are ordained into the order of deacons, usually between six and twelve months prior to priestly ordination.
Châu Sơn in the remote North-Western corner of Phát ĐSeattle diocese. He remained there as Abbott until 1945, when he was appointed (on July 19) and consecrated (on October 29) as titular bishop of Daphnusia, in effect the fourth Bishop of Phát ĐSeattle. His immediate predecessor, Nguyễn Bá T Middleton, had in 1933 been the first Vietnamese priest to be appointed as Bishop. Phát ĐSeattle, and the neighbouring diocese of Bùi Chu, had been the first to commence the process both of moving away from foreign missionary leadership to indigenous leadership, and from leadership by religious orders (i.e., by the MEP and Dominicans) to leadership by secular diocesan clergy.

Từ left Phát ĐSeattle for the last time on June 30, 1954, after nine years as diocesan Bishop, and resettled in Saigon. But he did not return to monastic life; instead, he was appointed as Director of the newly-formed National Catholic Centre, as Bishop of the Military Ordinariate (chaplaincy) of the RVN, and as director of Catholic Charities. But by the time of resettlement in the South, Từ's health was already beginning to fail, and after a short period of retirement, he died at Gò Vấp, outside of Saigon, in April 1967.

Many commentaries on Từ refer to his aesthetic and austere character; perhaps not surprising for a Cistercian. But for a contemplative and enclosed monk – with the

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192 Thự and Huy, Giám Mục Lê Hữu Từ, 34. Châu Sơn is approximately seventy kilometres from the Cathedral, in the opposite corner of the diocese.
193 The third Bishop, Phan Đình Phương, had died suddenly in 1944. Bishop Tòng was recalled from retirement to administer the diocese until a replacement was found. Hence Bishop Từ assumed control from the second, rather than the third, bishop.
194 Từ, although a member of a religious order in the Cistercians, came from neither of the orders that had traditionally controlled the Vietnamese Church. Moreover, as Bishop of Phát ĐSeattle, he made no attempt to covert the diocese into a monastic entity, encouraging instead the diocesan clergy to assume control of the diocese; something not always evident in MEP and Dominican-controlled dioceses.
195 Catholic Canon Law provides for a nation’s military chaplaincy to be administered by a diocese separate to territorial dioceses.
connotations of removal from the world that such monasticism invokes – Tự period as Bishop of Phát Diệm was marked by both a significant engagement with the Vietnamese polity, and a leadership of the people of his diocese that went far beyond their spiritual and pastoral needs. Studies of Tự’s role in ‘non-ecclesiastical’ leadership normally focus on the establishment of the self-defence militias within his diocese to combat the threat of Việt Minh incursion. Whilst this project perhaps drew the most external attention, given the seeming incongruity of a Catholic diocese maintaining a standing militia, it was, from an ecclesiastical standpoint, far from the most significant, or the most successful. The Church was also responsible for all education within the Catholic areas of the diocese in the 1945-54 period, with more than 3,000 students undergoing education at any one time. It also maintained hospitals, clinics, orphanages, and an active publishing enterprise, with books, pamphlets, and often politically polemic newspapers and magazines such as Tiếng Kêu [The Call].

The diocese also attended to the management of agricultural production, and the distribution and sale of the agricultural surplus.

This does not mean that Tự ceased to be a primarily religious figure. His capacity to attract a consensus amongst Phát Diệm Catholics to act as the de facto temporal authority sprang from his ecclesiastical and spiritual authority, not vice versa. Nor did his secular responsibilities mean an abrogation of his role as Bishop. To the contrary, the nine years of his episcopate at Phát Diệm were a period of significant religious activity within the diocese. Religious vocations to both the priesthood and the religious women’s orders increased substantially. Lay Catholic associations were promoted, some of which had a socio-political purpose, others of which were more wholly spiritual in nature. Religious conferences and campaigns were frequent; of the ninety

197 Thất and Huy, Giảm Mục Lệ Hậu Tự, 118, 122.
Pastoral Letters written by Tự to his flock in Phát Diệm, most dealt with solely spiritual and religious matters.  

Illustration 1. Bishop Thaddeus Lê Hữu Tự lying in state at Phú Nhuận, Saigon, 1967. From the Phòng Truyền Thông (Commemorative Room), Phát Diệm Diocesan Centre.

Tự always considered himself to be anti-colonialist and a nationalist; unlike Chí, he had never been under direct control of French MEP’s within the Church, and had never travelled abroad. It was this reputation that enabled Hồ Chí Minh to appoint him as a ‘Supreme Counsellor’ in 1945. This engagement with Hồ Chí Minh’s early coalition governments, which rapidly unravelled, was paralleled by his assumption of the role of de facto civil and military leader within the territory of the Phát Diệm diocese. The vacuum in civil authority created by his antagonism to both Việt Minh

198 Lê Ngọc Bích, Cảc Vĩ Giám Mục, 138.
199 Although the Abbott of Phước Sơn for its first four years was the French monk, Abbe Benoit.
200 See pages 86-7.
and French-sponsored authorities in Phât Diệm meant that the Church itself assumed the role of administrative control, and in effect became an autonomous free zone.

Pierre-Marie Phạm Ngọc Chi was born in 1909 in the village of Tôn Đạo, a short distance from Phât Diệm Cathedral.\textsuperscript{201} Tôn Đạo was one of the last parishes in Phât Diệm diocese to remain under MEP control, and its French parish priest, Fr. Pleneau, arranged for Chi’s early education in the junior seminary at nearby Phúc Nhặc, after which he was sent for further study at the Propaganda Fide College in Rome, where he was ordained priest in 1933. He thereafter took a doctorate in Canon Law and Theology at the Apollinaire in Paris, before returning to Phât Diệm in 1936 to teach at Thuồng Kiệm major seminary, becoming Rector in 1947. On February 3, 1950, he was appointed Apostolic Vicar of Bửi Chu, and as Titular Bishop of Sozopolis.\textsuperscript{202} He was consecrated in that position on August 4, 1950, by Bishops Lê Hữu Tự and Ngô Đình Thực. Significantly, no foreign missionary Bishops from the Vietnamese hierarchy attended his consecration; on the other hand, nor were there high officials from the DRVN present, as there had been five years earlier at the consecration of Tự.

\begin{footnotes}

\footnote[202]{Until 1960, all bishops in Vietnam were Apostolic Vicars for their respective dioceses, under the jurisdiction of Propaganda Fide, and consecrated as Bishop of a titular see elsewhere (usually somewhere within the domain of early Christianity).}
\end{footnotes}

Chi’s period of almost four years as Bishop of Bùi Chu was not entirely spent in resisting the Việt Minh, nor in other political and military activities. As with Phát Diệm, the normal ecclesiastical, pastoral and spiritual functions of the diocese had to
continue. Of particular importance to Chi was managing the problem first addressed by his predecessor, Hồ Ngọc Cần; how to deal with the pain of cultural change in converting the diocese from a Spanish Dominican enclave to one controlled by indigenous diocesan clergy. For example, Chi regularized the position of the Dominican sisters who, under Spanish Dominican auspices, had set up a series of independent and uncoordinated houses, forming them into a single Dominican Order of St. Catherine of Siena of Bùi Chu.\textsuperscript{203} As a former seminary rector, he also increased resources devoted to seminary formation, raising the teaching standards and expectations of the students.\textsuperscript{204} He also oversaw the official creation of a new religious order, the Đỗng Đực Mê Đòng Công Câu Chuộc [Order of Our Lady Co-Redemptrix], which was the first Vietnamese clerical religious order, a religiously and politically conservative organization which moved south as part of the transmigration of 1954-5.\textsuperscript{205} Like Tư, Chi left his diocese a month before the commencement of the implementation of the Geneva Agreement, fleeing to Hanoi. He was there appointed by the Apostolic Delegate in Hanoi as Bishop with responsibility for Refugee Priests, and concurrently as head of the Ủy Ban Hỗ Trợ Định Cư, or UBHTĐC [Committee for Refugee Assistance].\textsuperscript{206} With the advent of merger of the bắc đi cư camps into the broader Southern community in late 1957, and the consequent dissolution of the Committee, he was appointed to the South-central diocese of Qui Nhơn. When that diocese was divided in 1960 with the establishment of the Vietnamese hierarchy, he assumed leadership of the new diocese, Danang.\textsuperscript{207} With the advent of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Vietnam following DRVN victory in the South in 1975, Chi did not attempt

\textsuperscript{204} Lê Ngọc Bích, Các Vị Giám Mục, 236.
\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., 235-6.
\textsuperscript{206} See p. 184.
\textsuperscript{207} No new Bishop was appointed in Bùi Chu until 1960, the see being left vacant for nearly six years. He did not receive a territorial title until the creation of the Vietnamese territorial hierarchy in 1960, which occurred simultaneously with him being appointed bishop of Danang in 1960.
to flee a second time; instead, he remained in Danang, enduring an understandably
difficult relationship with the new authorities. He went into retirement in 1985, and
died in his diocese in 1988.

As a priest of the Phát Diệm diocese, Chi was a close collaborator with Lê Hữu Tự,
and served under him for the final five years of his time there, from 1946 to 1950, as
Tự’s political and legal advisor. But the relationship was by no means one of mentor
and protégé, albeit that Tự may have interceded with the Apostolic Delegate to help
secure Chi’s appointment to Bùi Chu.\textsuperscript{208} For the first nine of the fourteen years of
Chi’s active service in Phát Diệm, Tự was effectively confined to his monastery in the
distant north-west corner of the diocese.\textsuperscript{209} This is not to suggest that they were in any
form of contestation; to the contrary, they acted in active collaboration both in the
military and political defence of their neighbouring dioceses from 1950 to 1954, and
thereafter in their response to the Geneva Agreement; merely that Chi was by no
means beholden to Tự.

Chi was a man of independent connections within the broader Catholic Church.
Propaganda Fide was widely regarded as a ‘finishing school’ for bishops-to-be from
mission lands; his successful years in academia in the crucial centres of Rome and
Paris meant that he knew, and was known to, many of the Vatican decision-makers
who had it in their remit to influence the future direction of the Vietnamese Church.

\textsuperscript{208} Unsurprisingly, no documentation is available, but it is inconceivable that the bishop of a diocese
from which a priest is appointed bishop elsewhere would not at least be consulted. It should be noted
that Tự had been Administrator of Bùi Chu from November 1948, after the death of Bishop Hồ Ngọc
Cân. As to Chi as ‘protégé of Tự, the term was adopted by a Time journalist upon meeting the two

\textsuperscript{209} Albeit that abbots can often wield an influence well beyond the bounds of their physical
confinement.
Moreover, his doctorate in Canon Law gave him a capacity to understand (and perhaps influence) both the scope of his authority, and the limitations upon it, when placed in the highly unusual situation of operating something akin to a quasi-diocese on behalf of the *bắc diocese* church in the 1954-7 period. Managing the difficulties doubtlessly involved in negotiating a path between the Diệm government, the Papal delegates, the extra-territorial Catholic bodies such as Catholic Relief Services, and the territorial bishops of the Southern Church, would have required both a thorough knowledge of Canon Law, and the diplomatic skills that years in Rome can hone.

The transmigration to the South in 1954-5 fundamentally altered the balance of influence between Tù and Chi. Tù was thirteen years older than Chi, and had been in place as Bishop for five years longer than Chi. In the North, Tù was widely seen as the spiritual and political leader of ‘Bùi Phát’, and most certainly as its principal public spokesman. But when both men moved South, Tù, already fifty seven years old (against Chi’s forty four), began to take a less prominent role. Although he held important roles in the RVN, and in protecting the interests of *bắc diocese* Catholics from Phát Diệm dioceses, he did not assume a prominent position in *bắc diocese* affairs, and gradually faded from the public view. Chi, on the other hand, became both the public persona, and the holder of ultimate power, within the *bắc diocese* community prior to its de jure integration into the wider southern community at the end of 1957. In his role as the principal promoter (together with Archbishop Thục) of the political-ethical doctrine *Nhân Vị*, a form of Catholic personalism adopted as a foundational ethos by the Diệm regime, and as Chancellor of Pius X Pontifical University in Đà Lạt, Chi continued to wield considerable influence on the Vietnamese polity until the fall of Diệm in 1963, and on the Southern Church until his retirement in the early 1980’s. Yet despite his roles in resettlement of the *bắc diocese*, and as promoter of *nhân vị*, Chi himself contextualized these seemingly secular activities within his spiritual and pastoral role.
as a bishop and priest. In what was effectively a farewell letter of Christmas 1985 to the Catholics of Danang diocese, Chi wrote:

As to social activities, if I contributed anything, it was only with the aim of putting into practice the spirit of Catholic charity, to soothe the painful wounds, to help souls in distress or enduring persecution, and to aid the poor and needy. There were absolutely no other ambitions.\(^{(210)}\)

(b) The Church and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

Early developments

The majority of Vietnamese Catholics were caught up in the nationalist impulse which took form in the pre-World War II era. As the war ended, they found common cause with other nationalist entities in the August Revolution of 1945, and the subsequent Declaration of Independence and the formation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRVN) on September 2\(^{nd}\). These events were greeted with enthusiasm by most Vietnamese Catholics, including the Vietnamese members of the Episcopal hierarchy.\(^{(211)}\) The antipathy of much of the missionary hierarchy to the incoming government of Hồ Chí Minh served as yet another point of fissure between their socio-political standpoint, and that of the Catholics they led.\(^{(212)}\)

On September 23, 1945, each of the local Vietnamese Bishops – Nguyễn Bá Tông, Hồ Ngọc Cẩn, Ngô Đình Thực and bishop-elect Lê Hữu Tự - signed a public letter to Pope Pius XII seeking the Vatican’s support for Vietnamese independence, and aid for the


\(^{(211)}\) Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, 140; Gheddo, Cross and the Bo Tree, 25.

\(^{(212)}\) This can at least be said of the French MEP bishops; the Spanish Dominicans were, unsurprisingly, more equivocal on the issue. The Spanish Dominican Bishop of Haiphong, Francesco Gomez O.P., was said to have supported the incoming nationalist government; Thompson, Minority Problems in South East Asia, 249.
new government.\textsuperscript{213} There were substantial mass demonstrations of Catholic support for the new nationalist government, including 40,000 clergy and laity in Hanoi.\textsuperscript{214} When Hồ Chí Minh called for citizens to give gold to assist the new government, the Bishop of Bùi Chu, Hồ Ngọc Cẩn, famously donated his pectoral cross.\textsuperscript{215} As the Catholic historian Nguyễn Thé Thoại noted:

\begin{quote}
During 1945-1946, it was difficult to find a parish that did not have someone participating in a political party, a seminary which was not taking part in meetings with patriotic intellectuals along with their countrymen, particularly at the Declaration of Independence on September 2, 1945\textsuperscript{216}
\end{quote}

The bishop’s letter of September 23 was followed up with a further letter on October 29, supporting not only the establishment of the DRVN, but also the government of Hồ Chí Minh itself.\textsuperscript{217}

The early signs from the new DRVN government were also favourable. The date declared as National Independence Day, September 2\textsuperscript{nd}, was the feast day of the Vietnamese Martyrs, so that the two celebrations coincided.\textsuperscript{218} Messages of felicitation and solidarity were sent by the new government to the Catholics of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{213} Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, 140-1; David G. Marr, Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-45 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 26; David G. Marr, Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 550; Thụ và Huy, Giám Mục Lê Hữu Từ, 37. This was followed up with a similar letter to the Christians of the world, dated November 4, 1945; Gheddo, Cross and the Bo-Tree, 26.
\item \textsuperscript{214} Marr, Vietnam 1945, 529-30; Gheddo, Cross and the Bo-Tree, 26. There were similar demonstrations across the country; for example, by 30,000 Catholics, including the seminarians of Vinh diocese at the seminary at Xã Đoài on October 13; Phan Phát Huân, Việt Nam Giảo Sứ, 2:56; Trương Bá Cẩn, “Người Công Giáo Giáo Phận Vinh trong những năm kháng chiến chống Pháp và chống Mỹ” [Catholics in Vinh Diocese in the resistance years of opposition to France and the United States], CGDT, May 1996: 73.
\item \textsuperscript{215} Lê Ngọc Bích, Nhân Vật Công Giáo Việt Nam, 74
\item \textsuperscript{216} Nguyễn Thé Thoại, Công Giáo Trên Quê Hương, 2:352
\item \textsuperscript{218} Thompson, Minority Problems, 249; Irving, The First Indochina War, 139. The homily preached in Hanoi Cathedral that morning was purportedly highly political, and highly favourable to Hồ Chí Minh; Archimedes L.A. Patti, Why Viet Nam? Prelude to America’s Albatross (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 248.
\end{itemize}
Vietnam. On August 29, a prominent young lay Catholic lawyer, Nguyễn Mạnh Hà, head of the Cardijnist Young Catholic Workers Movement in Vietnam, was appointed as Minister of Economics. This was followed by the appointment in March 1946 of Bishop Lê Hữu Từ as high advisor to Hồ Chí Minh. On September 25, the government promulgated a decree on religious tolerance and freedom which forbade religious desecration or persecution, and enshrined the right to free worship. Prime Minister Phạm Văn Đồng, General Võ Nguyên Giáp, Information Minister Trần Huy Liệu, and former Emperor Bảo Đại all attended Từ’s episcopal ordination on behalf of the government, whilst Hồ Chí Minh sent a message of congratulations.

However, these positive indicators belied a less harmonious reality on both sides. This deterioration in the relationship came about as a consequence of global and national trends. In both Eastern Europe and China, the papacy shared western concerns over the rise of Communist influence. In Rome, the Holy Office issued a decree of July 15, 1949, re-affirming the condemnation of Communism contained in Pius XI’s 1937 encyclical, Divini Redemptoris, and extending excommunication to any Catholic who actively collaborated with Communists, through participation in united fronts or otherwise. The Vietnamese Bishops had by then already recanted their October 1945 letter of support for Hồ’s government; in June 1948, they issued an official

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219 John T. McAlister, Viet Nam: The Origins of Revolution (Princeton: Allen Lane, 1969), 195. Another Catholic, Vũ Đình Tùng, became Minister for Veteran’s Affairs; Bernard B. Fall, The Viet-Minh Regime: Government and Administration in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, research paper issued with the South East Asia Program, Cornell University (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1956), 70. However, he was affiliated with the various Việt Minh-Catholic Front Organizations, and was not seen as representative of Catholic interests in the manner of Hà. See also Buttinger, Dragon Embattled, 2:1019. Two other members of the National Assembly were Catholic priests, again closely identified with the Việt Minh; Petrus Vũ Xuân Kỳ and Phạm Bá Trọng; ibid., 1019.

220 Donald Lancaster, Emancipation, 196.

221 Thompson, Minority Problems, 249.

222 Thơ and Huy, Giám Mục Lê Hữu Từ, 44.

proclamation declaring the Viêt Minh to be a communist organization, and in March the following year declared their support for the French-sponsored Bảo Đại government.²²⁴

The early governments of Hồ Chí Minh were aimed at attaining a broad-based coalition, as the incorporation of Catholic interests into the cabinet indicates. These regimes were not avowedly communist; it allegedly came as something of a revelation to the participants in a political convocation of Catholics after Lê Hữu Tụ's Episcopal consecration in October 1945, when Nguyễn Mạnh Hà is said to have revealed that Hồ Chí Minh’s government was under substantial Communist influence, and was pursuing a Communist agenda.²²⁵

By 1947, the Viêt Minh were intent on consolidating power, rather than sharing it with the broad-based coalitions which had marked their earlier governments.²²⁶ Their strategy had evolved into one of bringing nationalist organizations and sectional interest groups into a United Front, from where all could be subsumed under Communist control. Whilst the administration still included some individual Catholics,

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²²⁴ Irving, *First Indo-china War*, 138; Ken Post, *Revolution, Socialism and Nationalism in Vietnam* (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishers, 1989-94), 5:167. Given that the French High Commissioner to Indo-China, Emile Bollaert, had sought an audience with Pius XII in January 1948 to seek support from the papacy for the government of Bảo Đại against the Viêt Minh, it is possible that this change in attitude came about as a result of pressure from the Vatican, directed through Drapier as Apostolic Delegate in Hue. See Thompson, *Minority Problems*, 250; Ellen J. Hammer, “The Bao Dai Experiment,” *Pacific Affairs*, 23, 1 (March 1950), 46-58. However, it should be noted that even after Bảo Đại himself had a an audience with Pius XII in October 1949, his government did not receive diplomatic recognition until March 1950, by which time the Vietnamese bishops had already made their public declaration of support; Thompson, *Minority Problems*, 251.

²²⁵ Thơ and Huy, *Giám Mục Lê Hữu Tụ*, 45. Until 1941, Hồ Chí Minh had gone by the earlier nom-de-plume of Nguyễn Ái Quốc. His communist antecedents with the Comintern were not general public knowledge in late 1945.

²²⁶ Buttinger, *Dragon Embattled*, 1:400.
they were amongst the minority who remained aligned to the Việt Minh.227 The process of exacerbating lines of cleavage between Communist and non-Communist nationalist forces within society, which formed an essential element of this strategy, affected the Catholic community. Unlike the religious freedom that was initially extended to Vietnamese Catholic adherents, missionary priests (especially French MEP’s) were placed under house arrest, or expelled from zones under Việt Minh control.228 For example, the MEP’s situation reports for the diocese of Vinh revealed that the venerable local bishop, André Eloy, was placed under house arrest in Vinh city (away from his residence at Xã Đoài) on September 1, 1945, and remained under guard with the other foreign missionaries, unable to minister in his diocese, until his death in July 1947.229

This divide-and-rule strategy on the part of the government found fertile soil in a Catholic community already deeply divided. The French missionary leadership, sympathetic to France’s continuing colonial occupation, sought to distance itself from the DRVN government and its nationalist aspirations.230 The French Dominican Apostolic Delegate in Hue, Archbishop Antonin-Fernand Drapier, issued a letter to all

227 Such as Vũ Đình Tùng, minister for War Veterans and Invalids, and the priests Rev. Phạm Bá Trực and Vũ Xuân Ký; Buttinger, Dragon Embattled, 2: 1019.
228 Thompson, Minority Problems, 249. According to Thompson, even by early 1946, only a few Spanish Dominicans were permitted to operate in areas under Việt Minh control. The Hung, ”The Catholic Church and the French Colonization,” in Nguyễn Khắc Viên (ed.), The Catholics and the National Movement Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1978, 48-9.
230 As noted above, the Spanish Dominicans of the North-Eastern province initially took a far more benign attitude to the incoming regime.
Catholics on May 17, 1946, forbidding them from association with the new government, and calling on them to submit to the discipline of the Bishops.\textsuperscript{231}

Whilst the government’s United Front strategy met with substantial success, it was the Catholics who remained largely resistant to it, with Catholic leadership, both lay and clerical, nationalist and non-nationalist, refusing to submit to participation.\textsuperscript{232} Whereas the Việt Minh largely replaced local representation in non-Catholic villages with their own operatives, village structures in the Chretientés, which as has been seen so closely paralleled the parish structures, were initially left intact, most particularly in the dioceses of Phat Diệm and Bùi Chu.\textsuperscript{233} But the visceral attitudes of antagonistic and poorly-trained lower Việt Minh cán bộ [cadres] towards their local Catholic compatriots were often redolent of those displayed during the Văn Thàn and Cân Vương Movements, and their actions towards local Catholic communities were often far less benign than the pronouncements of the central government in Hanoi.\textsuperscript{234} Việt Minh attacks against Catholic churches, clergy and even groups of worshippers became more frequent; in February 1947, Hồ Chí Minh wrote to Bishop Từ apologizing for these excesses.\textsuperscript{235} The French military came to reoccupy parts of Vietnam (Hanoi from December 1946, Quảng Bình from June 25, 1947, and so on).\textsuperscript{236} But the areas which remained under effective Việt Minh control (in particular, the North-central coastal

\textsuperscript{231} Thọ and Huy, \textit{Giám Mục Lê Hữu Tụ}, 45; The Hung, “The Catholic Church and the French Colonization,” 48-9. In February 1946, Archbishop Cassaigne of Saigon was pressured by the French authorities to prohibit the clergy from engaging in nationalist politics.

\textsuperscript{232} Hammer, \textit{Struggle for Indochina}, 141.

\textsuperscript{233} ibid., 276; Thompson, \textit{Minority Problems}, 249. By 1949, this arrangement had effectively broken down; B.S.N. Murti, \textit{Vietnam Divided: The Unfinished Struggle} (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1964), 73.

\textsuperscript{234} Lancaster, \textit{Emancipation}, 197. For example, in 1953, the DRVN government issued an edict commanding state and party cadres to avoid meddling in religion; a decree easily ignored if Church figures could be accused of infractions against security or other laws; Haas and Cong, \textit{Vietnam – the Other Conflict}, 19.

\textsuperscript{235} Thọ and Huy, \textit{Giám Mục Lê Hữu Tụ}, 111.

\textsuperscript{236} For a full list of dates of French re-occupation at the start of the First Indochina War, see Trương Bá Cẩn, “Người Công Giáo Giáo Phận Vĩnh,” 82.
area from Thái Bình down to Quảng Trị, most of which fell within Liên Khu IV [Inter Zone IV]), came more and more difficult environments for local Catholic communities to co-exist with their new political rulers.

The Liên Đoàn Công Giáo Việt Nam (Catholic League of Vietnam)

Catholic enthusiasm for the new government did not generally extend to joining united front organizations under the auspices of the Việt Minh. But attempts to take over pre-existing organizations and incorporate them into the United Front led some anti-communist nationalist Catholics to endeavour to create a new Catholic organization outside of the Front’s auspices. On October 29, 1945, the clerical and lay Catholic leadership who had the previous day attended the episcopal consecration of Bishop Lê Hữu Tự met to consider the establishment of a body or bodies which could represent Vietnamese Catholic interests. The meeting, which included delegates from Thanh Hóa, Hanoi, Vinh and Saigon, was chaired by Nguyễn Mạnh Hà; all those who attended were Vietnamese, and were representative of the more nationalist elements within the Church.

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237 Liên Khu IV ran from Thanh Hóa in the North to Thừa Thiên in the South. Thái Bình fell within Liên Khu III.
239 Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, 140.
240 Tự was consecrated by Bishops Tông and Cân. Bishop Thục was prevented from attending by Allied forces in Saigon, whilst no foreign bishops were invited. Thục and Huy, Giám Mục Lê Hữu Tự, 44. Bishop Tông did not attend the October 29 conference.
241 Ibid., 42. Bishops Tự and Cân were the only bishops to participate. Nguyễn Mạnh Hà was not reappointed to the cabinet after March 1946.
The meeting resolved to establish an organization to be known as the **Liên Đoàn Cộng Giáo Việt Nam** (Catholic League of Vietnam). Although avowedly not a political party, the resolution passed at the conference proclaimed the aim of the League as being a secular body dedicated to the political defence of Catholic interests:

> To unite the Catholics to live in a Free Vietnamese Nation, sharing their fate with the mass of the Vietnamese people. Therefore, the Federation has a responsibility to participate in the construction of the Vietnamese state, to uphold national independence, and to support the initiatives of the government. Construction means the construction of the Vietnamese nation, its authority, its society, its spirit and its future. In these activities, the League will, depending on available means, work by all appropriate methods. However, the League is not a political party.\(^{242}\)

Bishop Tữ and the LDCGVN’s other sponsors sought to promote the League as a national entity to protect Catholic interests in the secular realm, whilst giving Catholics a nationalist, anti-colonialist alternative to the **Hội Công Giáo Cứu Quốc** (Catholic Association for National Salvation), an organization previously formed under church auspices, but which had been effectively infiltrated by the Việt Minh, and integrated into the United Front.\(^{243}\)

However, the **Liên Đoàn** ultimately failed in its objective to become a pan-Vietnamese Catholic political lobby group. The reasons for that failure were numerous. On the one hand, the missionary bishops – each of whom had an effective right of veto over the operation of the League in his diocese – rightly saw it as an anti-French entity, and either banned it or ignored it.\(^{244}\) Rome, too, was equivocal in its support. Archbishop

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\(^{242}\) Published in *Đa Minh*, 15 November, 1945; quoted in Trưởng Bá Cần, “Hàng Giáo phẩm ở Việt Nam với các Tố chức Yêu nước” [The Vietnamese Clergy and Catholic Patriotic Associations], *CGDT*, January 1998, 73.

\(^{243}\) Tữ wrote, for example, a pastoral letter to this effect in October 1946; Thư & Huy, *Giám Mục Lê Hậu Tự và Phát Diệm*, 76.

\(^{244}\) For example, Archbishop Cassaigne banned the League in the Archdiocese of Saigon, and tried to establish a French-supporting equivalent; Thompson, *Minority Problems*, 251. See also Hammer, *Struggle for Indochina*, 140; Trưởng Bá Cần, “Hàng Giáo phẩm ở Việt Nam với các Tố chức Yêu nước”
Drapier ruled that, as a political organization, the clergy were not permitted to participate in the League, other than as chaplains or advisors, thereby disqualifying the first nominated president, Rev. Nguyễn Bá Luật, from his position.\textsuperscript{245}

On the other hand, the Việt Minh viewed the LĐCGVN as a political entity outside of their own political remit and control, and hence considered it (again correctly) as a potential source of anti-communist political opposition, competing for the same nationalist Catholic constituency.\textsuperscript{246} When this was added to internal deficiencies within the organization, particularly in relation to an effective network of communication, the League was bound to fail, and only became a significant and active presence in Phát Đköm, Bùi Chu, Vinh and Hue.\textsuperscript{247}

The establishment of the League was not the only attempt to consolidate Catholic political interests in the 1946-54 period. In 1947, a group in Hanoi established the Đảng Xã hội Công Giáo (Catholic Social Party), which later became the Đảng Cần Lao Nhân Vị, or Personalist Labour Party, in the RVN, whilst in Saigon, Catholic interests associated with the Ngô clan established the Tổng Liên Đoàn Lao Độngng


\textsuperscript{246} Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, 141. Participation in the LDCGVN was outlawed in Việt Minh controlled areas, although the Interior Ministry of the DRVN had in October granted the LDCGVN a licence to operate; Lê Ngọc Bích, Các Vị Giảm Mục, 149.

\textsuperscript{247} Nguyễn Thế Thọ, Công Giáo Trên Quê Hương, 2: 385-7. In Bùi Phát’, the league failed to prosper because many of its functions were subsumed into the self-defence militias. In the dioceses of Vinh and the northern part of Huế, the League became a frequent source of conflict between local Catholics and the Việt Minh, who rightly saw it as the most effective source of uncontrolled political activity in Liên Khu IV. See p. 92-3.
(General Labour Federation). The League’s creation was nevertheless a significant development, both in its effect on relations with the Việt Minh, and as an indicator of Vietnamese Catholic consciousness that political unity could be a source of protection for its rights as a national minority; a theme which was to become more pervasive as the **bắc di cư** formed a solid voting bloc during the period of the Southern Republic.\(^{248}\)

**Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu**

The re-mobilization of French military forces in an endeavour to re-incorporate Vietnam into the French Union led to the ousting of the DRVN regime from occupation of most of the major urban centres by the end of 1946. However, much of the countryside, particularly in the North and North-central region, remained under Việt Minh control.\(^{249}\) The Emperor Bảo Đại, who had abdicated in 1945, was invited by the French to form a notionally independent national government, although it only had effective jurisdiction over those areas which remained within French military control. The only significant areas to remain outside the ambit of both the French and the Việt Minh were the two Catholic dioceses of Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu. Bishop Lê Hữu Tữ, as an anti-French nationalist, and a critic of Bảo Đại, had no wish to bring the two dioceses within the jurisdiction of the French.\(^{250}\) But the early courting of Tữ by Hồ Chí Minh, and their shared sense of nationalism, did not prevent a steady deterioration in relations between the Việt Minh forces of the DRVN on the one hand and the

\(^{248}\) During the national elections of 1946, Bishop Tữ organized a slate of four candidates (one of whom was a priest) to stand against Việt Minh candidates for the six positions from Ninh Bình province. One of Tữ’s candidates, and three Việt Minh, were successful. Thự và Huy, *Giám Mục Lê Hữu Tữ*, 62.

\(^{249}\) As noted previously, most of the North central coast from Thanh Hóa to Quảng Trị, falling within Liên Khu IV (Inter-Zone IV) remained under effective Việt Minh control from 1945 onwards.

\(^{250}\) Bishop Hồ Ngọc Căn of Bùi Chu was by August 1945 already in failing health, and Bishop Lê Hữu Tữ was acting as unofficial spokesman for both Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu diocese. On Bishop Căn’s death on November 27, 1948, Bishop Tữ was appointed Administrator of Bùi Chu in addition to his responsibilities as Apostolic Vicar in Phát Diệm, thereby rendering official his leadership of both dioceses. This continued until February 3, 1950, when Bishop Phạm Ngọc Chí was appointed to Bùi Chu; Lê Ngọc Bích, *Nhân Vật Công Giáo*, 75. Bishop Tữ was not the only critic of Bảo Đại amongst the bishops. Ngô Đình Thuc of Vĩnh Long was also initially highly critical of Bảo Đại’s collaboration with the French; Hammer, *Struggle*, 276.
‘theocracies’ of Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu on the other. By February 1947, Phát Diệm had become a place of refuge to 30,000 anti-Việt Minh nationalists, who poured in from other parts of Vietnam.\textsuperscript{251}

Từ’s appointment as a Supreme Counsellor to Hồ Chí Minh may have suggested a commonality of political purpose. But in a 1951 interview with a correspondent for \textit{Time} magazine, Từ directly repudiated the significance of his acceptance:

\begin{quote}
Being ‘Supreme Counsellor’ to Hồ Chí Minh was only an expedient. I realized from the first that he was Communist, but I used to tell him, if you are a Nationalist I am for you and your government, but if you are a Communist, I am against you.\textsuperscript{252}
\end{quote}

At the local level, too, events mitigated against the continuation of any rapprochement between the DRVN and the Catholic ‘theocracies’ in Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu. In the first four years after the August Revolution, the DRVN appeared largely content to allow Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu to remain as independent entities.\textsuperscript{253} Few efforts were made to replace local administrations in Catholic villages (which, as was seen in chapter two, often merged with Catholic parochial structures) with Việt Minh operatives, as occurred elsewhere.\textsuperscript{254} However, Hồ’s apparent policy of acquiescence

\begin{footnotes}
\item[251] Thú and Huy, \textit{Giám Mục Lê Hữu Từ và Phát Diệm}, 38, 117. For a description of life as a political refugee in Phát Diệm during this period, see Bùi Diệm, \textit{In The Jaws of History} (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 54-9.
\item[252] Eric Gibbs, “Battle for Indochina,” \textit{Time}, January 8, 1951. One interviewee for this study told of how, as a novice in the Cistercian monastery at Châu Sơn in 1946, the then Abbott Lê Hữu Từ had lectured the novices about the evils of communism.
\item[253] On September 15, 1947, Từ met with a group of emissaries sent by Hồ Chí Minh, headed by the pro-Việt Minh Priest, Phạm Bá Trúc, who brought an assurance that in a Vietnam under unified Việt Minh control, ‘Bùi Phát’ would have total autonomy. Từ’s scriptural response – that ‘my kingdom is not of this world’ – was, to say the least, disingenuous. Thú and Huy, \textit{Giám Mục Lê Hữu Từ}, 156. Từ met directly with Hồ on December 20 that year at Nho Quan, in Phát Diệm diocese, when he offered to baptize Hồ; an offer politely declined; ibid., 160.
\end{footnotes}
in the existence of ‘Bùi Phận’ as an autonomous entity was persistently undercut by Việt Minh guerrilla encroachments, and by 1949 was effectively abandoned.  

On September 8 1947, a lay leader in the Phận Diệm diocese, Lê Văn Cường, was assassinated, and the next day, an attempt was made on Bishop’s Tứ’s life at Cường’s funeral.  

Thereafter, attacks and reprisals between Việt Minh and operatives of Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh’s self-defence force became more frequent. In October 1947, Việt Minh forces attacked the Catholic villages of Phúc Nhaciente, Văn Hải and Mùunnel Giáp, arrested 596 people, and executed thirteen of them.

In these circumstances, Bishop Tứ and the Catholic leadership in Phận Diệm and Bùi Chu saw it as imperative to provide a military infrastructure capable of safeguarding Catholic interests (particularly in those two dioceses) against external attack. The concept of a Catholic Lực Lực Tự Vệ (Self-Defence Force), whereby local Catholics formed armed militia on a parochial basis, answerable to a diocesan command structure, had existed since the anti-Catholic persecutions of the nineteenth century.

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256 Thứ and Huy, Gian Mộc Lệ Hữu Tư, 147-9; Gheddo, Cross and the Bo Tree, 43. A Việt Minh cadre was killed in reprisal; ibid. There were also reprisals and counter-attacks on Việt Minh cadres, four of whom were allegedly killed at Kim Sông, near Phận Diệm, in late 1947; The Hung, “The Catholic Church and the French Colonization,” 57.
257 Haas, Harry, and Nguyễn Bảo Công. Vietnam – The Other Conflict, 14-6. It should be noted that Catholic self-defence militias were not confined to Phận Diệm and Bùi Chu; many were organized on a local basis in other dioceses, often by the Parish priest, and sometimes against the wishes of the diocesan bishop; ibid., 14. For accounts of such parish militia, see Lam Quang Thứ, The Twenty-Five Year Century: A South Vietnamese General Remembers the Indochina War (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 1988), 51; Howard R. Simpson, “An Absolutely Impossible Militia,” Commonweal, July 20, 1954.
258 Thứ and Huy, Gian Mộc Lệ Hữu Tư, 173-81.
259 Attacks not only from the Việt Minh; the French military has also bombarded and attacked Catholic villages; Phan Phát Huồn, Việt Nam Giáo Sát, 2:243.
260 Although Fr. Quỳnh also assisted bonzes in the Buddhist sector of Kim Sông district to organize Buddhist militia against the Việt Minh; Thứ and Huy, Gian Mộc Lệ Hữu Tư, 61-2. Some commentators also describe the militia of Colonel Jean Leroy, known as the ‘Mobile Units for the Defence of
They had the dual aims of providing protection to villagers, whilst also guarding Church assets and activities from attack. Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh had established a militia structure prior to Lê Hữu Tự becoming bishop, but their activities were encouraged and expanded (including expansion into neighbouring Bửi Chu) during Tự’s tenure. Tự even sought the financial support of his fellow bishops to secure weapons and ammunition for the forces.

By late 1949, with Việt Minh attacks on the two dioceses increasing, and their long term survival as independent entities seeming increasingly unsustainable, Bishop Tự relented to overtures to accept the jurisdiction of Bảo Đại’s government over Phát Diệm and Bửi Chu, and to accept the protective presence of the French military.

Christian Communities’, as a Catholic Militia in the same mode as the ‘Bửi Phát’ forces, which operated during roughly the same period. But although avowedly Catholic, Leroy’s organization had not official church endorsement, no clerical chaplaincy, and no overt relationship with the diocesan authorities; hence it should be distinguished from Fr. Quỳnh’s operation. See Buttinger, Dragon Embattled, 2:782; Nguyễn Thị Định, No Other Road to Take, trans. Mai Elliott, Data Paper No. 102, Department of Asian Studies, Cornell University (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1976), 3-4. The local Bishop, Ngô Đình Thúc, forbade Leroy the right to call his troops a Catholic militia; Buttinger, Dragon Embattled, 2:1062.

261 For example; they organized secured storage of grain crops; Thữ and Huy, Giảm Mục Lê Hữu Tự, 40.

262 Ibid. 38, 128. The fact that Quỳnh had established a resistance force against the French and Japanese in the grounds of Châu Sơn Monastery during Tự term as Abbott increased Tự familiarity with their activities; ibid., 56. It should be noted that the Việt Minh specifically refrained from incursions into that area in the pre-independence era in deference to Quỳnh’s militia. In mid-1946, Tự brought the militia under the direct control of the diocese; ibid., 60. In July 1947, he sent Quỳnh to Bửi Chu to organize militia activities there; ibid., 90.

263 As part of a tour through the Northern dioceses in 1946, Tự sought and received a loan of one million dong from Bishop Gomez of Haiphong. When the loan fell due in 1951, Gomez wrote it off; ibid., 97, 114. Murti’s claim that the militia were supplied ammunition and weapons by the French is correct, but only for the period from 1949 onwards; Vietnam Divided, 73.

264 Thereby reversing a refusal, in October 1947, to have anything to do with Bảo Đại and the French; Buttinger suggests that Tự acquiesced to an alliance with Bảo Đại against his will, and under pressure from the Vatican; Dragon Embattled, 2:1240. Tự accepted from Bảo Đại the same appointment previously proffered to him by Hồ Chí Minh, that of Supreme Counsellor; Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, 276. The Việt Minh had attacked Phát Diệm on the preceding day. But subsequent DRVN accounts alleged that a site had been cleared and marked with lime for the French-backed parachutists, suggesting significant pre-meditation and collaboration; Thế Hùng, “The Catholic Church and the French Colonization,” 58.
October 16, 1949, Vietnamese paratroopers attached to the French military ‘invaded’ Phát Đệm, and after a brief period of negotiation, Bishop Tử submitted to the external jurisdiction of the Bảo Đại government, with Phát Đệm and Bùi Chu being incorporated in May 1951 into the State of Vietnam as administrative provinces. This effectively replicated the circular pattern of Catholic-nationalist relations in the later nineteenth century; anti-Catholic attacks leading to Catholic resort to French protection, thereby fuelling in turn the allegation of the Catholics being extrinsic, anti-patriotic and pro-colonialist, which in turn gave impetus to anti-Catholic attacks, thus requiring further protective support from external forces, and so on.

Far from stemming the Việt Minh incursions, the presence of French troops within the theocracies increased the frequency and severity of Việt Minh attacks. For example, from May 29 to June 18, 1951, the Việt Minh fought a series of battles with the French and their Catholic supporters along the line of the Đáy River, which separated Phát Đệm from Bùi Chu. The cumulative effect of these incursions was

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265 Thompson, Minority Problems, 252-3; Phan Phát Huốn, Việt Nam Giáo Sử, 2:57; Haas & Cong, Vietnam – the Other Conflict, 19. Thompson contends that Tử initially refused to negotiate with the French, sending Fr. Quỳnh as a spokesman instead, and only surrendered to the French two months after the arrival of the paratroopers; ibid., 252-3. Others suggest that Tử’s resistance was a total contrivance; see Thề Hùng, “The Catholic Church and the French Colonization,” 48-9. But in 1951, Lê Hữu Tử was at least still condemning the Bảo Đại government in public, even as he accepted their support; see Scholl-Latour, Death in the Ricefields, 58. The Vatican had recognized Bảo Đại’s government on March 12, 1950, and purportedly pressured Lê Hữu Tử to cooperate; Đoán Thêm, 1945-65: Việc Từng Ngày Hai Mươi Năm Qua [1945-65: daily happenings over the past twenty years] Saigon: Nam Chí Tùng Thư, 1966, 68.

266 In a letter to the Catholics of Phát Đệm dated December 9, 1949, Hồ Chí Minh accused the Catholic leadership of Phát Đệm as being complicit in the re-conquest of Vietnam by the forces of French colonialism, and urged Catholics to resistance in the cause of national struggle; Gareth Porter, ed., Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Affairs (Stanfordville, NY: Earl M. Coleman Enterprises, 1979), 46-7.

267 Fall, Street Without Joy, 44-6; Phillip B. Davidson, Vietnam At War, The History, 1946-75 (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1988), 116-20; Martin Windrow, The Last Valley: Dien Bien Phu and the French Defeat in Vietnam. Cambridge, MA.: Da Capo Press, 2006, 114-5. Đoán Thêm. 1945-65, 94-5. There were many other such battles in Phát Đệm and Bùi Chu in the 1949-54 period. For example, in June 1952, there was several engagements between Việt Minh Catholic forces in both Phát Đệm and Thanh Hóa; Thompson, Minority Problems, 253. On May 5, 1953, the Việt Minh attacked a Catholic seminary in
to heighten Catholic fears as to the fate that would befall them if the two dioceses were ever to fall under Việt Minh control. As will be seen, this in turn led to a partial evacuation of the Catholics of Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu in the wake of the French retreat in June 1954, once it became clear that neither the French military nor their own self-defence militias (which in September 1953 had been incorporated into the Vietnamese national army\textsuperscript{268}) had the long-term capacity to resist Việt Minh advances.\textsuperscript{269}

\textit{Liên Khu IV}

Việt Minh – Catholic relations were no less problematic in areas under Việt Minh control, most particularly in \textit{Liên Khu IV}. By 1951, the Việt Minh had begun to levy agrarian taxes, with a punitive base against large-scale landholders.\textsuperscript{270} By 1953, the land reform campaign had begun in earnest;\textsuperscript{271} the accompanying identification of class enemies and punitive actions against landholders, whilst ostensibly applied without regard to religion, were frequently turned against Catholics and Catholic interests.\textsuperscript{272}

\textsuperscript{268} Doàn Thêm. \textit{1945-65}., 133.
\textsuperscript{269} The French did not retain sole military control in Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu after 1949; they were content to rely on the Catholic militias, reinforcing them with weapons and, at significant battles such as the Dây River Battle of 1951, with troops from the French Army and the National Army of Bảo Đại. Nguyễn Thế Thảo suggests that, from May 1951 onwards, the Catholic Self-Defence Militias ceased to operate as independent entities; \textit{Công Giáo Trên Quê Hương}, 2:391.
\textsuperscript{270} Gareth Porter, \textit{“Imperialism and Social Structure in Twentieth Century Vietnam”} (PhD thesis, Cornell University, 1976), 211.
\textsuperscript{272} Nguyễn Thế Thảo, \textit{Công Giáo Trên Quê Hương}, 2:386.
But the land reform campaign was not the only source of conflict between the Việt Minh cadres and local Catholics. B.S.N. Murti, head of the International Control Commission after the Geneva Accords, claimed that the majority of Catholics living in Việt Minh controlled areas lived without direct involvement in politics, and hence without harassment. Yet there is much evidence to suggest that the local Việt Minh administration in Thanh Hóa, Nghệ An and Hà Tĩnh actively endeavoured to control and isolate Catholic clerics, and to eradicate Catholic-affiliated political activity not under Việt Minh auspices. In two remarkable late 1990’s articles in the state-sponsored Catholic Magazine, Công Giáo và Dân Tộc [Catholicism and the nation], its editor, Rev. Trương Bá Cẩn, set out details of the harassment, trials and penalties exacted against Catholic clerics and lay leaders in the 1947-54 period.273 The imposition of heavy agricultural taxes, the instigation of an early land reform campaign, and the trials before People’s Courts of priests and Catholic laity on patently political charges, led many Catholics within Việt Minh-controlled zones to believe that their economic prospects, personal safety, and freedom to practice religion would all be highly vulnerable if they were left under long-term Việt Minh control.

For example, the first leader of the Liên Đoàn Công Giáo, in the Diocese of Vinh, Phạm Tuyết, was executed after sentencing by a People’s Court on January 25, 1951.274 A more serious instance again occurred in the district of Hưng Yên, in the Diocese of Vinh, when in 1952, thirty four members of the Liên Đoàn Công Giáo, including at least two priests, were charged with activities ranging from membership of a reactionary body, to ‘causing a spirit of opposing the Government and the Resistance, and spreading secret propaganda amongst their flock’, and to inciting the avoidance of

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payment of agricultural taxes.\textsuperscript{275} Amongst the allegations made against them was that they had spread rumours that two local Catholics who had died in Việt Minh hands after a 1950 trial had ‘died for their faith’ (‘tử vì đạo’); a potent allegation for a community whose national religious heritage was based largely around a narrative of martyrdom.\textsuperscript{276}

Cẩn lists further similar episodes in Vinh diocese; at Nghi Lộc (May 1952), and Trùng Lưu (October 1952).\textsuperscript{277} Fifty priests of the diocese, or about a quarter of the total, were executed or imprisoned during the period 1948-54; all missionaries were initially detained in Vinh City, and then expelled, whilst the bishop who succeeded the imprisoned Bishop Allys, Bishop Jean-Baptiste Trần Hữu Đức, was himself brought before the People’s Courts on three occasions, and was under effective house arrest from January 1953 onwards.\textsuperscript{278}

As Cẩn notes, news of these actions in Liên Khu IV spread rapidly through Northern Catholic circles, thereby exacerbating fears in other areas as to the likelihood of Catholics losing political, personal and religious liberties in the event that they too fell under Việt Minh occupation.\textsuperscript{279} It also effectively ended the activities of the Catholic League within Liên Khu IV.\textsuperscript{280}

\textsuperscript{275} Ban buoc toi cau Cong Toi Viec Toa An Nhahn Dan Lien Khu IV ve vu An Bon Phan Dong O Hung Yen [Case for the Prosecution at the People’s Court, Zone IV, Concerning the Reactionary Gang at Hung Yen] (Vinh: Toa An Nhahn Dan Lien Khu IV, 1953), 68. Of those charged, four, including a priest, Rev. Võ Việt Hiền, were executed, whilst another thirty (including four priests) were sentenced to terms of imprisonment; Truong Ba Can, “Người Công Giáo Phần Vinh,” 90-1.

\textsuperscript{276} Ibid., 45. This incident is noteworthy because the report comes from DRVN sources. Many other allegations of persecution and atrocities against Catholics in Liên Khu IV came from the bõc di cut Catholics formerly of Vinh Diocese; see Joseph Minh, The Tragedy of Vinh (June 1959, publication details otherwise unknown), accessed via Vietnam Virtual Archive, Texas Tech University; “Một Giải Suất,” Giáo Hội Công Giáo ở Việt Nam, 3:246.

\textsuperscript{277} Truong Ba Can, “Người Công Giáo Phần Vinh,” 91-3.

\textsuperscript{278} Ibid., 97.

\textsuperscript{279} Ibid., 93.

\textsuperscript{280} Truong Ba Can, “Hằng Giáo phẩm,” 74.
The Apostolic Delegation

Until 1960, the Vietnamese Church was divided not into dioceses, but into Apostolic Vicariates. By Canon 293(1) of the 1917 Code of Canon Law, “Territories that are not erected into dioceses are ruled by Vicars or Prefects Apostolic; all of these are appointed by the Apostolic See [i.e., centrally from Rome].” 281 Apostolic Vicariates were regarded as an interim phase in the evolution of a mission territory into an autonomous Church constituted by a diocese. They resembled a diocese in most aspects, and Apostolic Vicars, who were all Bishops, enjoyed the same rights as a territorial bishop. 282 The main difference was that, instead of enjoying the independent rights granted to a Bishop under Canon Law, the Vicars Apostolic exercised their powers vicariously as representatives of the Papacy. 283

Vicars Apostolic are to be distinguished from Apostolic Delegates, who are essentially diplomats, similar to Apostolic Nuncios. 284 Whilst any Apostolic Delegate will have persuasive influence over the bishops in any territory, they held actual juridical authority on behalf of the Holy See over the bishops of pre-1960 Vietnam. By virtue of the fact that they were only Apostolic Vicars, and not territorial bishops of Vietnamese

282 Canon 294(1); Peters, 1917 Code, 122. They were, however, not given the title of Bishop of the territory which they administered, but rather were nominated to a ‘titular see’, a defunct entity somewhere in an earlier era. Bishop Phaïm Ngôc Chi, for example, was prior to 1960, the Bishop of Sozopolis.
283 Can 371(1) of the 1983 Code made this more explicit. It reads:
   A vicariate apostolic or a prefecture Apostolic is a certain portion of the people of God, which for special reasons is not yet constituted a dioceses, and which is entrusted to the pastoral care of a Vicar Apostolic or a Prefect Apostolic, who governs it in the name of the Supreme Pontiff. Gerard Sheehy et al., eds, The Canon Law, Letter and Spirit: A Practical Guide to the Code of Canon Law. Sydney, E.J. Dwyer, 1995, 211.
284 ‘Nuncio’ is a term applied to delegates to countries which have diplomatic relations with the Holy See. Dooley was the Delegate to Indochina; that is, Việt Nam, Laos, and Cambodia, which did not have diplomatic relations with the Holy See; hence he was not styled a Nuncio. Vatican representatives in Saigon under Diệm after 1959, on the other hand, were Nuncios.
dioceses, the Bishops were obligated to follow the dictates of Rome passed on to them by the Apostolic Delegate. This meant that the role of Rome’s local representative in the Vietnamese Church at the time was more decisive than would have been the case in other national churches.

An Apostolic Delegate to Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos) was first appointed to the Court in Hue in 1925.²⁸⁵ From 1928 until 1950, the post was held by French clerics; the Capuchin Franciscan, Victor Dreyer (1928-36), followed by the Dominican, Antonin-Fernand Drapier (1936-1950).²⁸⁶

On October 18, 1951, the Irish Columban, Archbishop John Dooley, was appointed to the post. He took up duties in December 1951. He transferred the Delegation from Hue to Hanoi, following on the transfer of the seat of power from that of Bảo Đại in Hue to that of the French-sponsored Associated State of Vietnam in Hanoi.²⁸⁷ Dreyer and Drapier both stood accused of active collusion with the French colonial administration and the MEP Bishops; Drapier in particular was regarded as actively

²⁸⁶ Ibid.
²⁸⁷ Nguyễn Thọ Quĩ, Cộng Giáo Trên Quê Hương, 2:400. Dooley and his Irish Columban Deputy, O’Driscoll, remained in Hanoi under effective house arrest by the new DRVN government until they were expelled in 1959 (although see Illustration 4); Peter C. Kent & John H. Pollard, eds., Papal Diplomacy in the Modern Age (Westport, CN: Praeger, 1994), 207.
seeking the restoration of French colonial interests after the Japanese occupation.\^{289}

Not so Archbishop Dooley, whose nationality and religious order had no significant pre-existing presence or vested interest in Vietnam. Within days of arrival in Hanoi in November 1951, he was chairing a conference of the Vietnamese Episcopal Council.\^{290}

The Council by then consisted of fifteen bishops (six French MEP’s, two Spanish Dominicans, one French Dominican, and six Vietnamese diocesan bishops), of whom

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288 From the collection of Tam Toa Parish, Danang.
289 As noted previously, Drapier also issued letters which effectively forbade clerical participation in the Liên Đoàn Công Giáo, and prohibited any Catholics from working in collaboration with the Việt Minh authorities. But in this latter edict, his actions were in accordance with the altered attitudes of the Vietnamese bishops.
290 Phan Phát Huốn, Việt Nam Giáo Sứ, 2:212-3.
thirteen attended the Conference. Whilst the political situation confronting Vietnam and the Vietnamese Church was the conference’s largest priority, it was not its only preoccupation. The Bishops reasserted that they saw their role as specifically spiritual, rather than political; but that the present situation of the nation, and of Vietnamese Catholics within it, specifically impinged upon their spiritual welfare, and took on an extra-political dimension. The conference called on priests to ensure that the pastoral, spiritual, sacramental and catechetical elements of the Catholic faith continue to be made available to adherents in all Catholic parishes. It also called for a campaign for catechetical study via sermons, catechetical classes, and Catholic books; for greater understanding of Catholic social teaching, organizing a just and charitable life, even in an environment of war and material destruction; and for respect for human dignity and human rights. It urged Vietnamese Catholics for this reason “to be vigilant against the propaganda of Communist ideology, ‘an ideology denying God, religion, the soul, human dignity, and the family.’” Finally, the Pastoral Letter of the Vietnamese Bishops, dated November 9, 1951, issued under Dooley’s signature on behalf of the Conference, recalled the 1949 instruction of the Holy See that announced a ban on acting in collusion with, or belonging to, the Communist Party:

We believe it is our duty to put you on guard against the grave danger of atheistic Communism[....] There exists the most complete opposition between the Catholic Church and Communism, to such an extent that the Holy Father has declared that it is absolutely impossible to be at the same time a Catholic and a Communist, and that every Catholic who belongs to the Communist Party is de facto separated from the Church. But not only is it forbidden to join the Communist Party; you must not co-operate with it or do anything that in some way might bring the Communist Party to power. The danger is so grave and the

291 De Cooman (Thanh Hòa) and Độc (Vinh) having been prevented by local Việt Minh authorities from attending.
292 Nguyễn Thé Thoại, Còng Giáo Trên Quê Hương, 2:400.
293 Ibid., 400. A bland statement in other circumstances, but rendered politically poignant by the fact that these fundamental religious activities were being circumscribed in some areas by Việt Minh-imposed constraints.
294 Ibid., 400
295 Ibid., 400.
possible consequences so terrible that we feel obliged to put you on your guard
also against the subterfuges and ruses that serve uniquely and solely the
Communists aims.\footnote{Pastoral Letter of The Vietnamese Episcopal Conference dated February 10, 1951, quoted in
Gheddo, Cross and the Bo Tree, 46. See also Stephen Denney, “The Catholic Church in Vietnam,” in
Pedro Ramet, ed., Catholicism and Politics in Communist Societies (Durham, NC, Durham University
Press, 1990), 272.}

Whilst it may be argued that relations between the Việt Minh and the Vietnamese
Catholic Church had deteriorated irretrievably prior to November 1951, the Pastoral
Letter is widely seen as constituting the final step in convincing the majority of
Vietnamese Catholics that a sustainable co-existence under Communist rule within the
DRVN was not a realistic option, and that in the event of a Việt Minh victory over Bảo
Đại and his French backers, they would need to seek refuge and protection from
another source.

These concerns on the part of ordinary Catholic laity were shared by the hierarchy of
the Vietnamese Church. Moreover, the Church was a significant property holder with
substantial income, from agricultural holdings in particular. Even if the practice of
religion was able to continue in some form under in the DRVN zones, it feared the
liquidation or confiscation of its assets in the event of Hồ Chí Minh completely ousting
Bảo Đại and the French. When this was added to the broader geo-political concerns of
the Church as to the advance of communism world-wide, and having irrevocably nailed
its colours to the anti-Communist mast by the 1951, the Vietnamese Church perceived
itself as having little viable future under Communism. Its belief was that a
perpetuation of the historical cycle of persecution, replicating that of earlier centuries,
was now in prospect. By May 1954, when French defeat at Điện Biên Phủ made it
clear that the French colonial enterprise in Việt Nam was doomed to failure, and the
theocracies of ‘Bùi Phát’ stood unprotected and vulnerable, the position of the Church
had moved from one of tentative rapprochement with the government of Hồ Chí Minh in 1945, to one of irreversible alienation.

Illustration 4. Apostolic Delegate, John Dooley, at Hàm Long Church, Hanoi, 1957. 297

This was experienced differently in the North and the South. Whilst fear of the Việt Minh gradually affected much of the Southern Church, it always held a greater urgency

297 Photograph taken by me in 2003 of a photograph displayed on a Notice Board at Hàm Long Church, 2003. Original photographer unknown.
in the North. In the South, significant areas of the Mekong Delta in particularly were affected by Communist insurgency. Guerrilla attacks, sometimes affecting Church targets, intermittently occurred in Saigon. Yet the North remained the principal theatre of conflict. It was in the North that the Catholic dioceses of Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu, which had remained politically autonomous, were now under threat; no comparable Catholic regions existed in the South. It was in the North that the Việt Minh had, at least in the Catholic view, targeted Catholic interests in areas under its control. The dispersed Catholics of the South were less vulnerable to such attacks, as potential Catholic targets were less concentrated and less obvious. It was in the North that the leadership of both theDRVN, through Hồ Chí Minh and his government, and the Catholic Church, through the Papal Delegate and the Bishops Conference, were located. And, as details of negotiations in Geneva began to leak out, it became clear that it was the North that may be ceded to at least temporary control of the Việt Minh in the event of de facto national partition between North and South.
4. Departure

(a) The Geneva Accords

On July 20, 1954, the governments of France, the DRVN, and a number of sponsoring nations, reached an agreement which concluded the Geneva Conference on Indochina.298 By Article 1 of the agreement, a provisional military demarcation line was fixed near the seventeenth parallel, close by the Bến Hải River.299 All DRVN military forces were to withdraw to the zone North of the demarcation line, those of the French to the South. The Conference did not provide for the permanent partition of Vietnam. On the contrary, the Final Declaration of the Conference, issued the following day, stated that ‘the military demarcation line should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary’.300 It further provided for a united Vietnam to make ‘a free expression of the national will’ by holding a national general election in July 1956, with discussions between the parties to facilitate the election to commence in April 1955.301 Until those elections were held, civil and political administration in the respective zones would be conducted by ‘the party whose forces are to be regrouped there in virtue of the present agreement’.302 French forces were permitted to temporarily maintain the corridor from Hanoi to Haiphong which had remained largely under their control, with provision for staged withdrawal; from Hanoi...

298 The sponsoring nations being the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and China. Laos and Cambodia were also parties to the agreement. Neither the United States, nor Bảo Đại government, gave de jure assent to the Agreement, although the United States agreed to respect their terms. See Louis A. Weisner, “Vietnam – Exodus from the North and Movement to the North, 1954-5,” Vietnam Forum 11 (Winter-Spring 1988), 217.
301 Ibid.
302 Agreement, Article 14(a).
after 80 days (i.e., by October 11, 1954), from Hải Dương after 100 days (by October 31), and from Haiphong after 300 days (i.e., by May 18, 1955).\textsuperscript{303}

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\textsuperscript{303} Ibid., Article 15 (c) (2); see also Article 14(b).
In the event, French forces rapidly withdrew from the South, leaving that zone under the authority of Bảo Đại and his Prime Minister, Ngô Đình Diệm, who had replaced Bảo Đại’s earlier nominee, Prince Bửu Lộc, on July 7, 1954. Diệm, who subsequently deposed Bảo Đại via a referendum to become President of the new Republic of Vietnam on October 26, 1955, and who had never acquiesced to the division of Vietnam in the first place, refused to accede to the holding of national elections as provided for in the Geneva Agreement; hence what had been intended as a temporary military demarcation line became a de facto line of long term partition between two claimant states, each professing jurisdiction over the territory of the other. During the three months of negotiations leading up to the Agreement and Final Declaration, the French had proposed that an area coinciding with the dioceses of Phát Diệm and Bửi Chu be excised from Việt Minh control; however, as local and French military resistance weakened, and the DRVN representatives at the conference refused to accede to the proposal, it was ultimately abandoned.

Apart from providing for the regrouping of French and Việt Minh military forces to their respective sides of the demarcation line to be completed within 300 days (i.e., by May 18, 1955), thereby coinciding with the intended final French withdrawal from Haiphong, the Agreement also provided for the free transfer of civilians from one

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304 France had agreed to full independence for Vietnam – under the leadership of Bảo Đại – on June 4; U.S. State Department, *The Geneva Conference – A Retrospective View*. Internal Secret Memorandum, 1957 (?); declassified April 23, 1979, 3. Diệm requested a French withdrawal in February 1956; the French military command in Vietnam was dissolved on April 26; ibid., 4. Diệm remained Prime Minister to Bảo Đại until he defeated him at an election and Constitutional Plebiscite on October 23, 1955, and thereafter became President.

305 The United States government similarly refused to assent to the Agreement, though it, like Bảo Đại’s government, was a party to the preceding negotiations.


307 In the event, this was extended out to July 20, 1955.
zone to the other in accordance with the timetable for military transfers. The critical provision of the Agreement was Article 14(d):

> From the date of entry into force of the present agreement until the movement of troops is completed, any civilians residing in a district controlled by one party who wish to go and live in the zone assigned to the other party shall be permitted and helped to do so by the authorities in that district.

An International Control Commission, comprised of representatives of India, Canada, and Poland, would have responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the Agreement, including the transfer of civilians pursuant to Article 14(d).

(b) Moving a Million People

By October 31, 1955, three months after the French forces withdrew from their final post at Đồ Sơn, near Haiphong, some 886,881 people in the zone to the north of the demarcation line had travelled to the south. Of this figure, 125,393 were southern-born soldiers and their families in the French or Bảo Đại armies repatriated back to the South. Of the other 761,408 moving from North to South, it was estimated that some 78.6% were Catholics. About 140,000 people had gone in the opposite direction from South to North. Many were Việt Minh cadres; they also included four Catholic

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308 *Agreement*, Article 2.
311 PTUDCTN to PTT, 24 November 1955; PTTDNCH, 1088.
312 Ibid.
313 Compared to 21.3% Buddhist and 0.1% Protestant. Compiled as at September 1955; UBHTDC, *Số các làng định cư* [A list of resettlement villages] (Saigon:UBHTDC, September 1955), 4. A government press release of July 1957 claimed, without attribution, that the proportion of Catholics was 85%; PTTDNCH, 1088. See further discussion of religious composition of the Bắc di cư at p. 116.
314 Directorate-General of Information (RVN), *Operation Exodus*, 4. The Former head of the International Control Commission estimated South-North departees at 130,000; Murti, *Vietnam Divided*, 224. It was originally assumed that the relatively limited numbers moving from South to North could be accounted for by people’s fear of the Việt Minh, together with a propaganda campaign by Diệm and his U.S. sponsors to persuade people to remain. Fall, who quotes a figure of 120,000 South-North departures, suggests that theDRVN government commanded large numbers of its adherents to remain in the South to assist in any subsequent reunification campaign; Bernard B. Fall, “On Bui Van Luong,” in
priests sympathetic to the Việt Minh. Not surprisingly, this group were widely lauded and cited in DRVN propaganda directed at Catholics remaining in the North.

Huge movements of people living north of the seventeenth parallel (particularly Catholics) began as soon as news of the Geneva Accords and their transmigratory provisions were publicized. A contemporary French report noted:

Immediately after the signing of the accords, a large number of Vietnamese fled from the Communist regime into the city, abandoning their villages to regather in Hanoi and Haiphong prior to evacuation to Saigon by air and sea. After the withdrawal of French Union forces from Hanoi, refugees travelled to Haiphong to embark on the journey south. In Hanoi, 33 schools and public buildings have been placed at the disposal of the refugees.

The flight from Catholic villages throughout North and North-Central Vietnam had in fact begun well prior to the proclamation of the Geneva Agreements. The plan for a conference at Geneva on the military situation in both Korea and Indochina had been flagged since February 18, 1954. But even before that, Catholics in particular had sought to leave areas controlled by the Việt Minh.

Lindholm, ed., Viet-Nam, the First Five Years, 57; U.S. State Department, The Geneva Conference – Retrospective View, 18.

315 They were Jean Baptiste Hồ Thanh Biên, Pheroê Voõ Thaønh Trinh, Tôma Luật Minh Ký, and Louis Nguyễn Hiệu Lê; Nguyễn Thế Thảoi, Cộng Giáo Trên Quê Hương, 2: 408. See also Haas, “Catholics in North Vietnam,” 174.


317 Untitled report on situation of evacuees, author unknown, 20 August 1955, 3-4; PTTDNCH, 1088. Public buildings such as the Opera House were also employed as refugee accommodation; Directorate-General of Information (RVN), Operation Exodus, 11.

318 “Hàng Van Dân lãnh nản miênười” [Lines of thousands of evacuees head downwards], Tiếng Chuông, July 7, 1954. See also O’Ballance, Indochina War, 239.


320 For example, at least nine Catholic refugee settlements, such as the village of Khoái Lạc, had been established in the vicinity of Haiphong (in the area under French control) since 1952; Weisner, “Vietnam – Exodus from the North,” 214-5.
After the defeat of the French forces at Điện Biên Phủ on May 7, the remaining French military command had, from July 1, instigated an evacuation of their forces codenamed Operation Auvergne from the dioceses of Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu back to within the corridor of French control from Hanoi to Haiphong. The largely Catholic civilian population, who were not advised beforehand, were left vulnerable to the advancing Việt Minh. Instructions to withdraw were sent from French high command to the local field command on June 15. The operation was supposed to be secret, but perhaps news leaked out to the Church leadership; it was in this two week period that Bishop Lê Hữu Tín left Phát Diệm, and Phạm Ngọc Chi left Bùi Chu. By the time the Geneva Conference concluded, there were already 25,000 refugees in Hanoi, 15,000 in Haiphong, and 5,000 in Hải Dương.

Not all of the early Catholic refugees were from Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu. The Saigon newspaper Tiếng Chuông [Sound of the Bell] reported in early July 1954 that:

All of the Spanish Dominicans, except for the Bishop of Thái Bình, have left for the South in the face of Việt Minh occupation. 17 priests have left (for Hong Kong). They left Nam Định, headed for Haiphong, then to Hong Kong. Bishop Ubierna and his secretary Rodriguez have not been heard from. Several thousand people from Phát Diệm/Bùi Chu have already come to Haiphong. Schools and churches were turned into evacuation centres. The Social Welfare

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321 ibid., 215; “Bùi Chu và Phát Diệm,” [Bui Chu and Phat Diem] Ánh Sáng, July 9, 1954; “Hà Nội Tân Cử và Hội Cử” [Hanoi evacuees and returnees from evacuation], Dân Ta, July 19, 1954; Windrow, The Last Valley, 631. Different starting dates are for Operation Auvergne are provided in the literature; A Diệm government publication claimed it began on July 1; Directorate-General of Information (RVN), Operation Exodus, 11. Weisner and Murti suggest a staged pull-out from June 22-23; Weisner, “Vietnam – Exodus from the North”, 215; Murti, Vietnam Divided, 71. Operation Exodus estimated numbers of refugees from Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu prior to the ceasefire under the Geneva Agreement at 25,000 in Hanoi, 15,000 in and near Haiphong, and 5,000 in the Hải Dương region; 11. See also Buttenger, Dragon Defiant, 837, 1092; Lancaster, Emancipation, 329; Devillers, End of a War, 262. Murti suggests there was little impetus for evacuation at this time; only 50,000 of a total population in the effected area of 2 million chose to leave. Murti, Vietnam Divided, 72. See also Lancaster, Emancipation, 330-1.
322 Windrow, The Last Valley:, 631.
323 Dân Ta, July 19, 1954; Joseph Buttenger, Dragon Embattled, 1092.
department gives each .5 kg of rice, and 7 dong per day. Most refugees are Catholics.\textsuperscript{325}

United States Navy reports told of one family’s journey from an outlying area:

29 November [1954]. Among yesterdays’ arrivals at Haiphong was a patriarch of 102 years who travelled two and a half months on foot to bring his family from Thanh Hóa home to Phật Đệm, and then to freedom. His family numbered forty two, and consisted of five generations, the fifth represented by a two day old infant.\textsuperscript{326}

Catholics from the areas north and west of Hanoi began to occupy various Catholic missions there.\textsuperscript{327} In the North-central region, Catholic communities in the northern part of the Diocese of Hue (situated in Quảng Bình and Quảng Trị provinces) had begun to draw back to Hue city and its southern environs in the face of Việt Minh advances in the late 1940’s.\textsuperscript{328} However, the overall impetus to flee southwards, particularly in those areas of the North further removed from the Hanoi-Haiphong corridor, and where Catholics formed a lesser proportion of the overall population than in Phật Đệm and Bùi Chu, took hold from late July.

It is impossible to determine with precision how many people were evacuated from above the demarcation line to below it during the official period provided for transmigration, namely July 22, 1954, to July 20, 1955.\textsuperscript{329} Some commentators suggested that the numbers released by Diệm’s government deliberately misstated the

\textsuperscript{325} “Tất Cả Việt Đạo đều ra Khối Khu Nam về Hà Nội hoặc Hải Phòng” [All of the (missionary) priests escape the Southern Region to head for Hanoi and Haiphong], Tiếng Chợ, July 5, 1954.
\textsuperscript{326} United States Navy Commander, Pacific Region, “The Role of the United States Navy” in Lindholm, ed., Viet-Nam – The First Five Years, 71.
\textsuperscript{329} The headquarters of the Refugee Commission were burnt down in May 1955, at which time the original data was allegedly lost; Bùi Văn Lương, “Bùi Văn Luông on Bernard Fall” in Lindholm, ed., Viet-Nam – The First Five Years, 60.
actual extent of the transmigration for political or corrupt purposes.\textsuperscript{330} However, the confidential reports to Diệm from his High Commissioner for Refugees, Bùi Văn Lương, now accessible in Diệm’s archives, show that the publicly released figures, whether accurate or otherwise, were in accord with the RVN government’s private computations.\textsuperscript{331} There is no evidence of dissimilitude in the public statistics.

There were, however, considerable logistical difficulties in calculating an accurate estimate of the total number of departees. First, the figures provided only indicate those who registered for flights from Hanoi or ship voyages from Haiphong, as well as those who registered for resettlement after arriving by private means (i.e., by small boat, or by land). Some of those who arrived in this manner melded into the local population and supported themselves, and hence never registered. Second, the figures only record those who succeeded in finding a means of leaving the North; they do not record those who fled their place of residence, but were lost in the attempt to head south, or those were turned back or thwarted by the DRVN authorities, or by other circumstances, and hence never made it across the demarcation line.\textsuperscript{332} Third, some sets of figures for evacuation include people who were evacuated from North to South, but who were never intended to be part of the refugee resettlement project in the South; most particularly, French, Chinese, and other foreign nationals, and Vietnamese soldiers of the French Army, together with their dependants.

\textsuperscript{331} Such figures were provided by Bùi Văn Lương to Ngô Đình Diệm in monthly confidential situation reports throughout his tenure as Commissioner from September 1954 to December 1957; see PTTDNCH, 1088; 4041.
\textsuperscript{332} U.S. State Department, Geneva Conference – Retrospective View, 14.
Illustration 5. “A flight carrying refugees from Hanoi to Saigon.”
Source: Dân Ta, August 27, 1954.

The following statistics are taken from Lương’s confidential monthly situation reports to Diệm:

Table 4.1
Numbers of registered departures from North to South,
July 20 1954 – October 31, 1955
Wealthy residents of Hanoi who could afford the escalating cost of air travel to the South had begun cramming commercial flights since the French defeat at Điện Biên Phủ. From August 5, these were joined by free relief flights under the auspices of the French military. Places in the airlift, whilst not restricted to Hanoi residents, were obviously only available to those who were able to reach Hanoi prior to the French withdrawal from the capital as scheduled under the agreement of October 11. At its peak, the military airlift was evacuating more than 3,000 bách địa cuts per day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOVEMENTS</th>
<th>AS AT 20 JUNE 1955</th>
<th>AS AT 31 OCTOBER, 1955</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air</td>
<td>213,657 (26.4%)</td>
<td>213,657 (24.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship</td>
<td>534,761 (66.0%)</td>
<td>536,254 (60.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other means</td>
<td>61,582 (7.6%)</td>
<td>136,961 (15.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>810,000</td>
<td>886,881</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

333 PTUDCTN to PTT, 15 July 1955, PTTDNCH 4041.
334 PTUDCTN to PTT, 24 November 1955, PTTDNCH, 1088.
335 The sharp increase in reported arrivals by ‘other means’ (i.e., small boat, foot, vehicle etc.) suggests an inaccuracy in the June figures, particularly given that Làông’s report of 15 July stated that only 932 had arrived by their own means the preceding calendar month. It is possible that the numbers in this category picked up substantially in the period from mid-July until the end of October, but given that the official transmigration period had by then concluded, this seems unlikely.
336 “Vé Phi Cơ từ Hà Nội về Sài Gòn, 200 ngàn d.” [Airline tickets from Hanoi to Saigon now 200,000 dong], Ânh Sáng, July 21, 1954. Similar profiteering occurred with bus travel from Nam Đình (Bui Chu) to Hanoi, where bus fares went from 80 piastres to 1,000; “Retreat from Namdinh”, Time, July 12, 1954, 21. The last commercial flight left Nam Đình (nearby to Bui Chu) on July 1st, “Phi cử cuối cùng cắt cảnh ở Nam Đình hồi 6 giờ 40” [The last flight leaves Nam Đình at 6.40], Tiếng Chuego, July 5, 1954.
337 The Sài gôn daily Tiếng Chuego claimed that, of every one hundred airline seats, forty places were allocated to public servants and their families, twenty to politicians, professionals and businesspeople, thirty-five to ordinary Hanoi residents, and five to people with illnesses or disabilities; Tiếng Chuego, August 2, 1954.
Illustration 6. “A train journey unexpectedly delayed taking compatriots from Hanoi down to Haiphong into order to enter the South”.

Source: Dân Ta, August 31, 1954.

4,280 flights took 213,635 people from Hanoi to Saigon.\(^{339}\) Despite the theoretical possibility under the Accords of further flights from Hanoi to be facilitated by Hồ Chí Minh’s Government after French withdrawal, the adverse attitude of the DRVN Government meant that the airlift programme ended with the conclusion of the French occupation of Hanoi.\(^{340}\) From October 1954 to July 1955, all departures were by sea, or by land across the demarcation line.

Most of those who were registered with the ICC to be evacuated by ship were kept in Camp Pagoda, an overcrowded and unhygienic temporary settlement about five


\(^{340}\) As the figures in Table 4.1 indicate.
kilometres north of Haiphong. However, not everyone who was given passage South was ICC-registered; many small boats filled with escapees dodged DRVN patrols to meet up with ships of the flotilla taking the refugees southwards.

At a 1959 Conference, Bùi Văn Lượng provided the following figures as to voyages by ship:

### Table 4.2
**Ship Voyages Carrying Refugees from North to South,**  
**From July 1954**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Voyages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French ships</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American ships</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British ships</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Ships</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish ships</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>505</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total passengers carried</strong></td>
<td><strong>555,037</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

French ships began evacuating refugees from the start of the ceasefire; after a direct plea from Diệm to President Eisenhower on August 5, 1954, American naval voyages began with the deployment of the USS *Menard* on August 17, one of forty one vessels of Task Force 90 of the U.S. Seventh Fleet deployed for the purpose. Lượng did not

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343 Bùi Văn Lượng, “The Role of Friendly Nations,” 49. The table provides no final date, nor an explanation for the variance between the figure quoted for departees by ship (555,037) and that quoted in Lượng’s figure of 536,254 in Table 4.1 above. It should not be a question of departures after the figures in Table 4.1, as the movement by ships had ceased as at October 1955.

344 In August 1954, the United States Ambassador, Donald Heath, had already reported to Washington that the French response was inadequate; they were planning to transport 80,000 per month, whereas there already 120,000 encamped in Hanoi, Haiphong and Hai Duong. Weisner, “Vietnam – Exodus from the North,” 220. Seth Jacobs suggests there was also a direct request from the French to the Americans; *America’s Miracle Man in Vietnam*, 131. The very first voyage carrying the refugees South – which left
provide a breakdown as to how many F investor were transported by each of the navies, but Bernard Fall, in responding to Lường, estimated that the U.S. vessels carried approximately 310,000 passengers south, with about 270,000 refugees travelling South on French ships (less those carried on the few British, Polish and Chinese voyages), together with 120,000 Vietnamese troops and their families, and 80,000 soldiers of the French Army.345

As for those leaving by independent means, Lường quoted a figure at the 1959 Conference of 109,000, an unexplained reduction from the 136,961 claimed in his October 1955 situation report to Diệm (Table 4.1).346 Most of these were from the mid-Northern provinces of Quảng Bình, Hà Tĩnh and Nghệ An, in the dioceses of Hue and Vinh, the areas most adjacent to the seventeen parallel. Most of these ‘irregulars’ left by sea on small craft, though some walked ‘around’ the demarcation line through Laos; a few crossed the Bến Hải River. Fall asserts that ‘...a good many of the 109,000 who went south by their own means “hitched rides” on French vessels not assigned to the population movement’.347 Most of these independent journeys ended to the area immediately south of the demarcation line, which is why the Độc di cư from the mid-North were so heavily represented amongst those resettled in Thừa Thiên-Hue and Quảng Nam-Danang in the mid-South, whereas the journey by ship of those from further north took them further south, to Vũng Tàu [Cap St. Jacques] or the Saigon River.348 Table 4.3 shows that residents of eight out of ten relocated parishes from...
within the lower North-Central region were relocated within the borders of the Archdiocese of Huế:

**TABLE 4.3**

**EVACUATION OF NORTHERN PARISHES, ARCHDIOCESE OF HUẾ, 1954-5.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resettled within Huế Archdiocese</th>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Priest</th>
<th>Re-located to</th>
<th>Established Camp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An Do Tây</td>
<td>Nguyễn Văn Phương</td>
<td>Lập An</td>
<td>Văn An³⁵⁰</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mỗ Duyệt</td>
<td>Nguyễn Văn Tin</td>
<td>Phương Thuộc</td>
<td>Bên Cô</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mỗ Hưởng</td>
<td>Trần Văn Phú</td>
<td>Lương Ván</td>
<td>Lương Ván</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bình Thôn</td>
<td>Nguyễn Văn Hinh</td>
<td>Bái Đầu</td>
<td>Đại Phong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kế Bảng</td>
<td>Hồ Đắc Liên</td>
<td>Trưởng</td>
<td>Xuân Lai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loan Lý</td>
<td>Phan Văn Cơ</td>
<td>Làng Cổ</td>
<td>Loan Lý³⁵¹</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cao Xá</td>
<td>Phan Văn Cơ</td>
<td>Cam Lộ</td>
<td>Cam Lộ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mỹ Đình</td>
<td>Trần Thắng Trung</td>
<td>Huế</td>
<td>Phú Bái</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Đồng Hà</td>
<td>Quảng Ngang³⁵²</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resettled outside of Huế Archdiocese</th>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Priest</th>
<th>Re-located to</th>
<th>Established Camp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bồ Khê</td>
<td>Nguyễn Thành Hoà</td>
<td>Đà Nẵng</td>
<td>Thanh Bồ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tam Toà</td>
<td>Đỗ Bá Ái</td>
<td>Đà Nẵng</td>
<td>Tam Toà, Thanh Bình</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lương’s monthly situation reports included the June 20, 1955 figures quoted in Table 4.1 above. They also broke the total figure down into categories of departees; 655,600 registered refugees and 154,400 repatriated soldiers and their families.³⁵³ This latter group did not participate in the refugee resettlement schemes in the South, but rather

³⁴⁹ Compiled from Trần Quang Chu, Giáo Phận Huế, 3:138-40.
³⁵⁰ In May 1957, Văn An camp subsequently moved to Pleiku, in the Central Highlands, where they established the settlement of Phú Mỹ; ibid., 142.
³⁵¹ Fr. Cơ was sent to relocate Cao Xá parish after completing the relocation of Loan Lý.
³⁵² Quảng Ngang was sent to relocate Cao Xá parish after completing the relocation of Loan Lý.
were either integrated into the Army of the RVN, or made their own way into Southern society.

Lụông’s final figures, for October 31, 1955, excised ethnic minorities (particularly Nùng, Mường and Mảnh) as a separate category; 14,794 from these groups, with 746,694 other civilians, and 125,393 repatriated military. Putting aside the military contingent, the 761,488 constituted 6.2% of the total population of the RVN. After the closure of the extended ‘cut-off’ date, small numbers continued to leave the North. For example, Lụông reported to Diệm in February 1957 that by the end of January, total arrivals had risen to 888,320 (i.e., 1,439 had arrived after the cut-off date for the operation of Article 14(d)).

Official RVN figures provided a breakdown of the bắc di cư by religion as at October 1955 of 676,348 Catholics (76.3% of all bắc di cư), 209,132 Buddhists (23.5%), and 1,041 (0.2%) Protestants. A Việt Tân Xã (Vietnam Press Office) press release of July 8, 1957, claimed that 755,227 of 888,503 bắc di cư, or 85%, were Catholics; given that this figure does not make provision for repatriated military, their estimate seems unreliable. Similarly, the RVN statistics did not provide for categorization of

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354 PTUDCTN to PTT, November 24, 1955, PTTĐNCH, 1088.
356 Thirty nine people having ‘escaped’ from the North during that month; PTUDCTN to PTT, February 21 1957, PTTĐNCH, 4925. Lụông’s July 1956 report to Diệm indicated that in June, there had been thirty eight new arrivals (twenty five via Thailand), and that there were 370 people in receptions centres who had arrived after the cut-off date. PTUDCTN to PTT, July 18, 1956, PTTĐNCH, 4401. In the following month, 13.7.56, two priests, three nuns and twenty six laypeople from Minh Cầm and Côn Sê Parishes, Quảng Bình province, escaped and crossed into Quảng Trị. PTUDCTN to PTT, August 19, 1956, PTTĐNCH, 4401.
357 PTUDCTN to PTT, November 22, 1955, PTTĐNCH, 4041. A figure of 78.6% of the bắc di cư being Catholics was provided by Bishop Chí’s Committee UBHTDC, Số các Lạng Định Câu, 4.
358 PTTĐNCH, 1088.
departees by region of former residence in the North; however, estimates as to the numbers of parishioners lost to the South of the ten Catholic dioceses located above the demarcation line were provided. The effect of the transmigration on the Catholic population in the DRVN differed greatly from diocese to diocese; whereas 72.7% of Catholics left the diocese of Phát Diệm, only 11.8% of the Catholic population of Hưng Hóa diocese did so (see Table 4.5). Similar variations occurred in the rate of departures of Catholic clergy; from 88.9% in Thái Bình down to 28.4% in Hưng Hóa.

Table 4.4
Total Catholic population, and as a percentage of overall population, 1954.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIOCESE</th>
<th>1954</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi</td>
<td>177,027 (8.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiphong</td>
<td>135,000 (9.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinh</td>
<td>180,000 (10.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bửi Chu</td>
<td>209,000 (23.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hưng Hóa</td>
<td>67,500 (5.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bắc Ninh</td>
<td>68,000 (6.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phát Diệm</td>
<td>110,000 (27.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanh Hóa</td>
<td>90,000  (6.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thái Bình</td>
<td>160,000 (10.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lang Sơn</td>
<td>5,000  (1.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

359 Lương’s presentation to the 1959 Conference did provide for an estimate by religion of 794,876 Catholics from a total of 928,152 bắc di cư, or 85.6%, the remainder being bundled together as ‘Buddhists and Protestants’. Lương, “Role of Friendly Nations,” 49. The figures provided by Chí’s Committee are likely to be more accurate.

360 At the start of 1954; i.e., prior to the transmigration to the South.

361 Because of the lack of Church infrastructure to undertake accurate accounting, all figures relating to the Catholic population in Lang Sơn should be regarded as very approximate.
Table 4.5
EMISSION OF LAITY AND PRIESTS FROM NORTHERN DIOCESES, 1954

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIOCESE</th>
<th>Laity</th>
<th>Priests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Departures</td>
<td>% of Catholics To migrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiphong</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinh</td>
<td>57,080</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bùi Chu</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>71.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hưng Hóa</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bạc Ninh</td>
<td>38,000</td>
<td>55.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phát Diệm</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanh Hóa</td>
<td>18,500</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thái Bình</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lang Són</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6
EFFECTS OF MIGRATION OF LAITY AND PRIESTS FROM NORTHERN DIOCESES, 1964

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diocese of</th>
<th>REMAINING IN DIOCESE</th>
<th>CATHOLIC BÁC DI CŪ IN THE SOUTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Pop.</td>
<td>Catholic Pop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi</td>
<td>2,500,000</td>
<td>155,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiphong</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
<td>54,617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bạc Ninh</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
<td>35,423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hưng Hóa</td>
<td>1,920,000</td>
<td>70,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lang Són</td>
<td>350,000</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phát Diệm</td>
<td>450,000</td>
<td>58,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bùi Chu</td>
<td>895,000</td>
<td>165,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

362 Compiled from Lê Ngọc Bích, Các Vị Giám Mục and Công Giáo và Dân Tộc, Giáo Hội Công Giáo. This figure seems very high; compare to Giáo Hội Công Giáo’s estimate of ‘more than 60’; 284.

363 Compiled from figures per diocese throughout Tòa Tổng Giám Mục Sài Gòn, Việt Nam Công Giáo Niên Giám 1964. It warns that all figures pertaining to the situation of those remaining in the Northern dioceses are best estimates due to difficulties of communicating with those dioceses, although the editors conclude ‘although as to the number of Catholics [in the DRVN], we have reason to believe the numbers are fairly accurate’. ibid., 184.

364 i.e., Catholics living in the South as a percentage of all Catholics from the diocese, both those still in the North and those based in the South.

365 Calculated on same basis as for laity.
<p>| | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thái Bình</td>
<td>1,660,891</td>
<td>88,652</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>13 (-)</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>79 (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanh Hóa</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
<td>47,000</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>27 (-)</td>
<td>18,500</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>64 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinh</td>
<td>1,890,000</td>
<td>156,195</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>124 (-)</td>
<td>57,080</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>70 (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What factors account for the significant regional variations in departure for both Catholic laity and clergy between the various northern dioceses? Article 14(d) of the Geneva Agreement provided for the free and unfettered movement of those who wished to move North-South or South-North during the prescribed transmigration period; and that such free movement be monitored, supervised and enforced by the International Control Commission (ICC) (Articles 34-6). Murti suggests that the DRVN authorities were initially content to allow free passage to those who sought to leave the DRVN zone, but that their attitude rapidly hardened in an alarmed reaction to the vast numbers taking early advantage of the opportunity to head south. In any case, by mid-1955, there were many reported instances of both Việt Minh Military forces, and DRVN administrative cadres, actively hindering or preventing intending departees from reaching the Hanoi – Haiphong departure points. Their ability to thwart the efforts of those wishing to leave lay partly in military force, partly in administrative obfuscation; authority to issue departure permits lay with the occupying authorities in their respective zones. Other tactics reportedly included the use of women and children to blockade roads, naval patrols to prevent seaborne departures, the prohibition of the sale of property by those who sought to leave their home districts, and a propaganda campaign portraying a life of enslavement and misery awaiting them in the South. In their First Interim Report (December 25, 1954), the ICC noted:

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367 Murti, *Vietnam Divided*, 74-9
Similarly, the High Command of the People’s Army of Vietnam, while they did co-operate with the Commission and took measures to secure freedom of movement in the case of about 8,000 Phù Đốc refugees, have so far done little to develop adequate administrative arrangements, with the result that complaints continue to pour in. Restrictions on internal movements can hardly assist in the effective exercise of the right of freedom of movement under Article (d).\textsuperscript{371}

The two most oft-reported incidents of interference with free movement by the DRVN authorities came at the villages of Lụt Mỹ, in Nghệ An province (Vinh diocese), and at Bả Làng, in Thanh Hóa province (and diocese).\textsuperscript{372} Twelve people were reported killed at the Catholic village Lụt Mỹ, with fifty wounded and two hundred arrested, when DRVN authorities surrounded the village after the 3,000 residents demanded permits to travel south.\textsuperscript{373} As to Bả Làng, the Catholic newsagency \textit{Fides} reported that:

> During the first days of January [1955], 10,000 Catholic refugees who were concentrated at Bả Làng in order to get to South Vietnam were stopped by force and ultimately led into the interior before the International Commission was able to intervene. In this operation, 5,000 Việt Minh soldiers were involved in taking over by assault the church where the refugees, who had only improvised armaments, were quickly overwhelmed. All were taken to an unknown destination and a part, among whom was one priest at least, was arrested....The mobile section of the International Control Commission, which was detained at Thanh Hóa under the pretext of guaranteeing their safety, until Bả Làng was no longer being ‘combed’, finally arrived on the spot with the decision to search out with every means the refugees that had disappeared.\textsuperscript{374}

As a consequence, those who lived in dioceses furthest removed from the departure points (e.g., Hùng Hóa, in the North West), and those who lived in areas under the most

\textsuperscript{371} Reproduced in Allen W. Cameron, ed., \textit{Vietnam Crisis; a Documentary History.} (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1970), 355. The Third Interim Report, of April 1955, also concluded that the recommendations of the Commission were not being fully implemented, and that the recognition of rights granted under Article 14(d) was unsatisfactory; ibid., 365.

\textsuperscript{372} Murti, \textit{Vietnam Divided}, 74-9; Dalloz, \textit{War in Indo-China}, 189.

\textsuperscript{373} Ghedo, \textit{Cross and Bo Tree}, 63.

\textsuperscript{374} Quoted ibid., 62. See also Phan Phát Huơn, \textit{Việt Nam Giáo Sĩ}, 2:39-44. For other reports of alleged Việt Minh interference with intended departees, see ibid., 44; Ghedo, \textit{Cross and the Bo Tree}, 60-70; Lê Xuân Khoa, \textit{Việt Nam 1945-1995}, 1: 237-8.
comprehensive and long-standing Việt Minh control (such as most of Vinh and Thanh Hóa, in Liên Khu IV), encountered the greatest difficulties in reaching those registration points. In contrast, the process of departure for those in Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu, which lie close by to Hanoi and Haiphong, (and some of whose residents had been pre-evacuated during Operation Auvergne), was, whilst by no means facile, still less complex and fraught than from the Việt Minh controlled zones.\(^{375}\)

However, the physical and logistical difficulties in journeying to the departure points cannot account for the entirety of the divergence of transmigration rates for the various dioceses.\(^{376}\) Why was it, for example, that only 33.4% of the Catholic residents of the Diocese of Hanoi, who had relatively ready access to means of departure, chose to leave, less than half the proportion of those from Phát Diệm, who had to journey to Hanoi or Haiphong to do so?\(^{377}\) This may partly be accounted for by the relative lack of military conflict within the capital after 1946, and to the positive attitude of some Hanoi residents – including some nationalist Catholics – towards the departure of the French, and the return of Hồ Chí Minh to national leadership. But the attitude of the bishops may also have played a part. The Archbishop of Hanoi, Joseph-Maria Trình Như Khuê, decided to remain in the North, and lent his support to the stance of the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Dooley, that bishops and clergy should remain where they were, and not flee to the South. Dooley warned the clergy that:

> All those who have the charge of caring for souls – after the example of the perfect Priest who did not abandon his flock – must remain with their own faithful, with the exception, naturally, of cases in which for special reasons they

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\(^{375}\) On November 30 and December 1, 1954, military forces of the Bảo Đại government assisted several thousand people leave the coast of Bùi Chu, but thereafter, the operation was discontinued in the face of increasing Việt Minh attacks; Weisner, “Vietnam – Exodus from the North”, 220.

\(^{376}\) Haas, “Catholics in North Vietnam,” 176.

\(^{377}\) It should be noted that a large proportion of the Catholics resident in the Archdiocese of Hanoi prior to 1954 lived in villages on the city’s outskirts, rather than in the capital itself.
have received written authorization to leave, given by the competent authorities.\textsuperscript{378}

However, Dooley’s letter may have been more equivocal than first appears. First, the exemption for authorization by ‘competent authorities’ (i.e., the bishops) seems to have been widely utilized, if not always provided in writing. The early departure of the likes of Bishops Tù and Chi was no doubt seen by many of the clergy and laity as an implicit authorization to do the same.

Second, and more importantly, if the ‘flock’ had made a decision to go south, then it would follow that the duty of their pastor would be to travel with them. For diocesan priests, their mode of ministry is normally seen as territorial; that is, they minister within their diocese, usually within a parish to which they are appointed. But the extraordinary circumstance of most of the Catholic laity abandoning their diocese and moving elsewhere is not contemplated by such arrangements. Does the obligation then become one of staying \textit{in situ} territorially, or of following the people to whom the given priest is assigned to minister? The majority of the northern clergy chose the latter option, even though Archbishop Dooley’s letter, on the face of it, instructed them to follow the former course. Normally, this form of judgement would be made by the bishop, from whom the diocesan clergy would take instruction. But what if, as in five of the ten northern dioceses, the bishops had themselves fled?\textsuperscript{379} One recent author suggested that the instruction to remain in place was deliberately designed to have its prima facie meaning contradicted:

\textsuperscript{378} Quoted in Gheddo, \textit{Cross and Bo-Tree}, 70; Specific orders to the same effect were given by the Superior of the MEP to their French Missionaries, orders which were largely obeyed; ibid., 70. See also Lancaster, \textit{Emancipation}, 344. Dooley himself remained at his post in Hanoi, under close confinement, until his expulsion in July 1959; ʻMột Giáo Sư Sĩ Học,ʼ \textit{Giáo Hội Công Giáo ở Việt Nam}, 3:411.

\textsuperscript{379} The United States Navy reported on November 26, 1954, that ʻA Dominican priest at Haiphong has been ordered by his Superior to depart the city permanently, along with all other Dominicans in the area. Dominicans have played a major role in the evacuation, being especially helpful in refugee campsʼ; U.S. Navy, “Role of the United States Navy,” 71.
At the end of August 1954, Rev. Mai Học Lý, Vicar General of the Diocese of Phát Diệm, sent a letter to all of the diocesan priests who lived under the DRVN “If you do not try to keep your flock to stay here, or if you yourself depart, then you will have your [priestly] faculties withdrawn, and be punished”. At first glance, this seems to imply good will. But at the top of the letter was the word ‘diversa’, which in Latin means ‘opposite’. Lý also preached at the Phát Diệm church “The Pope has instructed that all Catholics in the [Northern] dioceses must go south. The North will have no priests. You must follow your priests and go South with God”.  

Outside of the Archdiocese of Hanoi, the letter from Archbishop Dooley had minimal affect on the conduct of parish clergy.

Table 4.7.
Bishops of the Northern Dioceses, 1954

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIocese</th>
<th>Bishop</th>
<th>Appointed</th>
<th>Remained or Departed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi</td>
<td>Trịnh Như Khuê</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Remained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiphong</td>
<td>Trương Cao Đài</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Departed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bắc Ninh</td>
<td>Hoàng Văn Đoàn</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Departed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hưng Hoà</td>
<td>Jean Maizé MEP</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Remained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lang Sơn</td>
<td>Felix Hedde OP</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Remained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>André Jacq OP</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Remained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thái Bình</td>
<td>Santos Ubierna OP</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Departed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bửu Chu</td>
<td>Phạm Ngọc Chí</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Departed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phát Diệm</td>
<td>Lê Hữu Tự</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Departed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

381 Fall, Vietnam Witness, 59.
382 Compiled from Lê Ngọc Bích, Các Vị Giám Mục and Công Giáo và Dân Tộc, Giáo Hội Công Giáo.
384 Died in Qui Nhơn May 20, 1974.
385 Until 1959; then expelled, repatriated back to France.
386 Died in Lang Sơn diocese 1960.
387 Until November 1958, when expelled to Laos.
But in every one of the ten dioceses above the seventeenth parallel, the proportion of clergy leaving for the South exceeded the proportion of laypeople doing so (Table 4.5). Haas attributed this to the suggestion that ‘panic must have struck them. The bad news from China, and their own political involvement, have been factors which determined their decision’. 392

Fieldwork would indicate that whilst some priests left by themselves out of a sense of self-preservation, the more frequent motivation was a desire to preserve the welfare of the parish community, seen as imperilled by the advent of Communist rule, by leading the community to the South. Moreover, some of the factors leading individual lay Catholics to stay in the North, such as commercial and landholding interests, and attachments to their quê and ancestral graves, were far less likely to apply to Catholic clergy, who were usually appointed to parishes outside of their own immediate quê.

(c) Reasons for Leaving

Why did so many Catholics – laity and clergy – take advantage of the opportunity to head south provided by the Geneva Agreement? What prompted so many Northerners to leave, and why were so many of them Catholics? Some commentators have placed great emphasis on the ‘psywar’ activities of Colonel Edward Lansdale and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in instigating a propaganda campaign to entice people south. 393 Lansdale and his subordinate, Lucien Conein, had initiated a campaign to

| Thanh Hóa | Louis De Cooman MEP | 1935 | Absent391 |
| Vinh | Trần Hữu Đức | 1951 | Remained |

390 Died at Gò Vấp April 24, 1967.  
391 Retired to France, March 24, 1954.  
392 Haas, *Vietnam, the Other Conflict*, 21.  
encourage residents in the new DRVN – particularly Catholics - to cross into the South. Leaflets were dropped from planes; astrologers were asked to prepare calendars predicting dire fates for the Communist leadership and those under them; rumours were spread to frighten the Northern population to cross the demarcation line. When a significant proportion of Northern Catholic population did move south, a number of commentators attributed causal agency to Lansdale’s campaign. The argument runs that Lansdale campaigned to get people to leave, people did leave, and hence they left because of Lansdale’s campaign. Thus George Kahin wrote:

[As] the former CIA and White House Indochina specialist Chester Cooper has noted, “Although there was great uncertainty, even anxiety about their fate under a Communist regime, the vast movement of Catholics to South Vietnam was not spontaneous”. He and others have observed that the Catholic Church, as well as the Americans, French and Diệm mounted a campaign to arouse Catholics to the dangers of freedom of worship and encouraged the hierarchy and its adherents to move South...Data subsequently available tends to support the late Bernard Fall in his conclusion that ‘Although there is no doubt that hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese would have fled Communist domination in any case, the mass flight was admittedly the result of an extremely intensive, well-conducted, and in terms of its objective, very successful American psychological warfare campaign’.

In a more recent work, Seth Jacobs, again quoting Chester Cooper, makes the same assumption:

[The] United States promoted the exodus through one of the most audacious propaganda campaigns in the history of covert action. At the pinnacle of this operation was Colonel Edward Lansdale, a leg-end in the annals of cold war cloak-and-dagger exploits... In 1954, Lansdale’s assignment was to plan and implement a campaign of subversion north of the 17th parallel. As he recalled,

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394 Ibid., 158-9.
395 Ibid. 158-9.
396 Haas, Vietnam Conflict, 22; U.S. State Department, Geneva Conference in Retrospect, 11; Devillers & Lacouture, End of a War, 334; Burchett, North of the Seventeenth Parallel, 323-4.
398 George McT. Kahin, Intervention, 76.
“U.S. officials wanted to make sure that as many persons as possible, particularly the strongly anti-communist Catholics, relocated to the South”...

Lansdale’s most inspired appeals were to North Vietnamese Catholics. Soldiers of the South Vietnamese Army [sic; no such body yet existed] shipped north and dressed as civilians, distributed flyers advertising that “Christ has gone to the South” and “The Virgin Mary has departed from the North”. Psychological warfare teams posted enormous posters in Hanoi and Haiphong depicting communists closing a Cathedral and forcing the congregation to pray under a picture of Hồ Chí Minh; the caption read “Make your choice”.... Unsurprisingly – in light of such ballyhoo and the more tangible factor of the United States laying our about $89 for each refugee in a country with an $85 per capita income – Many North Vietnamese were persuaded to relocate South.399

The implicit suggestion that the bắc di cư left because their superstitious nature led them to be put in fear, in turn because they heard CIA-inspired rumours that the Virgin Mary was heading south makes a similar, unsustainable leap of logic.400 Lansdale himself later told Stanley Karnow that:

People don’t just pull up their roots and transplant themselves because of slogans. They honestly feared what might happen to them, and their emotion was strong enough to overcome their attachment to their land, their homes, and their ancestral graves. So the initiative was very much theirs – and we mainly made the transportation possible.401


400 Haas suggests that the ‘Virgin has gone south’ explanation for the transmigration arose from reports by a French journalist of Catholics carrying statues and images of the virgin on their flight to the South. Haas; Vietnam, the Other Conflict, 21.

401 Karnow, Vietnam, a History, 238. Lansdale’s biographer, Cecil B. Currey, whilst otherwise making much of Lansdale and Conein’s propaganda efforts, ultimately conceded that ‘most Northerners needed no rumors, no black propaganda tricks, to move South; Unquiet American, 159.
The propaganda campaign by the government of the DRVN similarly portrayed the bàc di cu as lacking free agency in their departure, invariably attributing their migration to the formulaic phrase dòng bào bị cuốn ép và dụ dỗ (compatriots who were forced and seduced).\footnote{As to the many contemporary works published under Party-state sponsorship in the DRVN to this effect, see Appendix I.} Those doing the forcing and seducing were the ‘American Imperialists and the Ngô Đình Diệm clique’ (Đế Quốc Mỹ và Bề Lũ Ngô Đình Diệm). In reality, a
very different set of motivating factors, and different agents of change, were at work in northern Catholic society.

Fieldwork undertaken for this study suggests that the reasons for the bac di cut for leaving were far more complex, diffuse, and in their own context, rational, than the above explanations would suggest.\(^{403}\) Similarly, Piero Gheddo’s hypothesis, that ‘they fled to preserve their faith’, whilst not lacking validity, is an over-simplification of a complex interplay of motivations.\(^{404}\) Many Northern Catholic families had connections to the French military, or to the lực lượng tự vệ (self-defence forces) in Phát Diệm and Bửi Chu.\(^{405}\) They feared the reprisals that are often exacted on the vanquished in military conflicts. Many had already been exposed to fighting with the Việt Minh within their home districts through the duration of the First Indochina War.\(^{406}\)

Other bac di cut respondents cited a fear of land confiscation; several small landholders who had lived in Phát Diệm told of having heard of the land reform campaign in Việt Minh controlled areas and its effect on landholders, and Catholics in particular. Even though the land reform campaign really took hold from 1954 onwards, after the DRVN authorities assumed control of the whole of the North, its commencement in DRVN-controlled areas did precede the Geneva Agreement.\(^{407}\) The prospect of corvee labour,

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\(^{403}\) For details of fieldwork undertaken for this study, see Appendix XI.

\(^{404}\) Gheddo, *Cross and the Bo Tree*, 70-7.


and onerous agricultural taxes on landholders, again based of stories of events in Việt Minh controlled areas, also caused great concern.\footnote{The policy of heavy agricultural taxes on landholders having been introduced in areas of the North under DRVN control in 1951; Porter, \emph{Imperialism}, 211; Fall, \emph{Two Vietnams}, 155. Hammer stressed fear of being forced into corvéé labour as a significant motivating factor; \emph{Struggle for Indochina}, 345.}

Catholics in \emph{Liên Khu IV} had experienced criminal trials, executions and imprisonment of Catholic clergy and lay leaders, incidents that led them to fear for their religious freedom, suggesting that they might be marked out for particular attention when all resistance to the Việt Minh ceased.\footnote{See, for example, the trial at Hùng Yên referred to at p. 92.}

Murti, relying on observations by staff of his ICC, noted that:

> Certain priests and nuns in Phát Diệm had been arrested by the local authorities and condemned by the provincial People’s Court at Ninh Binh for various crimes attributed by the authorities against them. In spite of Government’s declaration and guarantees, the leaders of the Catholic Church and priests felt that they could not preach their religion freely in the North...\footnote{Murti, \emph{Vietnam Divided}, 87. The same staff noted a fear amongst the \textit{bác di cư} of the North being destroyed by American nuclear bombs; ibid., 83. See also references to religious persecution of Catholics by DRVN cadres in Gheddo, \emph{Cross and Bo-Tree}, 47-49.}

This popular Catholic sentiment needed no propelling by external forces.

Table 4.8 uses the Archdiocese of Hue as an example showing some events which occurred during the First Indochina War, showing the extent to which the fears of Catholic clergy had a tangible basis in recent history:

\begin{center}
\textbf{Table 4.8.}
\textbf{Events in the Archdiocese of Hue 1946-53}\footnote{Compiled from Trần Quang Chu, \emph{Giáo Phận Huế}, 3:115-7; 134-8.}
\end{center}

\begin{tabular}{|l|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{DATE} & \textbf{PARISH} & \textbf{PRIEST} & \textbf{EVENT} \\
\hline
THÚA THIÊN PROVINCE & 1946 & Linh Thủy & Phan Văn Cơ & Flees parish \\
\hline
& 1946 & Đá Hàn & Huỳnh Văn Thế & Invaded, parish moved to Phú Cẩm \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Ngọc Hồ Ngô Văn Hiến</td>
<td>Assassinated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Hà Thanh Trần Thanh Giản</td>
<td>Invaded, flees parish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>QUẢNG TRỊ PROVINCE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Bố Liêu Phan Đức Sắc</td>
<td>Flees parish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>I hi Hà Huỳnh Đình Kinh</td>
<td>Invaded, parish moved to Lai An</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Đại Lược Nguyễn Thế Thảo</td>
<td>Assassinated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Mai Xa Chánh Nguyễn Văn Huệ</td>
<td>Imprisoned by French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>I gò Xá Nguyễn Văn Tin</td>
<td>Flees parish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Hội Yên Nguyễn Văn Bằng</td>
<td>Flees parish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Phước Môn Nguyễn Văn Giác</td>
<td>Flees parish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>QUẢNG BÌNH PROVINCE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Cồn Hàu Nguyễn Đăng Hùng</td>
<td>Killed in battle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Bồ Khê Trần Văn Đức</td>
<td>Flees parish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Bích Khê Đỗ Khách Tuấn</td>
<td>Assassinated four days after ordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>I am Tây Đỗ Khách Mỹ</td>
<td>Imprisoned, later murdered (1952)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Kẻ Sen Lương Văn Thể</td>
<td>Imprisoned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Thuận Hòa Nguyễn Văn Nhĩ</td>
<td>Imprisoned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>An Inh Minor Seminary</td>
<td>Evacuated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Phước Son Monastery Abbott Barnabé imprisoned (died 1953)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Phước Son Monastery Abbott Tuyên, 10 monks, imprisoned; monastery evacuated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Phước Mon Orphanage</td>
<td>Evacuated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>CATHOLIC INSTITUTES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>An Inh Minor Seminary Evacuated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>CATHOLIC INSTITUTES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other northern Catholics became disillusioned after the DRVN cadres took over local administration in the wake of the Geneva Agreement. Philippe Devillers and Jean Lacouture note that the lived experience of many northern Catholics was coloured by these contacts:

> …the sectarian spirit and narrow-mindedness of many Communist cadres (canbo [sic]) contributed greatly to the success of Diệm’s manoeuvres. Some cases of Communist oppression, ruthlessness, heavy taxation, confiscation and requisitioning of property, and impositions of all kinds did much to justify the propaganda of the Diệm regime – particularly since news of such behaviour spread like wildfire, confirming all fears and forebodings and giving even greater impetus to the flight.⁴¹²

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RVN propaganda cited this case:

A typical case was that of Dinh Van Thong. Thong came from the village of Chi Thien on the Red River delta. The title to one and a half acres of land was the Communist enticement for his submission. But the land given him was not as good as that which he had formerly tilled as a tenant farmer, and the taxes in ripe extorted by the Communists took most of his crop. The remainder was not enough to feed his family. The final blow came when on January 3 [1955], it was announced that everyone would be required to do many months of forced labour, the nature and locale of which were not disclosed. Thong decided to flee.413

Whilst ties to the ancestral lands and graves were indeed strong, and leaving them behind was no doubt a wrench to many people, this clearly did not necessarily act as an inhibitor to departure. Several interviewees still living in Phát Diệm diocese said that their family had taken a decision to divide, in the hope that those remaining could keep hold of their lands under the incoming regime.

To flee south to avoid periods of religious persecution or other difficulties was not an unprecedented phenomenon for Northern Catholics. For example, in the first decades of the twentieth century, Archbishop Mossard of Saigon had actively courted Northern Catholics, particularly from Vinh, to come South to establish communities in new agricultural areas.414 Another contingent left the area of Bùi Chu in the 1920’s to resettle in the Southern Highlands.415 Others had left the North to resettle in the South in the late 1940’s, either in the wake of the 1945 famine, or because of earlier fears of the Việt Minh, or to seek employment.416 The fears of those leaving in 1954-5 were far less conditioned by Lansdale’s campaign, or by a predilection to superstition, than

413 Christian Science Monitor, February 5, 1955, quoted in Directorate-General of Information (RVN), Operation Exodus, 4-5.
414 Nguyễn Thế Thảo, Cổng Giáo Trên Quê Hương, 260.
415 Hardy, Red Hills, 91. A 1932 plan to move 50,000 peasant farmers from North to South was not acted on; Ralph B. Smith, Vietnam and the West (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), 132.
416 Murti, Vietnam Divided, 83.
by their collective memory of the fate of Catholic communities in the nineteenth
century and earlier, and a fear that such persecution may have been about to recur.

The enmity between the Church and the Việt Minh awakened recollections of an era,
little more than seventy years earlier under the Nguyễn monarchs, when the
encroachment into their Catholic village world of antagonistic họa (non-Catholics)
combatants, goaded on by antipathetic central authorities, could often lead to death,
destruction and dispersal of their village communities. In 1954, many rural Catholic
communities feared that this pattern was about to be replicated. To flee in the face of
the perceived threat of persecution was a pre-conditioned and considered mode of
conduct, not one taught as a novelty by outsiders. As Bernard Fall put it, “the
Tonkinese Catholics fled because they had had a long experience at the hands of their
Non-Catholic fellow citizens, not because of the psychological warfare campaign”.

The advent of universal Việt Minh control throughout the North after the Geneva
Agreement was not the only incentive for departure. Although not as severe or
widespread as in the famine of 1945, 1954 was a period of significant food shortages,
suggesting that many left the North to avoid hunger. In addition, there were factors
attracting people to the South, and in particular to Saigon–Chợ Lớn. For members of
Hanoi’s urban middle class, there were many opportunities for commerce and
professional employment available to them in the wake of French withdrawal;
opportunities that would not thereafter be available in Hanoi. Saigon newspapers
abounded with advertisements for Northern businesses moved South. Mr. Vũ Đình
Tân, for example, advertising himself as a famous traditional physician from Hanoi, let

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417 Fall, The Two Viet-nams, 154.
elite quickly sold up their assets and headed south with the liquidated proceeds; Ernest Zaug, “End of a
it be known that his practice was now open on Rue Frère Louis, Saigon.\textsuperscript{420} For others, family ties with relatives in the South meant that the transmigration created an opportunity to reunite with them. For landless peasants, and others on the socio-economic margins of northern Catholic rural societies, the movement south raised at least the possibility of a more prosperous life for those with little to lose. Ellen Hammer justifiably concluded that:

> The religious factor was undoubtedly an important one in their [the \textit{bặc di cu’s}] decision to leave, but it would seem that revulsion against forced labour and the tight economic and political controls and heavy levies imposed on them by the Communists weighed heavily among refugees, regardless of their religion.\textsuperscript{421}

However, if these factors applied to all residents of the DRVN as asserted, why is it that at least 76\% of departees came from the Catholic minority? Some commentators attributed the disparity to the organizational and logistical capacities of the Catholic clergy, suggesting that if the \textit{luông} majority had been similarly organized, then total departures from the North would have exceeded two million.\textsuperscript{422} There were also ‘pull’ factors specific to Catholics in drawing people South. The appointment of the Catholic Ngô Đình Diệm to political leadership of the RVN – particularly a Catholic whose \textit{quê} (ancestral homeland) lay North of the seventeenth parallel – also acted as a powerful incentive to Northern Catholics to move southwards. At the request of Bảo Đại, Diệm assumed the Prime Ministership of HIS government on July 7, 1954. Contemptuous of Bảo Đại as a Francophile collaborator, Diệm sought his own mandate and in an election of October 23, 1955, assumed the role of president of the newly-constituted Republic of Vietnam.\textsuperscript{423} Whilst Diệm was not from the Catholic heartland of Bàu Chu and Phát Diệm and had allegedly been politically estranged from their leadership over their collaboration with the Bảo Đại government, the \textit{bặc di cu} now turned to Diệm in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{420} \textit{AÙnh Saùng}, July 9, 1954, 4.
\item \textsuperscript{421} Hammer, \textit{Struggle for Indochina}, 345.
\item \textsuperscript{422} Director-General of Information (RVN), \textit{Operation Exodus}, 8.
\item \textsuperscript{423} Doàn Thêm, \textit{1945-1964}, 184.
\end{itemize}
the hope that their religious and other interests would be best protected by a co-
religionist. Diệm assiduously cultivated the image of himself as saviour of the
intended departees, travelling to Hanoi in June, July and August of 1954 to implore
people to join him in the quest for a free Vietnam in the non-Communist zone.424
Duncanson described Diệm’s arrival to assume his premiership:

On 24 June Diệm arrived in Saigon. He was welcomed at the airfield by some
500 people, including personal friends, Roman Catholic priests, village notables
with goatee beards, and in the front rank an old gentleman with a red turban,
royal blue tunic, and bare feet shod in wooden pattens, representing the
Catholic communities of Annam who were to provide the new Government with
some semblance of popular support. Diệm also received an enthusiastic
message from Mgr. Pham Ngọc Chi, the Apostolic Vicar of Bui Chu, assuring
him of the ‘support unto death’ of the 1.5 million Roman Catholics in the North,
but Chi was generally considered to have exceeded his authority over Roman
Catholics in Tonkin, where Diệm represented a little-known personage from
Annam, were divided in their attitude to the new Prime Minister.425

Nguyễn Ngọc Tấn claimed that ‘refugee elites such as the priests of Phát Diệm…
were strongly anti-Diệm from the early months of the Diệm regime’.426 Tấn’s claim
of strained relations prior to 1954 between Diệm and the Ngô clan on the one hand,
and Tự, Chi, and the ‘Bùi Phát’ leadership on the other, may be overstated. In June
1946, Tự had intervened directly with Hồ Chí Minh to secure the release of Diệm from
Việt Minh captivity.427 In any case, the badass certainly looked to a Catholic Prime
Minister for assistance, notwithstanding that he did not share their quê (home area).

424  Ánh Sáng, July 28, 1954; Devillers, End of a War, 334; Lancaster, Emancipation, 343. He also
visited Haiphong on August 9, 1954. Nguyễn Thịnh Thảo, Công Giáo Trên Quê Hương, 2:408. Devillers
has Diệm making speeches in Hanoi on June 30 and August 2, whereas Ánh Sáng puts the date of the
second speech at July 25.
425  Lancaster, Emancipation, 328. Whilst this distinction may have initially have been true [I could find
no evidence for it in contemporary reports], the badass soon rallied around Diệm as their patron,
irrespective of where they came from beyond the seventeenth parallel.
426  Nguyễn Ngọc Tấn, “The ‘Miracle of Vietnam’: The Establishment and Consolidation of Ngô Đình
427  Thư and Huy, Giám Mục Lê Hữu Tự, 117. George Carver also makes the point that Diệm’s power
base amongst Catholics from central Vietnam were a quite discreet group from their co-religionists of
The influence of the Catholic Church

It should not be assumed from the above that each bắc di cư therefore made an autonomous, rational and uninfluenced decision, without resort to external input, and unencumbered by external influence. But the agent of greatest influence was not Lansdale and his propaganda campaign, nor pressure from the new regime in the South; it was pre-eminently, for rural Catholics, the decisive influence of their parish clergy. As seen in Chapter two, the social and organizational patterns of Northern rural Catholic societies placed the priest in a position as de facto leader in the civil as well as the spiritual realm, thereby either influencing or directly making important communal decisions.

So it was in the decision to leave or not leave their home parish during the period afforded by the Geneva Agreement. Fieldwork respondents from Northern parishes from which large numbers left, spoke almost without exception of their parish clergy addressing the subject of whether to stay or to go during a celebration of Sunday Mass, and of the pre-eminent influence of their opinions. Some priests took a rational approach, placing before their parishioners some reasoned considerations as to why they should depart. Others appealed to their parishioner’s primal fears, or to what can appear to be superstition; ‘God is not here any more’. Still others offered no explanation at all, simply advising their congregation that ‘I am leaving’, or that ‘we are leaving tomorrow’, in the expectation that parishioners would unhesitatingly comply and join with him in a communal journey southwards. These same respondents suggested that, rather than feeling manipulated or overridden by their parish clergy, they were pleased to receive this instruction; it was ‘natural’ to look to the priests for guidance on this issue; some regarded it as a source of comfort to have the decision


428 None reported being told ‘the Virgin Mary had headed South’.
made by someone who they regarded as wiser in the ways of the outside world than they were themselves.

Not all of the Northern clergy left for the South. Some were impeded from doing so by DRVN strategy described above. Others were old and tired or sick and incapable of undertaking the often rigorous journey. Still others had links to the Việt Minh, and looked forward to their coming to power. Finally, some may have stayed put as a consequence of the instruction to do so, contained in Archbishop Dooley’s Pastoral Letter of July 23, even though it was generally ignored.

Fieldwork interviewees in Phaùt Dieäm (in this case, all laypeople, some of whom had lived near the Cathedral) agreed that the episcopal hierarchy had no direct effect on their attitudes or decisions. They said that to them, Bishop Lê Hữu Tữ had been a distant and inaccessible figure; the Church’s directives had always been mediated entirely through their parish clergy, and it was their local clergy who held their attention and trust. This is not to imply that the hierarchy were without influence. It was they who informed their clergy as to the Church’s attitude to the Việt Minh; the organizational structure employed in both Phaùt Dieäm and Bùi Chu dioceses in particular meant that the fears held by Bishops Tữ and Chi as to the likely

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consequences of the loss of ‘sovereignty’ within their dioceses were readily conveyed to their parish clergy. The letter quoted above (at p. 122) from Monsignor Simon Mai Hộc Lý, Vicar General of Phát Diệm, and hence principal liaison between the bishop and his clergy, is evidence of priests being instructed on the issue of whether to stay or go. However, it is unclear as to the extent to which that letter, or other episcopal interventions, were a decisive element in shaping clerical attitudes. The extent of episcopal influence over the clergy, let alone the laity, should not be overstated; in some dioceses where the Bishops refused to leave, large numbers of clergy nevertheless chose to depart (e.g., Hanoi, where Archbishop Khue’s decision to stay did not stop more than half the priests of the Archdiocese from leaving). There does not seem to have been directives from northern Bishops to the clergy to leave; to have

Illustration 8. “A Father shoulders his trunk to head to the South.” Source: Dân Ta, August 30, 1954.
done so would have been to contradict the instructions in the letter of the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Dooley.\footnote{See. at p. 122, the rather strange argument that the instruction was intended to be read as ‘diversa’, i.e., opposite.}

As noted in Table 4.6, the proportion of clergy departing was greater than the proportion of laity in every one of the ten northern dioceses. Two reasons for this can be postulated. First, the clergy believed that in the event of Việt Minh reprisals against Catholics, they would be the most likely targets for retribution. Second, their leadership of the parish communities meant that they bore the onus to ensure their protection; if they thought that a significant sector of the parish population intended to flee, then their innate priority was to preserve the unity of the community, and remain at its head. The popular Redemptorist magazine Đức Mẹ Hằng Cứu Giúp [Our Lady of Perpetual Succour], itself recently moved from Hanoi to Saigon as part of the transmigration, offered an explanation in an article entitled Tại sao các Linh Mục vào Nam? [Why Did the Priests Go South?]:

To suffer death for God is a precious honour, something to be desired if judged from the standpoint of individual priests; but if viewed from the standpoint of the collective life of the Vietnamese Church, this is a [source of] great harm.

It takes twelve years in minor and major seminaries to form a priest; then that priest can help how many people? But not if they fall into the hands of the Communist Việt Minh, so that they can take away [their] freedom. As far as the priests are concerned, that would be unwise, and as far as the Vietnamese church is concerned, it would be very destructive. Who would look after the wandering sheep? Who would undertake the work of bringing virtue to North Vietnam when peace returns, when the people can reverently follow Christianity again?

In ten years of living under the Vietnamese communists, we have seen all of their cunning strategies to eliminate religion. We know that, for however long they hold power, for however long they have the means at hand, we will not be able to do anything. We must withdraw, with the agreement of our superiors.
But we withdraw in order to do what? We withdraw to the South not to find food and clothing, not to have grand houses, not to occupy power or [high] office. We go South to preserve our way of life, to prepare for the future, so that on a day not so far away, on the road to victory, we will return to the North, to place God upon the altar, to create love and trust with our non-Catholic compatriots, to build independence and unity in happiness and peace for all people.\textsuperscript{431}

Even allowing for the article’s polemical style, it provides considerable insight into the attitude of the \textit{bác di cư} clergy. First, their decisions to leave the North were placed within the both the context of Vietnamese history, and second, within the scriptural tradition of Christian history. Whilst conscious that Tertullian’s maxim ‘the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church’ held a central place in the history of Vietnamese Catholicism, such self-sacrifice was not to be courted or provoked. Through flight, self-defence, and the invocation of French protection, their forebears had sought to avoid the annihilation of martyrdom for generations. Rightly or wrongly, many of the northern clergy now saw a similar fate awaited them. Simply succumbing to their anticipated persecution made no sense. At the same time, to seek refuge in the South was initially seen merely as a tactical retreat, an interim period of preparation for an eventual triumphant return to the North. As will be seen in the following chapter, this attitude coloured much of the \textit{bác di cư}'s attitudes in the early phase of their southern resettlement.

The concept of leading into exile the people committed to their pastoral care was not only consistent with the Vietnamese local precedents. Leading one’s wandering flock through strange lands, and towards stability, peace, and freedom to worship one’s God, is also a deeply scriptural theme. As Moses led the people of Israel through the forty years in the desert (Num 14); as the same people of Israel were brought back to

\textsuperscript{431} \textit{DMHCG}, 71 (April 1955): 101, 124.
worship at the temple after the Babylonian captivity (2 Kin 24; 2 Chr 36); as Jesus called on Peter to ‘feed my sheep’ (Jn 21); the bắc di cư clergy consciously understood their shepherding role to arise explicitly from within this tradition.

Viewed in this light, the decision-making role which the bắc di cư clergy frequently took upon themselves can be seen as an act of service, rather than an arbitrary exercise of authority. If the decision to stay or go was seen by the Catholic communities as a substantially religious matter, then it follows that the religious leader would be viewed as appropriately playing a substantial role in shaping those decisions. The abrogation of an independent role in decision-making by individual bắc di cư did not imply a loss of agency on their part, but rather a consensual handing over of the decision to stay or go to a process of communal determining, a process employed by their Northern Catholic ancestors for generations, in which the parish priest stood at the head of the communal hierarchy of decision-making. Luce and Sommer interviewed participants in one such communal decision:

“Our whole village came in the tenth month of 1954... First we had a meeting in our village and discussed whether to come or not. A few wanted to remain because they did not want to leave the graves of their ancestors. Of course, none of us wanted to do that, but we were afraid of the Việt Minh. We talked long into the night, and decided to move to the South where we knew we would be free to follow our religion”. The old man paused, and it was Duong who took up the story again. “You see, we are Catholics” he explained. “The Việt Minh claimed that Catholicism was the religion of the French, and of those who sympathized with the French. Even though they sent a man to our village to tell us we could live in peace with the Việt Minh, we did not believe them. We had heard too much about their tricks”. “Did those who wanted to stay in the old village come also?” we asked. “Oh yes, we all came. It was the entire village’s decision. After this, the trip was very hard. Only Father Nam remained in good spirits, even though he had the greatest burden of all. In the evenings, he would gather us around the fire to pray.”

Luce and Sommer, Vietnam: The Unheard Voices, 138-40.
Illustration 9.
Priest and parishioners on the journey South on a U.S. Naval vessel; Source: Vietnam Virtual Archive, Texas Tech. University, Item VA 000865

It was the clergy who took also responsibility for the implementation of such decisions, and mediated their consequences in the community’s relationship to the outside world. This pattern of consensual clerical leadership of the community, which so characterized the Northern Catholic communities, occurred again and again during the process of resettlement and integration of the bắc di cư into Southern society.
5. Arrival

(a) Patterns of Resettlement

There were five modes by which individual Northern Catholic families moved South and resettled. First, some left with their fellow Catholic villagers as a single group, which remained intact upon resettlement in the South. For example, the Parish community of Tam Tòa, from the North-central city of Đồng Hới, moved as a single entity, taking with them many of their church fittings, and re-established themselves (under the same name) in the outer suburbs of Danang.\textsuperscript{433}

Second, there were those who left by themselves, but located and regrouped with other members of their home village upon arrival in the South. Parishioners of Tôn Đạo Parish, in Phát Diệm diocese, were advised by the assistant priest of their parish, Fr. Vũ Giả Khắc, to head south; but, perhaps out of deference to his Parish Priest, he did not gather the parishioners to go with him. However, on arrival in the South, most members of the parish who had taken his advice to leave, sought each other out, and resettled together in zone five of the Gia Kiệm resettlement area.\textsuperscript{434} Of course finding relatives or fellow villagers in an unfamiliar locale, amidst more than half a million people, was a far from easy process; in October 1954, Độc Mộc Hàng Củi Giupyter

\textsuperscript{433} For another example, see O’Daniel, \textit{The Nation That Refused to Starve}, 40. The impression that all of the bắc di cư migrated in this manner is incorrect. Robert Scheers’ assertion that ‘Usually, the refugees had moved as whole villages, with their hierarchies and leadership generally intact’, is overstated, even though the phenomenon was far from uncommon; Robert Scheer, “Genesis of United States Support for the Regime of Ngô Đình Diệm”, in Gettleman et al., (ed.) \textit{Vietnam and America}, 121. The Commanding Officer of the USS Mountrail told a \textit{National Geographic} journalist that ‘whole villages came on board at a time: maybe two small villages of 800 or 900 each, maybe a larger one of 2,000. We berth them by villages. They like to be near their own’; Gertrude Samuels, ‘Passage to Freedom in Vietnam’, \textit{National Geographic} (May 1955) 866.

\textsuperscript{434} From fieldwork interviews undertaken for the purpose of this study.
announced that it was so overwhelmed by requests to locate separated relatives that it could no longer offer that service.435

Third, some bàc di cut left with their fellow Catholic villagers as a single group, but then dispersed upon arrival in the South. Whilst the maintenance of the unity of the parish without defection in their transplanted environment was one of the principal aims of the clerical leadership of the bàc di cut communities, it was an aim not always attained. Several factors accounted for this. Sometimes individuals or families located southern contacts, or discerned opportunities, which offered the possibility of a better life than they were enjoying in the resettlement camps. Others came as members of a community whose home area in the North supported a mix of occupations or livelihoods, but which resettled in an area that supported only one of those economic activities. Particularly problematic were northern parishes comprised of both wet-rice farmers and fishermen; communities often had to choose between resettlement areas that would support either, but not both activities; the ‘losers’ often split away from the resettled community. This sometimes occurred when people from the same dioceses, but from different parishes, aggregated on arrival in the South. One example is the story of two fieldwork interviewees, Mr. and Mrs. Q.:

We left by ourselves in June 1955 by sea from the coast of Nghệ An, and were picked up by a Polish ship, which took us to Danang. We were there for about three months when we were invited to go to Phan Thiết, where a camp for people from Vinh diocese, called Vinh Thủ, had been founded by Father Hồ Sĩ Cai. We didn’t know Father Cai, or many of the other people from the camp, because although it was full of Vinh people, not many were from our Parish. Our Parish Priest didn’t go South. The problem with Vinh Thủ camp was that it was built with fishing and aquaculture as its income source, but I wasn’t from the coast; my family were farmers. Fr. Cai understood this, and arranged for Father Nguyễn Quang Diệu to transfer anyone who wanted to go to the new camp of Vinh An being established by the government at Đắk Mil, in Đắk Lak

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435 DMHCG, 67 (December 1954): 345.
province. We decided to go in early 1957, and have lived in Đắk Mil ever since. All of the fishermen stayed at Vinh Thuỷ.\textsuperscript{436}

The fourth pattern of settlement were those who left the North by themselves, and on arrival in the South formed ad hoc communities with other bāc di āc, usually from the same Northern diocese. This often arose from the original travelling groups being too small to constitute a viable unit for resettlement. At their own behest, or at that of the authorities, they were added to other groups from the same diocese (though not the same parish) to form composite communities. But even these new aggregations had some generalized sense of identity drawn from a common diocese in the North. For example, the largest of all the bāc di āc resettlement projects, that of Cái Sän in the Mekong Delta, was organized in this fashion, with people collected into communities arranged by Northern diocese.\textsuperscript{437}

The fifth group were those who left the North by themselves, and on arrival melded into Southern society (usually in Saigon or Chợ Lớn), rather than remaining as part of distinct bāc di āc communities. It is difficult to determine the numbers which fell into this category, as they did not register with the Southern authorities for resettlement subsidies or other assistance.\textsuperscript{438} A PTUDCTN report of November 1955 estimated that some 140,000 bāc di āc (or 18.4\%) lived dispersed through the community (particularly in Saigon), whilst another 24,400 (3.2\%) lived in unofficial resettlement centres outside of the Commission’s jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{439} Refugees from Hanoi’s upper and middle classes, in particular, tended to avoid using the Diệm government’s resettlement support

\textsuperscript{436} For a similar instance, related to the community of Đại Hải, which moved as a single entity from the Diocese of Haiphong to Sóc Trăng in the South, see Dân Chử, July 17, 1956.

\textsuperscript{437} See p. 154.

\textsuperscript{438} Weisner estimates them at 300,000, which seems very high, unless it includes repatriated soldiers and their families; “Vietnam – Exodus from the North”, 232.

\textsuperscript{439} PTUDCTN to PTT, November 22, 1955; PTTDNCH, 1088.
structure, relying instead upon their private resources and familial connections.\footnote{An RVN official noted that the non-registrants ‘were mostly former government or military officials, and a number of them now practice in the liberal professions or are merchants’; Lý Trưng Dũng, “Integration of Refugees in Việt Nam,” Migration News, 1958, 5 (July-August), 11. See also Gareth Porter, “Imperialism” 275. Diệm had encouraged Public Servants from the North (particularly his own North Central region) to come south, to join the RVN’s nascent public infrastructure in substitution for the departing French; “Thủ Tướng Ngô Đình Diệm Nghiên cứu Thẻ Thực Giúp do Công Chức từ Trung Bắc Vào Nam” [Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diệm Investigating the Capacity to Assist Public Servants from the mid-North to come South’], Tiếng Chưởng, July 29, 1954.} Diệm also encouraged northern intellectuals and bureaucrats to move directly to Saigon to participate in the development of academia and the bureaucracy in the RVN. Resettlement figures suggest that non-Christians were also more likely to integrate privately into the Southern community; the proportion of non-Christians who registered for resettlement was less than the proportion of those who traveled south. 92.6% of camps were described as ‘Catholic’ – meaning Catholic clerical leadership and largely Catholic populations – against a Catholic ratio of 76% (or 78%) of registered Bắc di cư. As at November 1955, 265 out of 286, or 92.6% of resettlement centres were described as ‘Catholic’, meaning under Catholic clerical leadership and largely comprised of Catholics, though non-Catholic minorities often lived in the camps as well. This proportion of the total is far greater than the actual proportion of Catholics amongst the Bắc di cư.\footnote{PTUDCTN to PTT, November 22, 1955; PTTDNCH, 4042.}

Resettlement of the refugees had three distinct but overlapping phases. The initial phase fell during the period of operation of Article 14(d) of the Geneva Agreement. The flow of refugees from the North was such that no government, let alone a nascent one, could readily have coped with the logistical problems which the new arrivals posed. During this initial phase, most of those evacuated via Hanoi and Haiphong were housed in forty-two trạm tiếp-cư (reception stations) near the points of disembarkation.
Map 8. “These are the areas which the National Government have established for you to earn a living and establish your business”. From Nêu Bạn Là Người Đi Tân Cưới (If you Are an Evacuee) (Saigon: Press Office of Republic of Việt Nam 1954), 14.
in Saigon, Chợ Lớn, and Vũng Tàu.\textsuperscript{442} Most were kept under canvas or in existing public facilities such as schools, army barracks (particularly those previously occupied by the French), churches, parks, and other open grounds; for example, in land adjoining the Tân Sơn Nhứt airport, and the Phú Thọ racecourse.\textsuperscript{443} Although initially countenanced by the government, who had few other options available to cope with the dramatic influx, this was not a viable long-term solution.\textsuperscript{444} The owners or users of the facilities soon required the return of these premises to use for their original purposes; moreover, the lack of proper residential infrastructure meant that these holding camps were prone to both disease and fire.\textsuperscript{445} For example, on July 7, 1956, an official of the PTUDCTN reported to the President’s office:

We have received a request from residents of Thành Tâm, Phú Thọ, asking to be allowed to set up an official camp, or if necessary to move to another place, to receive compensation for loss incurred. It is impossible to set up an official camp there for the following reasons.

1. The land belongs to the Education Department and the Army, who have said on many occasions that they want it back;
2. The Mayor of Saigon will not allow it.

Concerning their request for compensation, this is also impossible because:

1. They did not occupy the land under the instructions of the government;
2. There is no fund for the payment of compensation.\textsuperscript{446}

\textsuperscript{442} PTUDCTN to PTT, July 15, 1955, 1; PTTDNCH, 4041. As noted above, most of those leaving from the North-Central zone found immediate sites in the adjacent South-Central zone. All air flights out of Hanoi landed at Tân Sơn Nhất airport, on the outskirts of Saigon.

\textsuperscript{443} According to Lancaster, Diệm obtained an advance of 500 million piastres from the Indochina Bank of Issue to buy essential supplies for the refugees, and set up the evacuation centres; Lancaster, \textit{Emancipation}, 343. See also McAlister, \textit{Refugee in Retrospect}, 2. As to conditions in one of the transit camps, see “Trai Phú Thọ Lâu” [Phu Tho Tent Camp], \textit{Tự Do}, February 18, 1957.

\textsuperscript{444} As to the initial government sanctioning of this form of requisition of properties for use as transit camps, see the government report on the evacuation (author unknown), August 20, 1955; PTTDNCH, 1088.

\textsuperscript{445} Trần Trung Dũng, Deputy Minister for National Defence, to PTT, March 23, 1956, re Phú Thọ Camp. PTTDNCH, 9855.

\textsuperscript{446} Đỗ Văn Chữ, office of PTUDCTN to Office of PTT, PTTDNCH, 4417.
In the second phase of resettlement, which began before the 300 day period specified by the Geneva Agreement had concluded, the majority of the Saigon, Chợ Lớn and Vũng Tàu-based refugees moved to more permanent settlements in the provinces immediately surrounding these urban centres. Whilst they were scattered across several provinces, the highest concentrations were in those to the immediate north of Saigon, namely Gia Định, Biên Hòa and Long Khánh.\(^\text{447}\) Sometimes, the choice of sites was undertaken as a result of self-selection by the bác di-cut, sometimes because of government edict, or of the activities of the UBĐTTC. Sometimes their transfer was predicated on the government-perceived need to move the majority of the bác di-cut out of urban Saigon and Chợ Lớn, so as to prevent overcrowding, price inflation on housing and commodities, and inter-communal resentment over employment, commercial opportunities, etc. Resettlement in this second phase (as distinct from that which

\(^{447}\) In 1960, Biên Hòa and Bà Rịa provinces were sub-divided and renamed, to include Đồng Nai, Long Khánh and Phước Tuy; PTĐNCH, 2182.
followed) was not as a result of a comprehensive, strategic, state-sponsored plan, but instead was a mixture of happenstance, ad hoc decisions, and unauthorized self-determination. This was all predicated on a need to find somewhere — anywhere — for the **bặc đì cut** to be located in a manner which was as little disruptive to the infrastructure of Saigon (and to a lesser extent, Danang), as possible. As early as August 1954, the Saigon daily *Tiếng Chưông* reported that the RVN had granted to Bishop Chi (who had only arrived in Saigon three days before) a grant of 25,000 hectares in areas of Biên Hòa and Xuân Lộc districts (then in Long Khánh province), with the intention that U.S. aid would enable the establishment of forty villages, each housing approximately 2,500 people. Bishop Tô is said to have chosen Gia Kiêm, on the road from Saigon to Đà Lạt, as the site for resettlement of refugees from Phát Diệm diocese. By December 1954, 271,208 **bặc đì cut** had already been relocated, rising by April 1955 to 462,799.

By December 1955, there were 257 camps officially registered with the PTUDCTN. These resettlement camps were segregated in several aspects. First, they were largely segregated from the local Southern population. Most were located in thinly populated areas, where disruption to local landholding and agricultural activity was minimal, and local interests could remain largely unthreatened. During the term of the camp’s separate existence from the surrounding community, the permission of

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**448** *Tiếng Chưông,* August 30, 1954. It was intended that each of these villages would have a church, a school, a well, and ultimately, permanent electricity. These plans were ultimately implemented. Chi also acquired land in his own account, especially at Suối Cúng, in the district of Hố Nai. See PTUDCTN to PTT, November 17, 1955. PTTDNCH, 4042. A camp was established at Biên Hòa as early as September 1954; *Dân Ta,* September 21, 1954.

**449** Thọ & Huy. *Giám Mục Lê Hữu Tự,* 34


**451** PTUDCTN to PTT, January 21, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4041.

**452** The resettlement centres were referred to as **trại** (camps) for several years, even though many of them quickly took on the character of permanent village settlements.

**453** There were exceptions, where North-South resentments did centre around a perceived economic detriment to the local population; see pp. 238-40.
camp administrators was required before non-\textit{bác di cu} could enter the camps.\footnote{This had changed by late 1956, when the PTUDCTN was actively promoting the integration of the resettlement centres into provincial and local administrations; see Lữông’s letter to provincial chiefs, September 11, 1956; PTĐDNCH, 1181.} Second, they were segregated on a religious basis. Whilst minimal numbers of non-Catholics co-existed in camps with Catholics, all camps were designated as either Catholic, Buddhist, or Protestant.\footnote{There were also five camps reserved for \textit{bác di cu} from ethnic minorities; two for members of the Nùng minority (in Phan Ri and Bình Thuận), two for Mường (in Bình Hòa and Pleiku), and one for Mán (near Buôn Mê Thuột). There were a further 10,054 Nùng living dispersed throughout the community in Bình Thuận Province; PTUDCTN to PTT, January 21, 1956; PTĐDNCH, 4041. There were six camps dedicated solely to industrial development (three in Bình Hòa, three in Gia Định), and eleven camps based solely on fishing and aquaculture; ibid.} Third, the camps were segregated on the basis of Northern geography, by ‘home’ province or diocese. Those who arrived as part of a single parish unit were encouraged to resettle as such. As noted above, those who arrived as ‘oddments’ were usually grouped with others from the same region so that there was some form of common bond shared by residents in a given camp.

The third phase of resettlement came about as a result of the Diệm government endeavouring to relocate the \textit{bác di cu} so as to fulfil strategic goals of an economic, military and political nature. In this phase, refugees were moved from relatively crowded areas such as suburban Saigon-Chợ Lớn, Gia Định, Bình Hòa, and the Central Coast, to the less populous regions of the Mekong Delta and the Central Highlands. Apart from placing population stress on already overcrowded urban areas, the tendency of the \textit{bác di cu} to aggregate in large numbers in the one locality – a tendency exacerbated by government policy – had also brought such stresses to previously underpopulated areas. For example, the population of the province of Bình Hòa doubled in the twelve months to August 1955 to 265,000, of whom nearly 130,000 were \textit{bác di cu}.\footnote{Weisner, “Vietnam – Exodus from the North”, 232.}
Their distribution throughout the RVN was uneven; as at October 1955, before the third phase of resettlement had taken full effect, 79.8% of those registered for resettlement resided in the Southern Provinces, against 15.0% for the Centre, and only 5.2% in the Highlands (see Table 5.1 below).

Table 5.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registered Bắc Di cư camps and populations by region, October 1955</th>
<th>Camps</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>152 (64.4%)</td>
<td>467,858 (79.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>61 (25.8%)</td>
<td>88,074 (15.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>23 (9.8%)</td>
<td>30,197 (5.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>586,130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As at December that year, of thirty one provinces of the RVN which housed resettlement camps, five accommodated more than 30,000 Bắc Di cư (of which four were located in the South, in the vicinity of Saigon, and only one in the centre), whilst another seven had been between 10,000 and 30,000. The remaining nineteen provinces had less than 10,000, and many of them had less than 1,000 (see Table 5.2 below). Moreover, many second-phase resettlement camps had to be dissolved and relocated, either because of an adverse security situation, or because the land allocated was inadequate for the population, or because there was no capacity for available employment and commercial opportunities to provide for economic sustainability.

457 PTUDCTN Report to PTT on activities, November 24, 1955; PTTDNCH, 1088.
459 See for example the situation in Sa Đéc; PTUDCTN to PTT, Report on visit to Sa Đéc, November 22, 1955; PTTDNCH, 4042.
460 E.g., Khâu Bằng A camp, cited in Appendix VI
461 E.g., Cầu Vàng (Bắc Ninh) camp, cited in Appendix VI.
Map 9. Saigon and environs, c. 1964.  Source:

Illustration 11.

*Bác di cư*

housing near Bìên Hòa.

SOURCE:

Vietnam, Government of the Republic of,

*Why have 800,000 Refugees left North Vietnam?*

Saigon:

Vietnamese National Government, 1956

Near Bìên Hòa the Vietnamese Government erected a number of two family unit wood frame houses. From Saigon to Cáp St Jacques one sees small settlements built of these new homes. The majority of refugee housing, however, is thatch, but as there is only slight climatic change in southern Vietnam, this is sufficient and blends with the normal housing in the area.
Table 5.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>OCT 1955</th>
<th>DEC 1955</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biên Hòa</td>
<td>129,041</td>
<td>130,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thủ Đấu Mồt</td>
<td>17,451</td>
<td>17,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gia Định</td>
<td>156,338</td>
<td>160,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mỹ Tho</td>
<td>37,876</td>
<td>33,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bến Tre</td>
<td>15,234</td>
<td>14,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tây Ninh</td>
<td>36,962</td>
<td>31,298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vĩnh Long</td>
<td>2,747</td>
<td>2,764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bà Rịa</td>
<td>10,371</td>
<td>20,493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chợ Lớn</td>
<td>28,093</td>
<td>26,127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saigon</td>
<td>25,862</td>
<td>25,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Xuyên</td>
<td>4,017</td>
<td>4,017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vũng Tàu</td>
<td>1,504</td>
<td>1,504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sóc Trang</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>3,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tần An</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quảng Tri</td>
<td>9,411</td>
<td>9,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thừa Thiên</td>
<td>6,044</td>
<td>6,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danang</td>
<td>10,212</td>
<td>10,202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quảng Nam</td>
<td>747</td>
<td>602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quảng Ngãi</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phú Yên</td>
<td>1,603</td>
<td>1,811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khánh Hòa</td>
<td>5,126</td>
<td>5,347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bình Thuận</td>
<td>50,938</td>
<td>52,674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninh Thuận</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>3,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blao</td>
<td>16,785</td>
<td>17,387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gougah</td>
<td>2,263</td>
<td>3,701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dran</td>
<td>4,560</td>
<td>5,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Đà Lạt</td>
<td>1,464</td>
<td>1,464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Me Thuot</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>1,694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djiring</td>
<td>1,330</td>
<td>1,457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleiku</td>
<td>847</td>
<td>698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kontum</td>
<td>1,950</td>
<td>1,950</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

462 As to October 1955 figures, see PTUDCTN to PTT, November 24, 1955; PTTNDNCH, 1088. For December 1955 figures, see PTUDCTN to PTT, January 21, 1956; PTTNDNCH, 4041.
Table 5.3, showing the resettled population as a proportion of the total in some of the provinces adjoining Saigon as at November 1957, indicates the extent to which the *bắc di cư* in some places overwhelmed the local population, rising to as much as 54.8% in Bà Rịa (near Vũng Tàu):

**TABLE 5.3**
Resettled *bắc di cư* as proportion of provincial population in selected provinces, November 1957.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROVINCE</th>
<th>CAMPS</th>
<th><em>BẮC DI CƯ</em></th>
<th>VILLAGES</th>
<th>LOCAL POP.</th>
<th><em>DI CƯ</em> AS %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gia Định</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>146,164</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>216,826</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bà Rịa</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23,564</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19,467</td>
<td>54.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vũng Tàu</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2,577</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11,823</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bến Tre</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12,036</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>52,386</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tân An</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biên Hòa</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>84,310</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13,914</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tây Ninh</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20,483</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32,193</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thủ Đầu Môt</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6,329</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20,636</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diệm’s justification for this policy of population redistribution was to provide a force of economic, military and political stability in underdeveloped and vulnerable areas, thereby providing the RVN with an economic powerhouse and a bulwark against Communist insurgency, whilst at the same time relieving the pressure on areas stressed by overpopulation and inadequate land or economic opportunities for pre-existing refugee settlements in the overcrowded areas.  

It also served as a precursor to the more general land reform campaign which was to follow.  

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463 PTUDCTN to Province Chiefs, November 25, 1957; PTTDNCH, 4929. Percentage computations are mine.

464 Although the USOM reported that camps on the Central Coast – some of which were moved – were amongst the most economically viable and self-sufficient of all the camps; Leland Burrows, *Statement to the Congressional Committee on Foreign Aid*, June 14, 1956, 12.

This third phase began not immediately upon the Northerner’s arrival, but rather in 1956. The first project in this phase was the construction of the Cái Sán Agricultural Resettlement Project in the Mekong Delta, straddling the provinces of Kiềng An and Long Xuyên. Some 50,000 báéc di cõ were relocated to Cái Sán during 1956 and 1957.\(^{466}\) Residents were located on the banks of a series of nineteen subsidiary canals running off a central canal. Eighteen of these canals housed Catholic settlements, ordered by Northern, or ‘home’ diocese; the last housed Buddhist and Protestant settlements.\(^{467}\) Settlers on one of the eighteen ‘Catholic’ canals could come from anywhere within that diocese, but only from there.\(^{468}\)

The other main area chosen by the Diệm administration for relocation of the báéc di cõ was the Central Highlands region, in particular the areas around Đa Lạt, Pleiku and Buôn Ma Thuột.\(^{469}\) Plans to resettle báéc di cõ in the highlands, particularly those in the overcrowded region around Đà I âng, were formulated as early as July 1955.\(^{470}\) A report commissioned by the Diệm government claimed that only 109,000 out of 5,700,000 hectares in the Central Highlands had been opened up for economic exploitation by the

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\(^{466}\) Secretariat of State, Cái San, 8. Lê Xuân Khoa, Việt Nam 1945-1995, 1:264. The original plan had been to relocate 20,000 families, comprising 100,000 people, to Cái Sán; Minister for Land Reform to PTUDCTN, December 10, 1955; PTTĐNCH, 4405.

\(^{467}\) Report of Minister for Land Reform re Cái Sán, July 6, 1956; PTTĐNCH, 4405.

\(^{468}\) The remaining canal was dedicated to the settlement of Buddhists and Protestants.

\(^{469}\) Some 15,000 members of ethnic minorities from the North who joined in the transmigration were immediately settled in the Central Highlands, well prior to the ‘third phase’ relocation of kinh Vietnamese; Weisner, “Vietnam – Exodus from the North,” 234-5.

\(^{470}\) PTUDCTN to PTT, July 15, 1955; PTTĐNCH 4041.
As with Cái Sắn, Diệm sought to provide the Central Highlands with both a force for the economic development of under-exploited regions, and a bulwark against communist insurgency. In a report of August 8, 1956, the government representative in the Central Highlands, Nguyễn Sơn Duyễn, noted:

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471 Gerald Cannon Hickey, *Free in the Forest: Ethnohistory of the Vietnamese Central Highlands, 1954-1976* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), 18. The report ignored the fact that most of this area was inhabited by ethnic minority tribespeople, although Diệm government policy arising from the report did endeavour to address their needs; ibid., 18-9.

472 A further motivation was the relief of overcrowding in existing resettlement areas, particularly those in the central coastal provinces such as Thừa Thiên Hue and Quảng Nam – Danang. See “15.368 dòng barbar được gia nhập dân số đô thị Đà Lạt” [15,368 refugee compatriots agree to populate the Đà Lạt region], Tự Do, April 22, 1957. The new settlements in the Central Highlands were not reserved for bác di cư alone; for example employed and landless Catholics from the Archdiocese of Hue, who had not been involved in the 1954-5 movements, established settlements at Phú Mỹ, near Pleiku, and Buôn Hồ,
During a conference at Kontum on May 10 and 11 1956, the President decided on a residential plan for the Central and Southern Highlands, with the aim of wiping out the activities and organization of the VC, at the same time:

- Solving the overpopulation problem in a number of central provinces;
- Leading the people in the mountain region to improve their material lives, guiding them on the path to civilization and progress, so that they might join the ranks of the State’s founders and liberators.
- To clear and exploit the land in the highland area, and to create new consumer markets in areas rich with forest resources, minerals, etc. in the mountain jungles, and opening up new national industries.

The programme has the aims stated above, to disperse the people in the densely populated central region, to improve their material standard of living, and to open up the highlands for exploitation of its resources. To carry out this task, the government will implement a strong political operation with the people, particularly those in the Highlands, and to stabilize areas where the VC has caused confusion in places that are densely populated and difficult to control.

Despite Diệm’s absolute insistence on the need to relocate bắc di cư into these new projects, the enthusiasm of their response was at best mixed. Having already once relocated into areas where they had settled in relatively congenial surroundings, with a means of making a living and in the company of their co-religionists, most were highly reluctant to again uproot to areas known for economic and climatic harshness, malaria and other disease, and persistent insurgency from both the Việt Minh, and the so-called sects such as the Hỏa Hảo, Cao Đài, and Bình Xuyên.

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Quảng Đức, Hả Lang, and Đắc Lý, in Đắc Lác Province, near Ban Mê Thuột; Trần Quang Chu, Giáo Phận Huế, 3:142.

473 PTTDNCH, 4411. In fact, the decision to transfer some of the bắc di cư to new resettlement regions was neither new nor spontaneous; the importance of the statement is that it synthesizes Diệm’s policy priorities and their underlying motivations in this ‘third phase’ of settlement. For similar comments, see minutes of the previous meeting on July 24, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4408.

474 The Bình Xuyên, was a gang (hardly a sect) involved in both paramilitary and criminal activities, until eliminated or de-militarized by Diệm in 1955. On July 31, 1955, they attacked and set fire to the settlement of Phước Lý, in Biên Hòa, one of the earliest ‘second phase’ refugee settlements. The camp was ransacked, 190 homes were destroyed, and 2,400 people left homeless. See Operation Exodus, 12.
Some scholarship has conflated Diệm’s undoubted political and military motivations in placing the bắc di cư in strategic positions in the Highlands and the Mekong Delta in this third stage of resettlement, with the creation of a de facto ring of refugee settlements to the underpopulated, and hence militarily vulnerable, areas to the north and west of Saigon during the second phase. 475 Jean Lacouture, for example, suggested that Diệm deliberately created a ‘ring of steel’ by strategically placing settlements of loyalist bắc di cư around Saigon to protect himself both from communists and from potential enemies within the RVN:

As a result, surrounded by fortifications turning them into strategic hamlets, some villages filled with refugees formed a sort of a belt surrounding Saigon; it was as though the beleaguered [Diệm] regime wanted to fortify its capital with an iron guard composed of those people most hostile to communism and most violently attached to militant Catholicism. 476

However, the available evidence does not support this hypothesis. The main strategic goal to be served in the second phase of resettlement was not so much the placement of the bắc di cư in strategic areas, as the need to get them out of facilities within the urban areas, particularly as the immense numbers of arrivals threatened to swamp the available urban infrastructure. Whilst Diệm had always seen the bắc di cư as a potential source of support, the possibilities arising from their strategic placement were not fully appreciated until the resettlement process was well underway. In his autobiography, Bến Giòng Lịch Sử [On the Sidelines of History], Rev. Cao Văn Lưân, one of Diệm’s priest-advisors from his native Quảng Bình, suggested that the

475 Lê Xuân Khoa suggests that the impetus even for these third phase resettlements came largely from USOM and the MSU; Việt Nam 1945-1995, 1:261. However, evidence from the Presidential archive suggests otherwise; see p. 159.

possibility of utilizing the bắc đi cư in a strategic fashion came as a revelation to Diệm. Referring to an October 1954 conversation, Luân claims he told Diệm:

If you think about it, do you really believe that you and the people around you have used all your strength to deal with this situation? The refugees from the North and Nghe Tinh Binh [North Central region] are a burden, but also a strength. Have you yet thought about using that strength? Our refugee countrymen are presently living in miserably and precariously in temporary camps, dozens of people cheek by jowl in rooms of a few square metres. How could you have the heart to abandon them in such a state? Outside of you, there is no one who will look after the refugees. If you leave now, they will die, because they can’t return to the North, and there is no other leader who will help them to live in a strange land. Everyone knows that neither Bảo Đại nor Nguyen Van Hinh want to help the refugees.\(^\text{477}\)

Whilst this version of events may constitute self-aggrandizement on Luân’s part, it at least tallies with the lack of any documentation in the Presidential archive suggesting strategic placement of the bắc đi cư prior to late 1955, by which time the second-phase patterns were well established. At the opening of the Transmigration ‘window’ provided by the Geneva Accords, neither Diệm nor anybody else really knew how many people would avail themselves of the opportunity. Whilst he was openly active in soliciting Northerners (particularly northern Catholics) to come South, this does not of itself imply that he had an immediate plan for their strategic deployment.\(^\text{478}\)

If anything, the evidence suggests that, in the early stage of the transmigration, Diệm’s administration were initially so overwhelmed by the numbers arriving at a time when the government was still establishing itself that the central imperative was to find a place to put them, virtually anywhere, but preferably outside of the major population centres. Lương felt that the process of allocating the bắc đi cư to resettlement areas in


\(^{478}\) As evidenced by his two visits to Hanoi to address public meetings during the period prior to the capital’s return to the DRVN. “Chính phủ sẽ đòi lại các vùng Bùi Chu và Phát Diệm” [The Government will demand back the areas of Bui Chu and Phat Diem], Ảnh Sáng, July 9, 1954.
Saigon’s surrounding provinces was merely a precursor to moving them into more remote areas, which would take advantage of the self-resettlement choices which many had made. In a confidential November 1955 memorandum to Diệm after a demonstration by Northerners outside the presidential palace, he told him:


They are afraid that they will be resettled in a remote and secluded area. Therefore, we should allow for them to first be resettled in relatively close-by areas, so as to create a favourable precedent for when it comes time to resettle them further away. Knowing that most of them are farmers, we should send them to Gia Định which, being nearby to urban areas, is normally only for those engaged in trade and light industry. After that, they can go to Hồ Nai, Biên Hòa and the provinces in South-East Vietnam. These provinces, although poor, and lacking the ability to resettle [them], are nevertheless places where the
refugees are willing to go, because they are relatively peaceful, and have good transport links with Saigon.479

As will be seen, if any agency was taking a central role in planning of settlements encircling Saigon, it was Bishop Phạm Ngốc Chi and his committee, rather than the Diệm administration. Most of the resettlement was, however, determined simply by circumstance, and the choices made by individual bắc di cư communities. Settlements in Gia Định, particularly in locations such as Gò Vấp, Tân Bình, Thủ Đức, etc., spilled over into areas adjoining the emergency accommodation provided in locations such as Tân Sơn Nhứt and Phú Thọ. Large parts of Biên Hòa and Đồng Nai were occupied by the bắc di cư, in part because they had been left vacant by departing French interests. In particular, the rubber plantations in those two provinces offered large tracts of essentially unoccupied land, potentially ideal locations for the rapid settlement of large populations.480 Many communities of Catholic bắc di cư sought to settle in areas which already accommodated concentrations of local Catholics. The provinces of Gia Định, Biên Hòa, and Bà Rịa were all home to long-standing Catholic communities.

Once they were joined by a critical mass of Catholic bắc di cư, there was a reluctance on the part of many of the settlers accommodated in this second phase to move on into ‘third phase’ resettlement areas simply to fulfil government policy. Diệm’s responses to Lương’s situation reports bear out Philip Catton’s contention that:

The reluctance of northern refugees to play the role of nation-building pioneers particularly disappointed the Palace, which had viewed its coreligionists as perfect settler material. They were bred of hardy stock, Diệm believed, in comparison to the ‘lazy’ southern Vietnamese, and their anti-communism would

479 PTUDCTN to PTT, November 22, 1955; PTTDNCH, 4042. In the same memorandum, Lương went on to concede that the two provinces (Biên Hòa and Gia Định were far from ideal places for the bắc di cư to resettle, as there was insufficient farm land, and they were causing the local authorities a great deal of trouble; ibid.

480 This led to rumors that Northerners would not be given freedom, but in stead be press-ganged into working in the rubber plantations, as in the colonial period; Tiếng Chuông, August 23, 1954.
help to establish a loyal population in border areas. Yet, rather than face the
travails of life in the Central Highlands, many northerners still clung to the hope
that Vietnam’s partition would be short lived, and their next move would be an
early return to their original homes above the Seventeenth Parallel. Nevertheless, it was a common experience of the bắc di cư to move not only from
North Vietnam to the South, but to then move on a number of further occasions until
finding a place of stable, permanent residence. For example, the residents of Tiễn
Thuận camp, moved from emergency accommodation in Saigon to Tây Ninh, in the
South-West, before insurgency forced them to move back to Xóm Môi in Saigon,
before the PTUDCTN decided to resettle them at Pleiku in the Highlands.

A similar element of self-selection determined the settlement of North-Central bắc di
cư who settled in the South-central provinces of Thừa Thiên and Quảng Nam, and their
urban centres of Hue and Danang, immediately adjacent to the demarcation line.
Whilst the Catholic administration of Diệm’s brother, Ngọ Đình Cẩn, in Thừa Thiên
province provided an incentive to bắc di cư from the central North to settle there, the
principal factor determining their location was that their means of transportation,
unsponsored by the U.S. Navy or the French military, could not take them any further
than the relatively short distances involved in settling immediately south of the
seventeenth parallel.

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481 Philip E. Catton, Diem’s Final Failure: Prelude to America’s War in Vietnam (Kansas: University
Press of Kansas, 2002), 60-1. His subsequent claim (at 61) that ‘Their attitude further damaged relations
between Saigon and the Catholic community, already strained as a result of the government’s efforts to
curb the temporal authority exercised by priests in refugee villages’, is more contentious; Catton does
not provide substantiation.

482 Minutes of meeting of the PTUDCTN at Pleiku, July 23, 1956. PTTDNCH, 4408.

483 Although the area south of Hue, where many of the North-central bắc di cư settled, was both a
relatively unpopulated area, and an area with several long-standing local Catholic communities. Those
evacuating Quảng Bình and the parts of Quảng Trị immediately north of the seventeenth parallel, and
resettling in Thừa Thiên, were not even changing dioceses; both were parts of the Archdiocese of Hue.
Map 11
Provinces of the RVN, 1962.
Source: PTTDNCH, 2182.
(b) Resettlement Organizations

1. The Republic of Vietnam

On arrival in the South, the bàc di cư were offered assistance by an amalgam of government and non-government agencies that were given the task of ensuring their expeditious and successful resettlement in their new setting. Diệm, whose government had only been established in June 1954, appointed a Commissioner for Evacuations, Nguyễn Văn Lợi, on August 9 of that year. His leadership of the southern response to the transmigration proved ineffectual, and he was replaced little more than a month later by the creation on September 19, 1954 of the Phó Tổng Ủy Di cư Ty/download, (Commissioner for Refugees), or PTUDCTN (sometimes known by its French acronym COMIGAL). The first Commissioner, Ngô Ngọc Đới, was as overwhelmed as Lợi. He was soon replaced by Dr. Phạm Văn Huyễn. In this early phase, the Commissioner’s responsibilities largely revolved around the evacuation and transportation of the refugees from the North; the task of receiving and providing for them on arrival was largely managed by the Bộ Xã Hội và Y Tế (Ministry of Heath and Social Welfare).

On May 17, 1955 Diệm appointed Huyễn’s deputy, Bùi Văn Lương, as Commissioner; Lương was a lawyer, a career public servant, and a southern Catholic from the Diocese of Vinh Long, then led by Diệm’s brother, Bishop Pierre Ngô Đình Thục. Lương held the post until his office was abolished at the end of 1957, and transformed into to

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484 Decree 111-PTT-VP; PTTDNCH, 1088.
485 Decrees 85-CP (195) and 928-NV; PTTDNCH, 1088. These annulled decree 111-PTT-VP.
486 Lê Xuân Khoa, Việt Nam 1945-1995, 1:255. A Phát Diệm Catholic, Huyễn did go on to play an important role as advisor to the government on refugee issues.
487 Ibid., 1: 255. However, it soon became clear that the narrowness of their jurisdiction, and the extraordinary number of people for whom they had to provide, meant that the task was beyond them; henceforth, all matters pertaining with the bàc di cư were consolidated under the umbrella of the PTUDCTN; ibid.
488 Decree 170-CP (1955); PTTDNCH; Table of employees of PTUDCTN; PTTDNCH 672. See also “Ông Tân Tổng Ủy Di cư bắt đầu hoạt động” [The New Refugee Commissioner commences operations], Thời Luận, September 21, 1954.
the Tổng Ủy Định Diệm (Commissioner for Land Reform), an office which Lương also held. He was the most influential government official, outside of Diệm himself, in both determining and implementing government policy in relation to the **bặc đi cư**.

The PTUDCTN was responsible for the initial reception, registration and subsidization of the **bặc đi cư**. In the resettlement phase, it was also responsible for the administration of the camps, or centres, in which the majority resided, and for the implementation of development projects so as to ensure their economic self-sufficiency, that they might be successfully integrated into the wider Southern community by mid-1957.

![Illustration 13. Commissioner for Refugees, Bùi Văn Lương (centre), being welcomed by village notables at Cái Sân Resettlement Centre, 1956. From my collection.](image)

489 Decree 534-TTP (1957); PTTĐNCH, 1090. Lương, having generally been considered to have made a success of the refugee resettlement, went on to be Minister for the Interior; Neese and O'Donnell, *Prelude to Tragedy*, 67.
The reception phase was the PTUDCTN’s first challenge. All bác đi cắt arriving by aircraft landed at Tân Sơn Nhất airport near Saigon, whilst those coming by ship disembarked either in the port of Saigon, or at Cap St. Jacques (Vũng Tàu). They were met by an array of PTUDCTN and voluntary organizations who endeavoured to provide emergency relief, including medical treatment, clothing, and food parcels. These included the Red Cross, Rotary, the Philippines branch of the Jaycees, and the American Women’s League, in what became known as Operation Brotherhood.

They were also given an instalment of the per capita financial subsidy which they first received on arrival at the departure centres in the North. In the initial phase, this was 12 piastres (approximately 34 U.S. cents) per adult and 5 piastres per child per day, reducing to 10 per day on arrival in the South due to the lower prevailing cost structure. From October 20, 1954, this was supplemented by a lump sum of 100 piastres per adult on arrival, followed by a grant of 700 per adult to those transferring to designated resettlement areas, as an incentive to move away from overcrowded urban facilities and into the second-phase resettlement areas where the government wanted to relocate them. The PTUDCTN paid these resettlement allowances to camp committees; their administration became a constant source of difficulty for the priest-leaders in the camps.

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490 A similar, but much smaller reception programme was also in place in the port of Tourane (Danang). There was some initial discussion of the possibility of diverting some air arrivals into Danang, but this was rejected.
491 Phan Phát Huôn, Việt Nam Giáo Sĩ, 2:54. According to Huôn, Redemptorist and diocesan seminarians were also enlisted into the relief effort; ibid., 2:52.
492 Based on the prevailing official conversion rate of thirty five piastres to the U.S. dollar.
494 Ibid., 222. This was later increased to 800 piastres, with a further allowance of 200 piastres for those agreeing to resettle in the Central Highlands.
Disembarking bạéc đi cư were given every encouragement by the government to link up with their fellow villagers from the North; preferably on the basis of their home village or parish, but failing that, their own diocese. According to a Diệm government propaganda booklet, “At the Reception Centre at Cap St. Jacques, signs were posted along the quay showing debarking refugees where people from their own villages were congregated”. As an RVN publication noted, “If Nguyen Anh had become separated from his friends from Bui Chu, he had only to go to the area marked by the name of his village to find them or someone who knew them”. There was no significant government programme for the briefing of individual refugees on arrival. Some later arrivals were given a government-published booklet - Nêu Bạn Là Người Đi Tận Cự [If You Are An Evacuee] - but most were left to receive briefings from their community leaders, most particularly their priests.

The very earliest bạéc đi cư arriving in Saigon or Vũng Tàu were taken by military transport to the racecourse at Phú Thọ, but the one hundred tents provided there soon became inadequate. The provision of sufficient reception accommodation, and the transfer of refugees from reception to more permanent resettlement locations, were significant challenges both for the Diệm government and for the Catholic Church. The tendency of the bulk of the bạéc đi cư to arrive and settle in aggregations based on communal affiliation in the North proved both a help and a hindrance to this process.

The per capita subsidy paid to the refugees, many of whom arrived penniless, was a significant incentive to register with the PTUDCTN, and hence to live within one of the

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496 Information Office, RVN, Operation Exodus, 20.
497 Ibid., 20.
499 This task was initially undertaken by French military forces garrisoned in Saigon, but the reluctance of many of the bạéc đi cư to travel on French transport led to a rapid abandonment of their offer; ibid.
resettlement centres administered by them. Those that drifted off into Southern urban society did not receive the subsidy. A report from a Michigan State University Consulting Team estimated the number of bạéc di .cxưt actually resident in resettlement camps as at March 1956 at 628,000.

Table 5.4
Houses constructed by or under auspices of the PTUDCTN, to November 1955

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>49,593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>14,565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>1,671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>65,829</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once the reception phase was complete, the payment of the per-capita subsidies became a secondary activity to that of organizing camps and projects. The PTUDCTN was charged with the task of selecting sites for settlements, although, as has been seen, this was often done by the refugees and their clerical leadership themselves. Sometimes, these self-selected camps proved economically unviable; PTUDCTN officials assessed sustainability, recommended (and implemented) continuation or closure, and if necessary, relocated the camp population to a more suitable site. In conjunction with the resident’s selected leadership (as will be seen, almost invariably the priest), officials of the PTUDCTN’s Planning Office would then select a

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500 Others who made the journey South, such as Chinese nationals, were not eligible.
501 MSU, Review of Recommendations Concerning Proposed Field Organization of the Commissariat-General for Refugees, 9: PTTĐNCH, 789. This is far higher than the 1957 figure quoted by Bùi Văn Lượng of 512,012; “The Role of Friendly Nations,” 52. Lượng himself, in a report to Diệm, calculated that of the 762,408 bạéc di .cxưt that had crossed over into the RVN by the end of 1955, some 80%, or 609,926, had registered with the PTUDCTN, who had assumed responsibility for them. PTUDCTN to PTT, January 21, 1956. PTTĐNCH, 4041.
502 PTUDCTN to PTT, January 21, 1956. PTTĐNCH, 4041.
503 See p. 147. In 1956, when the Diệm government began to adopt a policy of resettlement of the bạéc di .cxưt at Cái Sà in and in the Central Highlands, this process was effectively reversed; the PTUDCTN officials were compelled to adopt a more assertive stance in selecting sites themselves, and then seeking the cooperation of the residents in occupying them.
predominant economic activity (e.g., rice farming, fishing, handicrafts and small industry, etc.), and design a project to further that activity. The project proposals would then be forwarded to the external funding agencies – usually USOM – for approval and underwriting. The task of actual implementation would then be shared between the funding partner, the PTUDCTN, and the residents themselves, with their priest assuming the lead role on the community’s behalf.

Lương, and the senior administration of the PTUDCTN, faced a daunting task in erecting, from scratch and in great haste, an infrastructure capable of meeting the needs of more than 650,000 incoming refugees, arriving over a period of little more than fifteen months. In these circumstances, it is unsurprising that deficiencies in their operations were identified by both internal and external reviews.

Many of the problems the PTUDCTN encountered arose from their interaction with, and dependence upon, other government bodies; the new RVN military, for example, were anxious to retrieve former French military facilities that had been appropriated by or on behalf of the bắc diệt. Lines of jurisdiction between the Công An (Security Police) and the PTUDCTN were often unclear when episodes of civil unrest or embezzlement effected the operation of the settlements.

More serious again were problems relating to interaction with local government, most particularly the province chiefs. These problems often centered on issues of financial control and the disbursement of funds. The accounting and auditing staff and

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505 Although this problem was partially overcome by the establishment of a Police Liaison Office within the PTUDCTN.
practices employed by the PTUDCTN were insufficient to deal with the enormous sums of money which were channeled through the Commission to provide for infrastructure in the resettlement camps. In these circumstances, instances of self-enrichment on the part of PTUDCTN officials, by various modes of siphoning off portions of the Commissions’ funds, became matters of public notoriety.\footnote{Fall, “On Bui Van Luong,” 56.} The seeming inability of RVN’s system to get the necessary funds from the international donor agencies to the people in the resettlement centres was, whilst not necessarily involving malfeasance, even more of a scandal. Alfred Cardinaux, Deputy Chief of the United States Operations Mission (USOM) in Saigon, was of the view that ‘by early 1956, the almost complete failure of COMIGAL to get the funds to the villages for the execution of the projects cast a dark shadow over the entire program, which a year earlier had captured everyone’s imagination.’\footnote{Cardinaux, “On Father Harnett,” in Lindholm, ed., Viet-Nam – The First Five Years, 88.} The PTUDCTN was in part cause, in part victim, of this problem. Until mid-1956, the funds from the international donors were not paid directly to the PTUDCTN, but rather to the Treasury of the RVN for release to the PTUDCTN by the Finance Minister. At the distribution end of the process, the project funds were not paid directly by the PTUDCTN to the camps, but rather to the Province Chiefs (another point of potential embezzlement), who would utilize their own local bureaucracies for distribution of the funds to end users (see Table 5.5).\footnote{Harnett, “Economic Integration of the Refugees,” in Lindholm, ed., Viet-Nam – The First Five Years, 85.}
A Presidential Decree in June 1956 circumvented this convoluted system by creating a system of village councils who would receive and administer the funds under supervision by the provincial authorities. Each committee was obliged to publish a

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budget, together with project details, which was to be available to every villager; this had a major and positive effect on the flow of funds.\footnote{Cardinaux, “On Father Harnett,” 90.}

Other problems were more a function of the PTUDCTN’s own internal difficulties. For example, a reluctance on the part of many of the 1,200 staff members of the PTUDCTN to leave the comforts and security of Saigon to work in the rural areas where most of the bác di cut were actually resettled meant that the Commission lacked personnel in areas where the projects needed to be implemented, thereby leading to a perception that they were remote, unresponsive, and bureaucratic.\footnote{Mode, Review of Recommendations, 1. The figure of 1,200 staff was provided Alfred L. Cardinaux of USOM; “On Father Harnett,” 88.} The lack of adequate financial controls meant that PTUDCTN officials were frequently accused of embezzlement and corruption; either the direct appropriation of Commission funds, or directing contracts to favored suppliers in return for secret commissions.\footnote{See for example the arrest of the camp commander at Hóc Môn; Từ Đô, March 30, 1957.}

The effectiveness of the PTUDCTN in administering the resettlement process has been variously assessed. Ronald Frankum, for example, portrays the Commission, and the Diệm government generally, as entirely incapable of properly receiving and resettling the bác di cut, and reliant not only on the funds, but also the expertise, of American advisors, to render the resettlement process viable.\footnote{Ronald B. Frankum Jnr., “To Move a Nation: The USOM and the Refugee Crisis of 1954-1955” (Paper presented at the Texas Tech University 5th Triennial Vietnam Symposium, Lubbock, Texas, March 18, 2005). Frankum’s paper relies entirely on United States sources, and presents something of the outlook of the USOM’s role as to its own significance in the resettlement process.} Other commentators are far more sanguine and positive as to the success of the PTUDCTN’s mission, suggesting that the resettlement of the refugees was one of the pre-eminent achievements of the Diệm era.\footnote{Scheer, “Genesis of United States Support”, 127; Lê Xuân Khoa, Viet Nam 1945-1995, 1:267-8.} Monsignor Harnett of CRS, for example, claimed that ‘COMIGAL did a marvelous job of receiving, housing, feeding, and eventually liberating Saigon of the
hordes of refugees that crammed the city’. Luông’s assessment was self-congratulatory:

As to resettlement generally, this is a matter of both national interest, and of justice, because to care for 1 million refugees is an important matter. This victory does not merely mark a glorious stage in our national history; it is also a matter in which the staff who have worked with the PTUDCTN can take great pride in the results achieved by those working to resettle the refugees. But also because the President and I have paid attention to the collaboration of all those who have looked for a way to help everybody in their sincere tasks, bringing all their abilities, goodwill, and sense of justice so that these buds may bear fruit.

The Commission, which was always intended to be a temporary organization, whose functions would conclude with the merger of the resettlement camps into the local population at the end of 1957, was abolished on December 16 of that year. Many of its functions were transferred to the new Land Reform Commission (Tổng Ủy Định Diện).

2. United States Operations Mission (USOM)

The PTUDCTN was aided in resettlement operations by the United States Operations Mission (USOM), an organ of the U.S. State Department, after the Diệm administration formally sought the assistance of the United States government, via the USOM, on July 26, 1954. USOM, which had a very significant presence in the Southern Republic, took a lead role in advising the Diệm administration on refugee affairs, and in providing logistical support. More importantly, USOM was the principal conduit for

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517 By Ordinance 524-TTTP; PTNDNCH, 1090. See also McAlister, Refugee in Retrospect, 3.
518 These functions included auditing, and examination and investigation; see letter of PTUDCTN to PTT, December 13, 1957; PTNDNCH, 1090.
519 Director-General of Information (RVN), Operation Exodus, 6.
520 Some have argued that USOM in fact took a preemptive role, taking over operations when Vietnamese government inaction led to bottlenecks; see Frankum, “To Move a Nation.”
the funds which the United States government poured into the Republic of Vietnam, much of which was taken up in refugee resettlement and relief (see Table 5.6).522 During the 1955 fiscal year, USOM spent a total of $55.8 million, including $10 million in operational expenses for the US Navy’s transportation of bâc di cư from Haiphong to the South, and $8 million in goods purchased abroad. This equated to an expenditure of approximately $89 per refugee.523 By mid 1956, refugee aid had grown to $93 million, or 18.7% of the overall U.S. aid budget to the RVN.524 97% of aid to assist the government of the RVN to cope with the refugee influx came from the United States.525

Table 5.6
Refugee Relief as Proportion of U.S. government Aid to the RVN526

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fiscal 1954-5 ($U.S. mil.)</th>
<th>Fiscal 1955-6 ($U.S. mil.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic Assistance</td>
<td>29.7 (9.3%)</td>
<td>54.5 (27.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee Aid</td>
<td>55.8 (17.4%)</td>
<td>37.0 (18.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Support</td>
<td>234.8 (73.3%)</td>
<td>105.0 (53.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>320.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>196.5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In its initial phases of operation in Vietnam, USOM’s principal role was organising logistics in the evacuation of the bâc di cư from the North; both in liaising with the U.S. Naval Fleet dispatched to assist in the project, and in the reception of refugees. However, their attention soon turned to involvement in the resettlement of refugees, and the disbursement of the substantial funds made available by the United States government for this purpose. USOM placed considerable emphasis on specific resettlement projects, such as Cái Sán, and those in the Central Highlands. They

522 ibid.
524 Leland Burrows (Director of USOM), Speech to the Vietnamese-American Association, October 9, 1956.
526 Compiled from Burrows, Statement to the Congressional Committee on Foreign Aid, 7.
played a significant role not only in the planning of these projects, but also in the procurement of such items as building materials, agricultural equipment, motor vehicles, etc. By May 1956, the USOM was funding resettlement projects in fifty nine separate areas, together with thirteen non-locality based projects. Each had a project budget provided by the USOM, purportedly in consultation with the PTUDCTN, provincial, and bàc di cư representatives (almost always the Catholic clergy). Nearly all significant liaison committees established by the PTUDCTN had USOM representatives, most often its head, Leland Burrows. Unlike Frankum, who attributes the problems to Vietnamese incompetence and the solutions to American efficiency, Robert McAlister, as Director of the International Rescue Committee in Vietnam, saw USOM as suffering from similar problems to those of the PTUDCTN; rapid expansion causing administrative and personnel problems which limited their operational effectiveness.

The USOM also worked in concert with review teams from the Michigan State University (MSU), who reported on the operations of the PTUDCTN. These MSU teams (which reported on many aspects of government administration, not merely refugee resettlement), were commissioned not by the United States government, but directly by Diệm, who had formed a relationship during his time in the United States in the 1950’s with the MSU team’s leader, Wesley Fishel, a professor of political science. However, the teams were often critical of the PTUDCTN, and of the blockages that prevented the free flow of funds to aid the projects aimed at economic self-sufficiency.

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527 PTUDCTN to PTT, May 22, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4438.
528 For example, the Conferences of May 30 and July 27, 1956, of all province chiefs and camp leaders and province chiefs also had USOM representatives; PTTDNCH, 4399.
529 McAlister, Refugee in Retrospect, 4.
These blockages often formed a source of frustration with the USOM as well. Whilst commissioned to work closely with the PTUDCTN, and with the Diệm Administration generally, the USOM were restrained by the fact that, operating within a foreign, sovereign state, they were unable to simply implement their own plans via their own administration. This frequently led to tension between the advisors and the RVN government; the relationship was not merely symbiotic. The Diệm Administration
was more protective of both national sovereignty and its own administrative autonomy in relation to its American benefactors and advisors than has often been credited. On one occasion, an official from Diệm’s office responded to a USOM proposal to import technical advisors from Japan:

The President sees no problems with the proposal. OK to authorize use of experts. The same conditions would apply as apply to UN staff. We only want them in aspects where they are really necessary. Your office must make clear to them the areas in which their help is needed. But they are only to advise, [they are to have] no authority, actual drawing up of the plans must be done by Vietnamese staff.531

The Diệm Administration eventually grew more distant from both the MSU and the USOM, tiring of what they saw as constant and unhelpful criticism which failed to take into account the progress that had been achieved in ensuring the refugee’s resettlement.532 They also believe that the American operatives of the USOM and MSU saw the resettlement as essentially an exercise in administration and management, whereas they (like Bishop Chí) saw it as a matter of national salvation. Even as early as November 1955, Luông reported to Diệm that:

The USOM are pessimistic, asserting that incorrect implementation of this task [by the PTUDCTN] is a principal part of the problem. They see the expenditure of much money, but there must be change in a lot of resettlement centres. They query why the Commission still needs to provide for our refugee countrymen, whilst people who have resettled in the countryside receive comparatively little…If the Americans understood the life of farmers during peacetime outside of the North, and the material conditions they are used to, they would not be so pessimistic. Moreover, the resettlement is a new phenomenon, for which you [Diệm] have agreed to accept responsibility at a time when the spirit of the

531 Nguyễn Hữu Châu, office of PTT, to PTUDCTN, June 2, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4435.
masses was alarmed by the bargaining at Geneva; how were you supposed to
measure with certainty, and provide for every aspect of the problem.\footnote{PTUDCTN to PTT, 22 November, 1955; PTTDNCH 4042.}

One example of this mismatch in policy priorities and modus operandi came in the
USOM attitude to the role that resettlement of the bác di cư could play in the overall
programme of land reform. Lương reported on one visit to Thọ Hà, in the Ô Môn
district of Cân Thơ province:

It would be possible to establish a camp here of between 5,000 – 7,000 for people
presently in Ba Beo, and maybe some from Thủ Đậu Mạt and Hố Nai.

Although the whole delegation thought that the site had the capacity to resettle the
refugees, the Americans appeared cautious about spending the money to buy the
plantation, because they didn’t want to pay the full price. They reminded us of the
Government’s task to reform the plantations, and complained that this was
proceeding too slowly.\footnote{PTUDCTN to PTT, Report of visit, with US experts, to Thọ Hà, Quận Ô Môn, Cân Thơ, November 5, 1955; PTTDNCH 4042.}

2. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and National Catholic Welfare Conference
(NCWC)
The United States government was not the only source of American public monies;
many non-Government organizations also channelled private funds into the South
generally, and into refugee resettlement in particular. By far the largest amongst them
was Catholic Relief Services (CRS), a department of the National Catholic Welfare
Conference (NCWC), in turn an agency of the U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference.\footnote{American Catholic History Research Centre, “NCWC Description,” libraries.cua.edu/achrcua/ncwc.html#CRS, (accessed March 23, 2005). Other voluntary agencies who played a role in assisting the bác di cư, either in their evacuation or their resettlement, included the Mennonite Central Committee, the International Rescue Committee, Church World Services, War Relief Services, and the Jaycees. Letter from Minister of Finance to PTT, February 17, 1956. PTTDNCH, 9615.}

CRS received United States government funding to undertake post-war relief work,
and assist refugees in, amongst other places, Palestine and Poland; this funding could
not be used for religious purposes. However, together with other American denominations and faiths, it conducted a fund-raising appeal every Laetare Sunday (the fourth Sunday of Lent), the proceeds from which could be, and were, applied for religious purposes (e.g., the building of churches, stipending of religious, etc.). Catholic Relief Services was originally intended as a temporary effort of the U.S. bishops to assist World War II refugees and POWs. By 1955, the organization had become permanent, and assisted victims of natural disasters as well as victims of war. In its earlier years, CRS concentrated on resettling refugees and sending supplies of food, clothing, and medicine to areas of need. Later, CRS began efforts to foster economic development in the areas it served, particularly in the developing world. Its involvement in Vietnam predated the 1954-5 transmigration; in the period from 1952 until early 1954, CRS supplied $1.175 million in aid to Archbishop Dooley for relief services in the North.

On August 11, 1954, Diệm issued a call to the War Relief Services Office of the NCWC to assist in the resettlement of the bác di cư. The then director of CRS, Edward Swanstrom, immediately appointed Monsignor Joseph Harnett to establish an office that would ultimately become the centre of Vietnam operations of CRS. He arrived

536 Kauffman, “Politics, Programs and Protests,” 224.
537 ibid., 224.
538 From a biographical note of its Director, Bishop Edward Swanstrom; University of Notre Dame Archives, “Notre Dame Archives Index ORL010,” www.archives.nd.edu/findaids/ead/index/ORL010.htm, (accessed September 1, 2004).
540 “Đặc Giám Mục Harnett đã đối diện vấn cho Thủ Tướng Ngô Đình Diệm báo tin sẽ đến Sài Gòn” [Bishop [sic] Harnett has sent a message to Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem informing him he will soon come to Saigon], Tiếng Chương, Aug 15, 1954. As to Bishop Swanstrom, see American Catholic History Research Center, libraries.cua.edu/achrcua/ncwc.html#CRS, accessed March 23, 2005. Swanstrom, a priest of the diocese of Brooklyn, was Director of CRS from 1943 to 1947, and thereafter Director from 1947 until 1971. He was widely viewed as both a polemical and political figure, and as a protégé of Cardinal Spellman, who placed the ostensibly humanitarian resources of CRS at the political
in Saigon in 1955, and after heading the Saigon office until 1957, became head of the Far East Bureau of CRS, a post he held until 1967. Harnett was an executive member of the American Friends of Vietnam, a lobby group established to aid and assist the Diệm regime, supported and promoted by Swanstrom’s mentor, Francis Cardinal Spellman of New York.

Under Swanstrom and Harnett, CRS took a direct participatory role in refugee resettlement, and the implementation of projects; Harnett, as its in-country leader in Vietnam, was regularly consulted by Diệm and Lương. It rapidly established a network of regional offices throughout the Republic, from where its representatives liaised with the PTUDCTN, the UBHTDC, and the USOM, and joined with them in project design and implementation.


Kauffman, “Politics, Programs and Protests,” 227


Joseph Harnett Papers’, www.archives.nd.edu/findaids/ead/index/HNT001.htm. Kauffman reports that ‘He [Harnett] had many meetings with him [Diệm], and had celebrated Mass in Diệm’s private chapel’; ‘Politics, Programs and Protests,” 229. Kauffman notes that Harnett eventually became disillusioned with Diệm, and that by May 1957, the relationship had become more distant; ibid., 233. However, by that time, the operation to aid the bđc di cừ had largely concluded.

Under the patronage of Cardinal Spellman, CRS was a substantial contributor of funds to the refugee resettlement effort. Like USOM, CRS was often represented on resettlement liaison committees. On occasions, it sponsored projects which USOM were unable to support; on others, it ran projects parallel to or in concert with USOM. CRS had the latitude – indeed, the mandate – to assist in projects in which, because of their overtly religious nature (e.g., the building of churches), the USOM as a government body could not participate.

In the early phase of reception and resettlement, CRS also had an important role to play in the provision of relief supplies. It would purchase and transport these supplies (rice, milk powder, etc.) to central holding points, then rely on the PTUDCTN for distribution into the camps themselves. In the first ten months of operations, total relief supplies distributed totalled more than $4.5 million, of which 45% went to local, non-\textit{bác di cư}' poor, of all religions.

However, as the need for resettlement supplanted the evacuation phase, the Catholic agency's participation in project implementation became more significant. By December 1956, CRS had established nineteen projects for land clearance and agricultural production in Gia Định, Biên Hòa, Thù Dâu Môt, Phan Thiết and Chợ Lớn, which engaged 7,500 families. Harnett described their operation:

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547 Thereby emphasizing the fact that CRS’ mandate in the RVN was not confined to the \textit{bác di cư}; ibid., 80.

548 The movement from relief supplies to economic sustainability projects sometimes lead to difficulties for the CRS operation. Some camps would be resentful that Bishop Harnett had not supplied them with rice, milk powder, etc., in the manner that been done for other camps in the earlier phase. See, for example, Minutes of the Conference chaired by Bùi Văn Lượng on October 4, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4399.

549 Harnett, “Role of Catholic Groups,” 82.
This program was another form of co-operative enterprise between the refugees and the Catholic Relief Services, whereby the latter would supply the necessary resources to a village, and the people would contribute what they could in terms of personal labour. The outstanding problem at the end of 1955, because of the impending rainy season, was that of clearing the land and making it ready for planting. For a refugee village or a group of villages to participate in this plan, the village leader [i.e., the priest] had to present us with a detailed document, showing the names of the families in his village, the total number of persons in each family [etc.]. The entire plan was based on the fact that in a refugee family of five persons, at least one would be available for farm work. Presumably, one of the workers would have to continue at his regular tasks to earn money for the normal needs of the entire family, whereas the others could contribute their services to the common problem, providing that Catholic Relief Services would supply the family’s daily needs of rice, as well as provide other foods and clothing at its disposal, along with a maximum sum of a thousand piastres for each two and a half acres of land cleared and planted by the family unit in this program.550

Harnett viewed this model as both flexible, and appropriately relying on the personal resourcefulness of the bàc di cư themselves, rather than ‘a paternalistic approach to the problem that would put a large group of civil servants between the resources that were available and the people who need them’, which is how he characterized the trend towards bureaucratisation within the PTUDCTN.551

Whilst Swantsrom made it clear that CRS’s mission in Vietnam was to assist refugees regardless of their religion, Harnett and CRS nevertheless provided a vital point of overseas contact with the Vietnamese Catholic Church.552 Significantly, very little of that contact was with the Bishops of the territorial or ‘indigenous’ Church hierarchy in the RVN. Instead, Harnett liaised almost exclusively with the Apostolic Visitor,

550 Ibid., 81-2.
551 Ibid.
552 CRS provided relief to the Buddhist camps, but instead of direct involvement in implementation, turned funds and supplies over to the PTUDCTN; ibid., 79.
Monsignor Giuseppe Caprio, and the head of the bà¢c di cût Church, Bishop Phạm Ngọc Chi. Harnett noted:

Since it was impossible to carry out the Catholic program in behalf [sic] of the hundreds of thousands of refugees in the Saigon ecclesiastical province with voluntary and part-time workers, the program was operated directly by Catholic Relief Services, with the help of the Catholic Auxiliary Resettlement Committee [i.e., the UBHTDC].

In other words, CRS bypassed the local Church to conduct activities unilaterally, or in concert with the bà¢c di cût hierarchy and the representative of Rome.

Harnett – and presumably the entire CRS infrastructure – sat at the intersection of the worldviews of the United States and the Catholic Church. They clearly saw the Catholic Bà¢c Di Cût as participants in a more universal struggle of contestant ideologies between the Christian faith and Communism, and thus viewed CRS’s mission to assist them in a religious, or even apocalyptic/soteriological context, rather than as a matter of purely utilitarian or political concern. At the same time, he was also conscious of the local, historical context in which transmigration occurred. In a statement for publication, sent to Swanstrom in December 1954, Harnett appropriated rhetoric similar to that employed by the Diệm regime on one hand, and the bà¢c di cût church on the other:

Only an inspiration of the highest order would have produced the most spectacular declaration in human history that free men will not accept slavery. But of all the nations that have fallen one by one before the foe of human spirit, the inspiration was found strongest in the hearts of the little Catholic people [sic] of North Vietnam. They rose to the challenge, cast aside their traditional love of their villages, their attachment to property and home, and to a land sanctified by their martyrs. This took courage, indeed. But it took courage founded in their deep Catholic Faith in God. These people refused to stand by passively while the false gods of materialistic Communism were erected in their midst...these are not only refugees, they are torchbearers of freedom, whose light shows clearly the evil way of the powers of darkness, and

553 Ibid., 79.
illuminates the path of courageous faith which free men everywhere must follow to avoid disaster.\footnote{Harnett to Swanstrom, December 9, 1954, quoted in Kauffman, “Politics, Programs and Protests”, 239-40.}

4. \textit{Resettlement Assistance Committee (Ủy Ban Hỗ Trợ Định Cư; UBHTDC)}

No longer able to exercise episcopal jurisdiction within Bùi Chu diocese from June 1954, Chi was appointed by Archbishop Dooley to two positions which were both central to refugee resettlement.\footnote{DMHCG, October 1954, 278; Tiếng Chuông, August 30, 1954; Thư and Huy, Giám Mục Lê Hữu Từ, 246. His new office was located on the newly-named Bùi Chu Street, Sài Gòn.} The first was as the \textit{Giám Mục Phủ Trách Giáo Đan Di Cư} (Bishop responsible for Christian refugees). This position gave him canonical jurisdiction over all \textit{bác di cư} clergy, a jurisdiction which would normally have been exercised by the bishop of the territorial diocese. Second, he was made head of the \textit{Ủy Ban Hỗ Trợ Định Cư} (Resettlement Assistance Committee), the role of which involved the co-ordination of Catholic activities on behalf of the \textit{bác di cư} regardless of faith, but with an emphasis on pastoral care of lay Catholics (See Appendix II).\footnote{Ủy Ban Hỗ Trợ Định Cư [Refugee Assistance Committee], Tìm Hiểu về Ủy Ban Hỗ Trợ Định Cư [A brief history of the Refugee Assistance Committee], undated (1956?); PTTDNCH, 4402. See also Lê Xuân Khoa, Việt Nam 1945-1995, 1:256. According to Huôn, jurisdiction over the clergy was given by Dooley, whilst that over the laity was given by Archbishop Cassaigne of Saigon within the jurisdiction of his Archdiocese only. Whether jurisdiction over \textit{bác di cư} laity in other Southern dioceses was given by their territorial bishops, or simply assumed, is unclear; Phan Phát Huôn, Việt Nam Giáo Sứ, 2:293.}

The mandate for the UBHDC came not from the Southern bishops, but directly from the Vatican, via its Apostolic Delegate in Hanoi, John Dooley.\footnote{Ibid.} The Dominican historian Bùi Đức Sinh contends, without attribution, that the Bishop of Saigon, Jean Cassaigne, acted conjointly with Dooley in appointing Chi to these posts.\footnote{Bùi Đức Sinh, Lịch Sử Giáo Hội, 429.} However, his jurisdiction to do so would have been restricted to the territory of his own diocese,
unless he had the tacit consent of the other four southern diocesan bishops. The local territorial bishops were presumably consulted, and presumably assented, though whether they did so willingly is unclear. Throughout the entirety of the UBHTDC’s existence, it was more answerable to the Holy See, via the Apostolic Visitor (from 1956 onwards, Monsignor Giuseppe Caprio), than to the southern bishops. For example, it was Caprio, rather than the southern bishops, who in September 1956 issued an edict restructuring the UBHTDC, and placing them under the jurisdiction of the territorial bishops (see Appendix VIII). Similarly, it was to Caprio and Chi, rather than to the southern bishops, that Diệm and Lương appealed when they sought the assistance of the bắc di cư clergy, particularly in relation to their resettlement. This ‘hands-off’ approach by the southern bishops had bases in Canon Law, politics, and practicality. Their canonical jurisdiction over the bắc di cư church was at best contentious. Politically, both Rome and the Diệm administration favoured the concept of Chi and his Committee being granted wide-ranging (but temporary) authority. And at a practical level, the logistical challenge of assuming responsibility for a Catholic cohort larger than itself must have been an unwelcome prospect for the Southern church.

When the Committee ceased to function and Bishop Chi was appointed to the diocese of Qui Nhơn, a diocese in the central region, the functions formerly fulfilled by Chi and his Committee reverted to the Southern bishops. Thus, when issues pertaining to the transfer of priests within resettlement areas arose in late 1956, they were referred to

559 Caprio, who became an Archbishop in 1961, and Cardinal in 1979, had to be styled ‘Apostolic Visitor’ (a moveable position) rather than ‘Apostolic Delegate’, because Archbishop Dooley notionally retained jurisdiction over all of Indochina from Hanoi, albeit that, under effective confinement, he was largely unable to exercise it, and was unable to communicate directly with the RVN from July 1955 onwards; Phan Phát Huống, Việt Nam Giáo Sứ, 2:217. On his expulsion in July 1959, Archbishop Mario Brini was appointed Apostolic Delegate in Saigon; ‘Một Giáo Sứ Sụ Hộc,’ Giáo Hội Công Giáo ở Việt Nam, 3: 411-2; Niên Giới 1964, 463.

560 See p. 255.
Southern Bishops; for example, Lương asked Diệm to seek permission of Bishops of Hue and Qui Nhơn for transfer of priests to Pleiku camps. Hitherto, Chi had always exercised this jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{561}

The Committee also had access to a substantial funding base of more than $12 million from Catholic churches overseas.\textsuperscript{562} As Table 5.7 shows, the largest donors to the UBHTDC were, in order, the Holy See, Great Britain, the United States and Australia.\textsuperscript{563}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donor Nation</th>
<th>$US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holy See</td>
<td>6,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>2,105,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1,812,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1,086,261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>270,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>226,245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>2,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>3,081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>3,338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lybia</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarre</td>
<td>19,977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>4,575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>13,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>1,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>33,156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>26,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany (West)</td>
<td>33,215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>12,378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>12,159,880</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{561} PTUDCTN to PTT, August 18, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4408. It is also possible that Lương was seeking the transfer of southern priests, not under Chi’s jurisdiction.

\textsuperscript{562} Bulletin from the UBHTDC, December 16, 1955; PTTDNCH, 4042.

\textsuperscript{563} ibid. Most U.S. Catholic monies were sent through CRS, whilst the French church sent funds to the Diệm administration through \textit{Secours Catholique}; ibid.

\textsuperscript{564} ibid.
Funds raised by Chi’s committee were used to build churches and other church-based educational and welfare facilities for which state-provided funds could not be diverted. This substantial fund, together with the fact that the vast majority of the bảc di căn were subject to his ecclesiastical control, greatly augmented the prestige and influence of Chi and his Committee. Like Monsignor Harnett, Bishop Chi was a regular correspondent with Bùi Văn Lương; he or one of his delegates sat on many working committees and investigatory delegations, and not only in matters pertaining to religion. The extent of Chi’s influence on the polity of the republic was substantial, and his advice was sought on a diverse range of subjects, well beyond those that might be expected to fall within a bishop’s jurisdiction. In November 1955, Lương reported to Diệm that ‘According to [Msgr. Harnett and Bishop Chi], the transmigration has had very satisfactory results, in the spiritual and political spheres, as well as the social and economic’. Whilst Chi and his Committee were bound in a close relationship with the government, it was not an entirely uncritical relationship; when, in October 1955, there was a delay in the payment of monetary subsidies and rice deliveries, the ten priests who constituted the UBHTDC wrote to the PTUDCTN demanding an immediate rectification.

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565 For example, when on October 20, 1955, Lương visited camps in Biên Hòa in order to provide a situation report to the President, he asked Bishop Chi to accompany him; PTUDCTN to PTT, November 19, 1955; PTTDNCH, 4042.

566 PTUDCTN to PTT, November 22, 1955, PTTDNCH, 4042. On another occasion, Harnett and Chi were official guests at a ceremony to mark the inauguration of the National Assembly; Monthly Report, PTUDCTN to PTT, May 1956; PTTDNCH, 4401. Chi’s position in the Southern polity was later enhanced by becoming the leading proponent of nhân vị (personalism), a de facto state ideology under Diệm.

567 UBHTDC to PTUDCTN, October 27, 1955; PTTDNCH, 4046. Interestingly, Chi himself was not a signatory to the letter.
The Committee performed the vital role of providing camp leadership through allowing the bàc di ću clergy to act as ‘spiritual leaders’ – which in effect meant overall leaders – within the resettlement camps. As will be seen, this had a profound influence on the nature of the bàc di ću experience within their new and largely alien surrounds. Bishop Chi also exercised his pastoral jurisdiction over the bàc di ću clergy by appointing them not only to positions of community leadership, but into liaison with other church and non-church agencies to provide for services and infrastructure to those communities. CRS, for example, employed thirty bàc di ću priests, supplied by Bishop Chi, to be trained in undertaking total needs surveys of resettlement villages, in an endeavour to circumvent the delays and unresponsiveness which Harnett perceived as characterizing the PTUDCTN’s approach.568

The aim of each of the bodies described above was to aid the successful and productive integration of the bàc di ću into the new Southern Republic. But of necessity, their

568 Harnett, “Economic Integration of the Refugees,” 86.
efforts centred largely on physical infrastructure and financial viability. Negotiating the less tangible cultural, emotional and spiritual aspects of resettlement would largely be the left to individuals and their communities.
6. Integration

The 512,012 bác di ffset who sought to remain within the resettlement system established by the Diệm regime were eventually accommodated across 319 resettlement centres. Beginning as camps, many of these centres had by the time of their official integration into Southern society in the latter half of 1957 become stable, permanent villages. In part, this was due to a gradual (and sometimes grudging) recognition on the part of the bác di ffset that their return to their quê in the North was not an immanent reality, and that they would therefore have to provide a living for themselves on a long-term basis in their new surroundings. Running parallel to this was the creation of a social and physical infrastructure which provided for the settlements’ ongoing viability.

Whilst most remained in the belt to the immediate west and north of Saigon, Diệm’s campaign to move the bác di ffset to the Mekong and Central Highlands had produced results, as Tables 6.1 and 6.2 indicate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.1</th>
<th>Geographic Distribution of Resettlement Centres, 1957</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>64.90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

569 Lương, “Role of Friendly Nations,” 52. This was the final figure at the conclusion of PTUDCTN operations in 1957.
570 Ibid., 52.
Table 6.2
Geographic Distribution of Resettlement Centre residents, 1957

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>394,682</td>
<td>77.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Coast</td>
<td>52,988</td>
<td>10.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>64,342</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>512,012</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3
Principal Economic Activity Across Resettlement Centres, 1957

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>90.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light industry</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>319</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the period 1955-57, the PTUDCTN had been responsible for the construction of 92,442 homes, 317 elementary schools (with 1,636 classrooms and 66,176 pupils in attendance), eighteen secondary schools (forty nine classrooms, 1,521 pupils), two hospitals, 143 infirmaries, fifty five maternity clinics, 105 first aid posts, and 6,029 wells.

At the same time, Bishop Chi’s Committee, utilizing funds from the CRS and other overseas church donors, had constructed corresponding religious infrastructure; 231 churches, and 138 smaller chapels or oratories. As the Catholic historian Bùi Đức Sinh put it:

In every Catholic resettlement camp, the Church, presbytery, school, convent, aged care centre, orphanage, and industrial centre sprang up, giving it an appearance no different to that in the North, though sometimes busier and more progressive. The Church, and the educational and social service organizations,

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571 Ibid.
572 Ibid.
573 Ibid., 52-3.
though then only built of wood and bamboo, would later be built of tiles and concrete, and every year would be larger, following the increase in their population, and the development of their lives [in the South].

(a) The Role of the Catholic Clergy

The Diệm administration actively discouraged the dispersal of **bắc đi cắt** into the general Southern population, seeking instead to settle the northern communities as distinct entities, usually in areas away from high concentrations of the local population (Biên Hòa province, for example, had been quite lightly populated until the arrival of the **bắc đi cắt**). Even when the administration of the resettlement centres was integrated into local and provincial government jurisdiction in late 1957, the population of the centres remained largely distinct and undispersed. This meant that the previous settlement patterns of the majority of Northern Catholics were replicated and perpetuated; they lived within communities defined by their religious commitment, largely separated off from the surrounding non-Catholic world outside them, and with a commensurately blurred distinction between religious and civic life. In these circumstances, it is little wonder that the pattern of community leadership which evolved in the North – a lay leadership mixing both parochial and secular functions, presided over by a powerful clerical leadership – would also emerge in their new circumstances in the South. The Michigan State University Field Report of September 1955 found that:

As for leadership within the [resettlement] village, the spiritual leader dominates… It is the spiritual leader who serves as the leader in village decision making and problem solving. In almost every case, he was the one who dealt with authorities in Saigon or the province on village matters.

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574 Bùi Đức Sinh, Lịch Sử Giáo Hội, 430.
575 The government’s motivations evolved over time. Initially, they had been worried about adverse reactions from the ‘indigenous’ Southern population if housing, employment opportunities, school places, etc., were swamped by a tide of Northern arrivals. Later, the **bắc đi cắt** began to emerge as a potential engine for economic growth, and a bulwark against communist insurgency.
576 Luce and Sommer, Viet Nam – The Unheard Voices, 144.
This clearly identified leadership pattern, and the nucleus of administrative organization found in the village have implications for resettlement. If anything, they should in most cases make it easier to develop and carry out rehabilitation projects. Furthermore, the tendency to elect leaders is a good sign for the development of democratic institutions. On the other hand, the heavy reliance on spiritual leadership may too severely restrict the planning of the village.

It was generally agreed upon that, while many factors influence the progress demonstrated in individual villages, one factor of great importance was the individual leadership qualities of the spiritual leader of the village... It seemed equally clear in some of the villages that the priest with a plan for his village, with a clear idea of what was wanted, with some political and administrative understanding, had a distinct advantage in providing for the welfare of his followers.577

Diệm and Lương did everything possible to retain the civil leadership of the bvac di cut priests over their communities, notwithstanding some reluctance on the part of Phạm Ngọc Chi and the UBHTĐC.578 On October 7, 1955, the ten priest-delegates constituting the Resettlement Assistance Committee wrote to Lương explaining their reasons for accepting a pro tem extension of bvac di cut priests’ duties beyond the normal clerical role:

The basic and most important mission of priests lie in the sphere of spiritual activities, following on from the principles of the Gospel, and the dictates of Canon Law. But because of the circumstances of our nation, for the happiness of our compatriots, for the freedom of our people, and in accordance with the pressing severity of our situation at the present time, the priests have reluctantly agreed to undertake the coordination of the material aspects of the transmigration and resettlement. We will do so regardless of the hardship and suffering involved, regardless of the distortions and vile slanders of scoundrels who would harm the nation and the people, and regardless of doubting attitudes, who are sometimes also accompanied by the authorities.579

577 Smuckler, MSU Study, 5-7.
578 Robert Scigliano of MSU wrote that “While priests in the refugee villages hold no formal government posts, they are generally the real rulers of their villages, and serve as contacts with district officials”; South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1964), 55.
579 UBHTDC to PTUDCTN, October 7, 1955; PTTDNCH, 4042.
Diệm and his Refugee Commissioner had indeed invited the priests into a role within the resettlement camps that went beyond even the widest understanding of the general role of a parish priest in providing pastoral care to the community in his charge. In cases where a camp had been established without a priest-leader, Lựong would petition Bishop Chi to request one be appointed. The nomenclature given to their positions within the resettlement camps provided a hint of this. They were generally known as ‘lành đạo tỉnh thành’ (spiritual leaders), but sometimes the pretence of the spiritual circumscription of their roles was dropped, and they were instead referred to as ‘chủ tịch trại’ (camp president), ‘trại trưởng’ (camp chief) or ‘giám đốc trại’ (camp director). These titles revealed something of the reality of the priestly leadership within the camps. The clergy were called on to determine and implement decisions which went well beyond the range of a duties which fall within the normal domain of a parochial cleric, such as sacramental and liturgical celebration, catechetical teaching, the construction of churches and schools, the provision of education, health and welfare services, and so on. Monsignor Harnett told of one such example:

Late one afternoon in early October, 1955, these problems were discussed with a refugee priest who had come to CRS to find out why so many months had passed without government aid of any kind reaching his village…A detailed discussion of the refugee village presented by this priest revealed that he had an intimate knowledge of his people, their resettlement area, their needs, and the potentialities of the region.

580 For example, Da Kai camp. See Annexure VI (d).
581 From numerous examples, see Minutes of Meeting of the Refugee Committee for Đa Lật, May 26, 1956; all ten camp representatives were priests, designated as 'spiritual leader'; PTTDNCH, 1089.
582 PTUDCTN to PTT, October 29, 1955; PTTDNCH, 4041.
583 PTUDCTN to PTT, November 19, 1955; PTTDNCH, 4041.
Harnett’s view of the suitability of the b٪c di c튼 clergy for quasi-secular leadership in their new surrounds was not unchallenged. Replying to Harnett, Jean Le Pichon, a French civil servant employed by the PTUDCTN as a technical expert, claimed:

Before the exodus from the northern Christian provinces, the village fused into the parish. The basic unit remained the family; the social unit was the parish, whose acknowledged leader was the priest. But the parish was first of all a spiritual organization, the first element of a hierarchical religious society possessing a deep inner life. The parish was a very simple society, composed of peasants, fishermen, small artisans, a few village dignitaries who were peasants themselves, and the Parish Priest with his catechists, the Sisters. There was no middle class and no leadership groups. Living in the shade of his church belfry, the priest had to deal with only uncomplicated problems, which did not extend beyond the daily little issues of a stabilized rural society. His life was a quiet one, free from material worry, in a village having well established traditions. He was, as a rule, ill-prepared for the role he was called on to assume in the South.\(^{585}\)

Le Pichon’s caricature of the life of the Northern clergy – perhaps representative of a traditional antagonism within the French colonial civil service towards the Catholic Church – failed to take into account the travails of persecution, famine and war which the priests and their communities had to confront. Nor did it acknowledge that leadership in the secular domain had been a significant element in their overall leadership of the northern parish-village, where leadership in the spiritual and temporal realms had in many instances been seen as indivisible. Le Pichon continued:

However, with him rested the responsibility of the initial resettlement of his parish in Free Viet-Nam. For many priests, the task was too demanding, and Monsignor Harnett, in my opinion, has overestimated their capabilities in this respect. It would have been dangerous to have given the parish priests the full responsibility for the resettling program, including the drawing up of budgets. How many of them, even after the new village location turned out to be poor, wanted to detain their parishioners to complete the building of a brick church? How many eagerly launched unwise co-operatives, which cost a great deal, without being of any practical use?\(^{586}\)


\(^{586}\) Ibid., 96-7.
Cases can be found to support Le Pichon’s hypothesis. But none of these instances served to undermine the central role of communal leadership which their parishioners expected of the bà¢ dì cut clergy. For the ‘closed’ communities of the Northern Catholic heartland, there was nothing unusual in their priests taking a more broadly defined role in their new environment, any more than there had been in the North, or in the process of fleeing to the South. Diệm and Lụông, Catholics themselves, understood this very well, and were content to use the priests as the natural community leaders to ensure the smooth implementation of their resettlement programme. They were also prepared to use their connections with the upper echelons of the Catholic hierarchy to override any reluctance on the part of the priests in adopting a non-spiritual role. When, in early 1956, Phạm Ngọc Chí and his Committee indicated an intention to withdraw priests from active roles in leadership and government liaison (see Appendix III), Lụông responded:

On April 9, 1956, when I reported in person to the President that you had instructed the priests in the camps to withdraw from administrative work, the President thoughtfully suggested that I ask you again to consider the unfavourable consequences of such a complete and unqualified withdrawal, as I set out for you on April 10, 1956. That is:

- A complete withdrawal in all circumstances, in all areas, will cause many objections and distortions;
- Your office has been responsible for the priests and laity involved in the transmigration and resettlement from the outset; it has cost you a great deal to look after every aspect of your compatriots; to all of a sudden withdraw from all responsibilities before the project [of resettlement] is complete, will be a wasted effort. The project perhaps will fail, leaving your compatriots to lament that their priests ‘abandoned their children’ (‘mang con bô chô’).

Therefore, following the wishes of the President, the priests should only withdraw where resettlement has consolidated, and has been carried out harmoniously and satisfactorily. The priests can then train others to succeed

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587 See p. 205.
them in their tasks, depending on the circumstances in each camp. It is absolutely imperative that they do not abandon those camps which are new, or where the resettlement project is not yet completely consolidated.

On Wednesday April 12, 1956, when you and Archbishop Caprio, the Apostolic Delegate, visited Cái Sán, Bishop Caprio told me that despite Canon Law saying that a priest cannot hold civil office, because of the current special circumstances, we should follow the wishes of the President.⁵⁸⁸

Unsurprisingly, Chi acceded to the request. At the same time, he and Harnett remained cognisant of the clergy’s limitations. Harnett recalled:

The Catholic Relief Services tried to reduce the burden of administrative responsibility that was thrust upon the clergy, which resulted in their being treated as civic, as well as spiritual leaders. In this, Catholic Relief Services was supported by Bishop Pham Ngoc Chi, who only permitted the priests to shoulder the role of administrators because no others were available, and the government agencies had not as yet found a solution to the problem. In the fall of 1954, the Minister of Finance proposed to use the clergy to transmit financial aid to the people. I rejected this proposal, because I recognized that the priests were “ill prepared for the role they were called on to assume in the South” [quoting Le Pichon]. In fact, rare indeed was the refugee who was prepared for that role!⁵⁸⁹

Both Lường and the staff of his Commission frequently reflected unfavourably on the leadership skills in community affairs of the Buddhist clergy. In June 1956, Lường reported to Diệ́m on a camp in the Đà Lạt area:

Camp Lam Sôn. Established by Ven. Thích Mật Chi [a Buddhist monk], August 1955. Declared at 362 people in 75 families, in fact 369 people in 88 families. 40 houses, another 7 without roofs. A number of very lazy residents who disturb order. No enterprises, a number work on nearby tea plantations. No communal fund as yet. Good land, but ‘the camp lacks order, because the spiritual leader (i.e., the Buddhist monk) is seldom in the camp and the internal committee is still non-functioning’. It is suggested that the office and the

⁵⁸⁸ PTUDCTN to Phạm Ngọc Chí, April 14, 1956; PTTĐNCH, 4423. As to the Canonical implications of a priest holding civil office, see p. 214.
Buddhists instruct THÍCH MẬT CHI to always be in the camp, so as to provide guidance to his compatriots’.  

Even more pointed was the Lưông’s comment to the head of the National Assembly the following month over a dispute as to the adequacy of mosquito nets at Cái Sân:

Representatives at Cái Sân know that the mosquito nets distributed by the PTUDCTN on other canals have caused no complaints that they are too short; only the Buddhists [complain]. Although we know that a number of Buddhists complain about anything, without any basis, we will ask the representatives at Cai San to examine the nets distributed to the Buddhists. If in fact they have received a number of bad nets, then they will be returned to the contractors to be replaced by proper ones.

Comments such as these may have been indicators of the sense of sectarianism and Catholic-Buddhist suspicion that would bedevil the later years of the Diệm regime. On the other hand, they could have been a reasoned assessment of the comparative roles of Buddhist and Catholic clergy in the provision of civil leadership. Buddhist clergy were not necessarily expected by their communities to be willing or able to provide direction outside of spiritual and religious issues. The delineation of responsibilities between clergy and laity was fairly clearly defined, and there was little perceived need for the monks to undertake leadership roles in the secular domain. Similarly, the need to attain personal spiritual fulfilment by meditation and periodic withdrawal from the community was seen as acceptable and appropriate amongst Buddhist communities, but caused frustration on the part of Lưông and the Catholic operatives within the PTUDCTN, for whom such “otherworldliness” was little more than an impediment to the smooth running of the resettlement centres. By contrast, the continual presence of the bácn di cút Catholic priests, their total immersion in every aspect of the life of the community under their spiritual charge, and their ready accessibility as a point of

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590 Report from PTUDCTN to PTT on visit to South-central Highlands, June 6, 1956; PTTĐNCH, 1081.
591 PTUDCTN to head of National Assembly, 10.7.56, re mosquito nets at Cái Sân; PTTĐNCH, 1081.
592 There was also an expectation of spiritual renewal and reflection on the part of Catholic priests, but this involved less onerous amounts of time, and only very rarely withdrawal from the community.
contact between the bâu di cư community and the resettlement bureaucracy of the state, meant that their role was viewed by the government in a favourable light, and their community leadership viewed as something to be preserved. However, this dichotomised perception of the respective role of Buddhist and Catholic clergy served to further widen the religious cleavage between the two groups, and to perpetuate the view (correct or not, but widely held amongst the Southern, largely non-Catholic population), that the bâu di cư Catholics were receiving unfairly favourable treatment.

The reliance of both the RVN administration and the bâu di cư communities on Catholic priests to provide leadership and a liaison point between the two is demonstrated through the representative structures established by the government to deal with refugees in the various provinces. In Biên Hòa Province, for example, refugee affairs were handled by a committee of ten, five of whom were bâu di cư priests paid a salary by the province, the other five being officials paid by the PTUDCTN. A 1956 MSU Field Report indicated that, in eight of the principal resettlement provinces, six had bâu di cư priests acting as leaders or principal advisors to the liaison committees.

Apart from the staffing of structures at a provincial level, there were three aspects in which the government relied on the priests most heavily, and which gave the priests the greatest leverage over the communities they led, whilst at the same time creating great potential for dissent and divisiveness. They were, first, liaison with, and involvement in, the administration of the camps by the Commissioner; second, the custody and distribution of government and charitable subsidies and the other financial assets of the

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593 Notwithstanding their displeasure over the misdeeds, perceived and actual, of a number of the bâu di cư clergy.
595 Smuckler, Field Study of Refugee Commission, 2.
community on behalf of the camps’ Administrative Committees; and third, their acquiescence in, or resistance to, government initiatives to relocate communities away from existing resettlement areas.

(i) Government Liaison.

Each resettlement camp was administered by government officials accountable to the Commissioner. But each camp also had a Liaison Committee, responsible for communicating government decisions to the camp’s residents and ensuring their implementation, at the same time receiving petitions and complaints from the bàc di cut residents, and endeavouring to resolve them. The priests derived their secular leadership status within the camps from their headship of these committees. They were also regularly co-opted onto working parties, or sent as delegates to conferences established to examine particular issues.

All of this was largely unproblematic as long as it involved the priests acting as advocates for the communities which they led, pressing the best interests and wishes of their bàc di cut parishioners. However, when the interests and wishes of the refugees and the government did not coincide, the situation of the priests became more compromised. The government had an expectation that they would play their role in

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596 The government representative at Cái Sán reported that he “regularly meets with priests and representatives to discuss and resolve problems...;” Nguyễn Văn Thời to PTUDCTN, May 31, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4405.
597 For example, all twelve camp representatives on the Đà Lạt Resettlement Committee were Catholic priests; see Minutes of Meeting of the Refugee Committee for Đà Lạt, May 26, 1956; PTTDNVN, 1089. A conference at the Commissioner’s Saigon headquarters on September 9, 1956 concerning how best to ensure that supplies reach camps had twelve participants; each of the five camp delegates were priests; PTTDNCH, 4402.
598 For example, when the ten members of the UBHTDC complained about the late delivery of rice, Lương effectively turned the matter back to them, urging them to ‘be willing to console the people in the camps, and ask them to be willing to wait a little longer;’ PTUDCTN to UBHTDC, December 13, 1955; PTTDNCH, 4046.
implementing government policy, even when those policies were unpopular, or contrary to their perceived interests. In such situations, the priests were compelled to act as *de facto* agents of the Vietnamese state, and faced potential sanctions should they fail to willingly do so. For example, Lường appointed Fr. Nguyễn Việt Khai, a priest of the Vinh Diocese, as resettlement co-ordinator for the Central Highlands region, but when Khai started to complain that the land and financial assistance programme was inadequate, he was described by government officials as ‘troublesome’.  

Relations between the government and the clerical leadership at Cái Săn were particularly tense. On a number of occasions, the government prevailed upon both Bishop Chi and the Apostolic Delegate to discipline the Cái Săn priests for their failure to support government policy. On September 29, 1956, Lường wrote to Diệm:

Priests advised that they don’t want contracted sharecroppers introduced. A delegation of priests has twice been to see Bishop Phạm Ngọc Chi and I, and want to see [you] about it.

The Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Caprio, has promised to persuade the priests as spiritual leaders at the camp, and I suggest we call a meeting of a number of priests to analyse clearly the problems they face with common sense, with a propaganda effort for residents to follow government policies.

Lường wrote to Diệm again on October 2:

As to residents on Canal 1 under Fr. Lộc, who is their ringleader [and Parish Priest], they still adopt a recalcitrant attitude. They have seen the signed presidential order. Fr. Lộc has apparently sent a letter seeking an audience with the President, and is willing to use his prestige to persuade [him] if he can.

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599 As to Khai’s appointment, see PTUDCTN to PTT, April 6, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4404. As to the complaints, see the comments of the governments’ delegate to the Highlands, Mr. Kinh, at a conference organized by the Commissioner on October 4, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4399.

600 In the margin of the copy in the presidential archives, Diệm wrote ‘put them to work first, they can meet later’; PTTDNCH, 4405. Lường had previously written to Chi, urging him to instruct the priests at Cái Săn to be more cooperative; PTUDCTN to Phạm Ngọc Chi, May 14, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4405.
If not, you should know of Fr. Lôc’s intentions, and decide on a suitable response.\textsuperscript{601}

Dieâm’s response by no means suggested subservience to the Catholic clergy:
Make sure people at Cai San understand government policy. Anyone misusing the name of religion to cause any unlawful plot, stirring up trouble, or acting dishonestly, must be punished in order to make an example.\textsuperscript{602}

That the bâc di cụ clergy wielded enormous power within their communities did not necessarily imply that they wielded that power in an imperious or unilateral fashion. Given the diversity of the issues with which they had to contend – from the momentous, such as where to resettle, through to technical minutiae such as what brand of tractor to use – most priests were engaged in active and continuous consultation with their communities as to decisions to be made in the non-spiritual realm. Yet the fact remains that for the two and a half years of the official duration of the resettlement programme, almost all of the representation of Catholic bâc di cụ interests with the government were undertaken by their clergy.\textsuperscript{603}

\textit{(ii) Financial management}

One of the most important functions of the priest-leaders in the resettlement areas was to hold and distribute the various per capita subsidies and grants paid to the community by the PTUDCTN, USOM, CRS, the UBHTĐC, and various other charitable agencies. Some were paid in money, others in food, clothing, building materials, and agricultural and other equipment. Some were paid on a per capita basis for the benefit of individual families, others for communal use.\textsuperscript{604} At every point along the chain of financial distribution (see Table 5.5), the lack of auditing or other adequate

\textsuperscript{601} PTUDCTN to PTT, October 2, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4405.
\textsuperscript{602} PTT to Minister of Interior, October 5, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4405.
\textsuperscript{603} However, a lay political leadership soon emerged. In the 1960’s, the bâc di cụ Catholics were regarded as being one of the most disciplined voting blocs in the Republic; see p. 202.
\textsuperscript{604} Monies used for the erection of church buildings – always an early priority of bâc di cụ communities – came from the UBHTĐC or CRS, thereby maintaining the pretence of separation of church and state.
mechanisms of accountability, meant that possibilities existed for embezzlement and pilfering.

An MSU field report noted that:

Now that the bulk of administrative and fiscal decisions are made in the field, refugee leaders [i.e., the priests], are far less likely to depart from channels and carry a problem directly to Saigon. In recent visits to the Refugee Commission, we have noticed that the waiting rooms are far less crowded than they were last autumn. An official at COMIGAL summed up the changed situation by referring dryly to the proverbial attraction of sugar for flies.\(^{605}\)

The ability to hold, manage and disburse these funds further consolidated temporal power in the hands of the priests. But it also left them vulnerable to critical accusations when the required resources failed to reach the intended beneficiaries. On occasions, their own malfeasance or financial incompetence meant that monies paid to them went missing, with consequent repercussions with either the authorities or their own community. For example, an investigation at Cái Sân found that whereas the commissioner paid to two priests a sum of thirty five piastres per cubic metre of soil dug from the canal by community members, they passed on only twenty eight, using the extra to buy and sell rice on the black market, the profits of which they kept for their own benefit.\(^{606}\)

On other occasions, they were held accountable by their own communities when the misdeeds of other officials, higher up the distribution chain, meant that the intended funds or goods did not make it into the priest’s possession. A case in point is that of Fr. Quý, spiritual leader at Tràng Lôn camp, Tây Ninh province. The assessment of Lưỡng’s investigators, passed on by Lưỡng to the Ministry for the Interior, could equally apply to many other báč di cụ priest-leaders:

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\(^{606}\) Initial Report of Investigation of Theft at Cái Sân, October 1956; PTTDNCH, 10454.
Fr. Quý is an honest and straightforward person, active, and worried about the economic affairs of his countrymen. But he has made some fundamental mistakes, especially given that he is not a bureaucrat or public servant. Apart from that, he has never cheated or oppressed anyone. According to local priests, when Fr. Quý came south, he brought a large capital sum, and hence his house is very comfortable. Maybe it is because of this that people have misjudged him, and bad elements have made these baseless allegations against him. These matters regularly occur in camps where the money-hungry element has not yet been eliminated.  

In most resettlement camps, the priest-leaders had the responsibility to maintain an accurate roll of current camp residents to be submitted to the camp management, one of the uses of which was to determine the level of per capita subsidies to be paid. It was not uncommon for these lists to contain ‘gia đình ma’ (‘ghost families’); people who had either never existed, or could not be legitimately claimed as currently residing within the camp. For example, at Camp Tần Chí Linh, under the leadership of Fr. Vũ Phùng Tuyền, an investigation found pilfering via ‘ghost’ forms which yielded him 10,000d. Again, this was sometimes because the priest had deliberately inflated the figures, either to maximize the fund available for communal use, or sometimes to siphon it off for his own benefit. On other occasions, the inaccuracy in the roll was a consequence of his being duped; either way, upon discovery, he would have to bear the consequences. For example, in a report of December 23, 1955, Lương advised Diệm that:

In two camps (Tân Hà in Blao, Lạc Lam in Dran), the priests and other leaders were clearly suspicious of the government representative. There was a dispute

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607 PTUDCTN to Minister for the Interior, June 6, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4456.
608 “Tài Sao Động Bảo Di Cực Được di chuyển đi các trái pháo bì Chốn Chất Như Cả Mội?” [Why are our refugee compatriots transferring between camps being pressed in like sardines?] Đàn Chu, December 28, 1956. Similarly, An investigation at Tần Việt Camp, led by Fr. Vũ Đức Tân, led to arrest by the PTUDCTN for submitting ‘ghost’ forms, but was released after allegedly paying a bribe of 5,000 dong; ibid. Other cases involved a process of fraud that began with people falsely claiming to have come from the North: “Thêm 2 con ‘hàm đi cu’ bi thợp có chung làm mọc già, thế giả, để lập cắc gia đình ‘ma’” [Two false refugee ‘vessels’, bearing false papers, are seized trying to set up ‘ghost families’], Tiếng Chúa, October 29, 1954.
over the payment of money to the priest in charge of the upper camp. The priest had responsibility of presenting lists of the names of refugees at Blao. For example, at Lâm Sơn Camp, 576 residents were listed, whereas in fact there were only 350, or even less. At Tần Phát, the list showed 3,500 people, but the Priest in charge of the camp knew of only 3,250. At Tần Hà on 31.11.55, the record showed fourteen tân of rice received, when in fact they only got twelve.  

The actual criminal and moral culpability of the clergy for these losses was in many ways less significant than the adverse impression that their involvement created. When they were themselves involved in financial wrongdoing, the Commissioner referred priestly malefactors to Phạm Ngọc Chi to be dealt with by the Church (usually by transfer to another role), rather than through administrative or legal sanctions. For example, when Fr. Phạm Công Ngọc of Hoa Lạc camp was found by the Commissioner’s investigators to have been involved in selling off aid supplies on the black market, Lương recommended to Diệm that “[we should] ask Fr. Ngọc to produce his receipt books for expenditure in the camp, and at the same time, ask Bishop Phạm Ngọc Chi to remove Fr. Ngọc and replace him with another priest who is more sound.”  

Lương implicitly acknowledged that the success of the resettlement programme, regarded as one of the Diệm government’s major achievements, had become so reliant on the role of the priest-leaders that, if their integrity was publicly impugned, then the success of the programme, and consequently the delivery of the bàc đi cử vote at forthcoming elections, would be imperilled. After the discovery of a very significant episode of fraud against the Commission in early 1956, Lương wrote to the Minister for the Interior:

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609 PTUDCTN to PTT; PTTDNCH, 4042.
610 PTUDCTN to PTT, June 4, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4457.
In the present stage of our state, which is preparing for a national election to ratify the constitution, I can see many points of disadvantage in the political sphere if, by quickly revealing this fraud, we were to become a target for every type of distorted public opinion during the period of free expression leading up to the election. Such public views will not harm the prestige of the government. But it will harm the good name of the spiritual leaders of the refugees [i.e., the priests], who would be required to go to court to give evidence... No doubt the communists, and opposition factions, could exploit these events to ruin the government’s elections plans. I have sought the opinion of many involved in the refugee problem (including the Special Minister of State), and they all share my viewpoint. I know that the priests will withdraw from camp management after the election, so should we wait until after then, or continue the investigation and interrogations of the priests, and lose the influence of the Catholic bloc, which is at present the government’s strongest source of support? For these reasons, I would ask you to wait until after the election before implementing any severe measures.611

It is worth noting that none of these allegations of fraud against the priests, some of which were substantiated, led either Lương’s administration, or Bishop Chi’s Committee, to suggest that the bàc đĩ cu t clergy lacked the decidedly non-spiritual financial skills that were required to fulfil their duties as the camps’ fiscal custodians. The instances of priestly malfeasance or incompetence cited above were the exceptions to what was generally seen (Le Pichon notwithstanding) as highly effective and honest organization and administration on the part of most bàc đĩ cu t priests.

(iii) Resettlement camp transfers

Communities which had recently undergone the traumatic changes involved in migration as refugees from North to South now faced two more forms of potentially traumatic dislocation; fragmentation of the community as members sought to disperse, and forced relocation from the initial place of refuge to a government-chosen resettlement site.

611 PTUDCTN to Minister for the Interior, February 21, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4454.
The priests regarded the maintenance of the unity and integrity of the community as one of their first duties, entrusted to them with an almost theological significance, in perpetuation of Mosaic leadership of the wandering tribes (see p. 138). This sometimes bought them into conflict with the parishioners in their care, who whilst valuing being with compatriots from their own quê, also wanted to enjoy greater flexibility of movement.\footnote{\textit{See Appendix VI (c).} Even this less satisfying aspect of \textit{bác di cắt} priestly leadership refers back to the Mosaic template, where the ‘murmurings’ of Israel’s wandering tribes at times required firm and corrective leadership (Ex 14:11; Nu 11:1-3; Dt 9:22).} Some \textit{bác di cắt} managed to locate relatives in the South, or friends in other camps, and so sought to leave their community in order to join up with them. Others found that their normal trade or livelihood could not be practised in the area where they had been resettled, and identified better economic opportunities in other places. \textit{Thời Luận} interviewed residents of the Trung Nghĩa resettlement camp in Long Khánh:

Some of us have gone off in a different direction to find opportunities after receiving the [government] subsidy. They went with regret and yearnings, because they have to be far from the parish priest, far from our place of worship. But for those who stay, it’s really difficult to find the means to earn an adequate living.\footnote{\textit{Thời Luận}, April 13, 1955, 2.}

The priests, however, had a powerful weapon in dissuading their parishioners against such dispersal. Because they controlled the camp residents’ lists, and hence the financial subsidies, if they refused to endorse transfer documents, they could effectively prevent a family from leaving the camp, by refusing to transfer its subsidy. Unsurprisingly, this regularly brought them into conflict with community members. In noting the six greatest challenges which he faced as Commissioner (appendix VI(c)), Lương noted one of them as ‘people complain because the priests refuse to allow them to leave the camps to live elsewhere’.\footnote{Undated hand-written note (March 1955?), PTTDNCH, 4041. For the full text of Lương’s note, including other complaints, see Appendix VII.}
Map 12. From Sổ Cực Làng Định Cư [A list of refugee villages]. (Sài Gòn: UBHTĐC, 1956), indicating resettlement camp locations.
Lương noted one of them as ‘people complain because the priests refuse to allow them to leave the camps to live elsewhere.’

In June 1956, he heard the complaints of residents of the Đa Minh Camp, a mixed community of farmers and fishermen who had been resettled in the Central Highlands. They complained to Lương that, whereas it would be sensible to split the camp so that the farmers remained whilst the fishermen went to the new canals of Cái Sắn, their priest leader, Fr. Đỗ Trọng Bích, had refused to allow this.

Forced relocation created an even greater problem. The government frequently sought to co-opt priests to persuade their often reluctant parishioners, who had resettled themselves on one site, to move to another. The Commission regularly sent priests on investigatory missions with officials of the Commission, USOM and CRS, to report back (hopefully favourably) on the suitability of a proposed new site. They assumed, sometimes justifiably, that the bàc điicut would automatically accept the recommendations of their clerical leaders. One official asserted that ‘we should take the priests from some of these camps to see then new sites in the highlands. When they see that conditions are good, they will convince people to go’.

Referring to a new project in the Central Highlands, Lương wrote to Diệm in March 1956 that:

Taking the opportunity afforded by the presence of a number of priests, I reached an agreement with them to move a series of 1,000 families, to the two areas mentioned above, from about 23.3.1956 onwards. Camps Tâm Hùng A and B (Phan Thiết) led by Fr. Quyên, will go to Đắk Mil. Fr. Nghi will bring his followers from Zone IV who are presently in Danang, to Boun Ea Kouang.

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615 Undated handwritten note (March 1955?), PTTDNCH, 4041. For the full text of Lương’s note, including other complaints, see Appendix VII.
616 PTUDCTN to PTT, June 6, 1956; PTTDNVN, 1089.
617 Minutes of meeting July 23, 1956 at Resettlement Commission, re resettlement at Pleiku; PTTDNCH, 4408.
618 PTUDCTN to PTT, March 19, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4404. See also fieldwork interviews on movements from Phan Thiết to Đắk Mil at p. 142.
However, the chain of action from government initiative, to clerical persuasion, to communal submission, was not always so facile. On occasions, priests baulked at becoming agents for the implementation of government policy, or believed that planned moves were not in the best interests of their community. When the government moved to repossess the site of the Phú Thọ camp in metropolitan Saigon, the priests led an unsuccessful campaign of resistance to allow the refugees to stay on the site.619 Ronald Frankum asserted that ‘some Catholic clergy insisted on moving their congregations to Biên Hòa, refusing to relocate to established resettlement camps with houses and agricultural land outside the province, because the province had become a Catholic resettlement haven’.620

More often, the clergy were cast in the role of trying to persuade reluctant parishioners to move:

On 1.2.55, the head of the Refugees Committee, together with a representative of Bishop Phạm Ngọc Chi, went to visit the site. Fr. Phạm Bá Nguyên, the Chaplain of An Hảo camp, Mỹ Tho, also saw the land and offered to move 1,000 Northerners there to make a living. However, the people would not go, because they were afraid of the sects. Father used all his efforts to persuade them, but was unable to do so. In my opinion, if you want to resettle this area, you will need to first send in the army to mop up the remaining elements of the Hoa Hảo and Bình Xuyên, and establish a post to ensure that the settlers can live in peace.621

Others were reluctant to volunteer to relocate, because they believed that their stay in the South was temporary, and they had the intention of quickly returning to the North

619 PTUDCTN to Fr. Trần Ngọc Nhật, October 1, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4417.
620 Frankum, To Move a Nation.
621 Trần Văn Lắm, government representative for the South to PTT, December 21, 1955; PTTDNCH, 4421.
after a short period of refuge. Still others feared that their economic situation might be adversely affected:

Illustration 17. Ngô Đình Diệm: “I have opened for Catholic refugees who have come south a bright path to the future.” From Chinh Nghia, a state-sanctioned Catholic newspaper in the DRVN, December 17, 1961.

The delegation went with the three priests from the two camps, and chose five areas. After that, the delegation sought the opinion of the spiritual leaders. The priests said that they thought the land chosen was better than that at Rạch Bập

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622 Minutes of meeting July 23, 1956 at Resettlement Commission, re resettlement at Pleiku; PTTDNCH, 4408. See also Catton, Diem’s Final Failure, 60-1.
and Kiên Điên, but they were unable to decide to force their congregations to move. After that, the people asked me to ask you if they could remain. Delegation decided people fell into two categories; those who were genuinely making a living from the soil, and those who were working on the rubber plantations, or some other employment. The first type can stay if they want. The second type can stay, but must mix in with the locals, and cannot be subsidized. Or, they can go to the places chosen, or to Pleiku.\textsuperscript{623}

It can be seen from these episodes that the authority of the clergy was not absolute, and on occasions when it was exercised in a manner not congruent with the community’s desires or motivations, it was liable to be challenged. The problematic leadership role of the clergy in secular affairs occasionally prompted dissatisfaction and resentment amongst their communities, especially in circumstances where the priest was shown to be venal, or living at a material standard out of alignment with that of his parishioners, or was seen as being particularly harsh in his dealings with his parishioners; a range of resentments synthesized in a July 1955 article in the Saigon daily \textit{Thời Luận} (see Appendix IV). But there is little evidence to suggest that such dissatisfaction was widespread; on the contrary, the relative lack of departures or transfers from the camps, the minimal number of complaints as to clergy on the files of the PTUDCTN\textsuperscript{624}, and the capacity of the clergy to retain internal coherence within the resettled \textit{bác dĩ cut} communities, all suggest a willingness on the part of their communities to accept the continued authority role of the clergy over community affairs. At first glance, the scope of that authority appears to have gone well beyond matters pertaining to religion. Yet it was ultimately the priest’s position as religious leader from which all other aspects of their authority were derived. The religious raison d’etre to the villages in the North had often elevated the priest’s position to that of overall communal leadership; the religious foundation to social organization of the \textit{bác dĩ cut} in the post-

\textsuperscript{623} PTUDCTN to PTT, October 4, 1956; PTTĐNCH, 4423.  
\textsuperscript{624} Although such complaints could be recorded in the files of the UBHTDC, which are not presently accessible.
transmigration in the South meant that their communities bore a greater likeness to their quê (native place) than to their new environment.

*An exercise in pastoral leadership?*

The Canonical implications of the bàc di cut clergy’s role in the administration of the camps, and the non-spiritual aspects of their communities’ existence, were complex and far-reaching. Clergy who are members of religious orders or institutes, such as the Dominicans or the Missions Étrangères de Paris, are subject to obedience to their religious superiors. But by Canon 111 of the 1917 Code, diocesan, or secular priests (as most bàc di cut clergy were), were bound by obedience to the bishop of the diocese to which they are incardinated. What happened when they were forced by circumstances to operate outside of the territory of their diocese? More particularly, to whom were those bàc di cut clergy now accountable if they had no functioning bishop in the South (remembering that only three of the ten Northern Bishops continued Episcopal duties in the South)? Canon 201 (3) of the 1917 Code gave them the right to function as priests outside of their home diocese, but did not resolve the issue of their accountability. Eventually, the matter would be resolved by their re-incardination in the Southern diocese in which they took up residence. This process was not completed until the erection of the Vietnamese hierarchy, and the creation of actual dioceses, in 1960. In the meantime, Bishop Chi claimed authority over them in his role as Vicar for the Northern Clergy transmigrated to the South. But his only direct supervisory right under Canon Law would have been over those priests who had fled his own diocese of Bùi Chu. His vicarious authority over other bàc di cut priests must have come from a grant of such authority by the Southern bishops, perhaps again acting at the behest of the Holy See, in whose name they themselves exercised authority vicariously.

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625 Peters, 1917 Code, 62.
626 Pursuant to canons 114, 116 and 117 of the 1917 Code; Peters, 1917 Code, 62-3.
Obedience to a bishop is not the only circumscription of the role of a cleric to be found in Canon Law. Most fundamentally, the role of the cleric was seen as one of wholly spiritual leadership; a fact given notional recognition by the designation within the camps of the bac di cu priests as lãnh đạo tinh thần (spiritual leaders), even when the practical reality belied this.\(^{627}\) The 1917 Code specified some activities which were considered inimical to the pursuit of spiritual leadership, such as military service (canon 121), and, strangely, medicine and surgery (canon 139(2)).\(^{628}\)

The more problematic prohibitions for the bac di cu clergy, however, lay in the injunctions against holding public office, and participating in trade and commerce, both of which were to be found in Canon 139 of the 1917 Code:

(1) They [clerics] should avoid those things that, whilst not indecent, are still alien to the clerical state.
(2) They shall not exercise medicine or surgery without an apostolic indult; they shall not act as public functionaries or notaries, except in the ecclesiastical curia; they shall not assume public offices that encompass the exercise of lay jurisdiction or administration.
(3) Without the permission of their ordinary, they shall not go into the conduct of goods belonging to lay persons or into secular offices requiring the duty of rendering accounts; they shall not act in the role of procurator or advocate, except in ecclesiastical tribunals or in civil cases that involve their goods or the goods of their church......;
(4) ...

It is a delicate point as to whether the bac di cu priests, in their leadership role within the camps, had assumed a public office, or were simply liaising with the camp authorities as an act of pastoral concern for their communities. Certainly Monsignor

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\(^{627}\) Using a theology which was totally overturned by the Second Vatican Council and the 1983 Code which followed it, the 1917 Code stated (at Canon 124) that ‘clerics must lead an interior life holier than that of the laity, and should excel in rendering them an example of virtue and good deeds’. Peters, *1917 Code*, 65.

\(^{628}\) Ibid., 65, 70.
Caprio thought that they were holding public office in breach of Canon Law.\textsuperscript{629} It is a sign of how far Church and State became entangled in the \textit{di cut} period that, whilst it was Bishop Chi and the UBHTDC that appointed each of the priests to their role within the camp as its spiritual leader, it was the state which secularized that role by making the leader an \textit{ex officio} part of the government’s administrative apparatus in the camp’s operation.

The injunction against holding secular office is not, of course, a prohibition against co-operation or liaison with the state for proper purposes pertaining to the affairs of the pastoral community which the priest leads. But it can be a fine line between co-operating with the state, and acting on its behalf. As noted previously, many priests found themselves in the invidious position of being made the agents for implementation of state policy with their often unwilling communities, particularly in regard to their resettlement in the Highlands or at Cái Sân. Notwithstanding their Catholic credentials, neither Diệm nor Lưỡng had any inhibition in compelling clergy to undertake this role, which effectively forced them to act as government functionaries.\textsuperscript{630} It could be justifiably argued that in such cases, they had ceased to represent the interests of their pastoral communities, and were instead agents of influence operating at the behest of the State. Indeed, when they failed to implement government policy to the authorities’ satisfaction, then contact would be made with Chi and the UBHTDC, to ensure their compliance. It is therefore not inconsequential as to whether the \textit{bác di cut} clergy’s role as state-designated camp leaders and liaison officials did or did not breach the injunction against holding public office in Canon 139(2). The relationship arguably transgressed the demarcation of the respective roles

\textsuperscript{629} See p. 197.
\textsuperscript{630} Although ‘public office’ in the sense used in the Canons referred to specific offices, such as appointment to the legislature or judiciary, rather than mere paid employment with the state; see Canon 19 of the former code.
of church and state which church law endeavoured to establish via the above provisions.

A 1993 manual on the Code of Canon Law states that provision against holding public office:

... is based on the same ontology as the ministerial priesthood, and on the sacred object of its mission. In virtue of this, the priest sets himself up as a symbol and instrument of unity and fraternity amongst all people and apart from any ideological and political confrontation.\(^{631}\)

There is little suggestion that the priests’ role in public office during the resettlement period had direct party-political connotations, although the marshalling of the \textit{bác di cut} into a disciplined voting bloc was to become a potent allegation in later years against such activist clergy as Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh.\(^{632}\) However, when the priest-leader’s role on behalf of the state became a point of divisiveness, such as when they sought to coerce communities into secondary resettlement in the Highlands or at Cái Sắn – their secular role came into potential conflict with the intrinsic nature of their spiritual ministry. Any clerical community leader will, of course, be involved in making and implementing decisions which do not meet with full agreement within the community, and hence be regarded as a source of dissent. However, the vital distinction here is that those decisions are made by or on behalf of the community. In the case of the \textit{bác di cut} clergy, many of the decisions which they were called on to make were taken not by the community, but by the state, and served the purposes of state policy, sometimes in a manner inimical to the community’s self-perceived interests. The reluctance of Bishop Chi to extend the secular mandate of the priest-leaders within the \textit{bác di cut} communities towards the end of the resettlement period suggests that he was aware of


\(^{632}\) See p. 289.
both the pastoral harm, and the canonical illegitimacy, of leaving the priests in these compromising roles.\textsuperscript{633}

Another difficult issue was that of the commercial and fund-holding activities undertaken by many of the priest-leaders in the resettlement camps. As noted previously, many engaged in commercial activities on behalf of their communities. Many more were engaged in the holding and dispersal of communal funds paid by the state or charitable organizations to the community. Were these canonically legitimate activities for these priest-leaders to undertake? The relevant canons from the 1917 Code were as follows:

137. Clerics are prohibited from posting bonds, even out of their own goods, if they have not consulted the local ordinary.

...  
139 (3). Without the permission of their ordinary, they shall not go into the conduct of goods belonging to lay persons, or into secular offices requiring the duty of rendering accounts....

...  
142. Clerics are prohibited from exercising, either for themselves or for the advantage of another, business or trades, either in their own name or by using the name of another.

If Bishop Chi was to be regarded as the local Ordinary for the purpose of overseeing the activities of the bắc di cư clergy, then permission to undertake fiduciary and commercial activities would have come from him. It was presumably implied in the permission he gave for priests to act as de facto community leaders, and de jure as liaison officers, within the camps, given that the retention and distribution of funds was a stated part of that position. It is doubtful, though, that some of the more entrepreneurial excesses of the clergy – such as tree-felling and timber-selling, which

\textsuperscript{633} Canon 285(3) of the 1983 Code simplifies and absolutizes the division in providing that ‘Clerics are forbidden to assume public office whenever it means sharing in the exercise of civil power’. This provision – which does not provide for dispensation by the Ordinary – would have effectively made the role of the priest leaders in the bắc di cư camp ultra vires. Had it been in effect at the time?
transgressed the law of the state as well – came within the mandate granted to them by Bishop Chi. Activities such as these were in clear breach of Canon 142.

Some priests engaged in these activities defended themselves by asserting that all of their actions were undertaken on behalf of, and for the benefit of, the community of which they was given charge. Nearly any Catholic cleric, given leadership of a parish or religious community, will of necessity be entrusted with the funds of the community to administer, preserve and disburse on behalf of that community. Sometimes, to deepen those reserves or serve some other pastoral purpose, that cleric will invest the funds in the hope that the return on the investment will enhance the communal fund. 634 Such activities are legitimate within the provisions of the Canon Law that allow the Church, and its clerics, to possess temporal goods (under the 1917 Code, canons 1495 and 1499). 635

The point of demarcation is notionally clear; that the cleric should administer and invest the funds on behalf of, and for the benefit of, the whole community over which he acts as leader, rather than for his own personal benefit or enrichment. However, the entanglement of personal and communal finances, benefits and commercial activities has been a problem confronting clerical leaders and church communities throughout the entirety of the Church’s history. It was no less so during the post-transmigration resettlement process. Putting aside the instances of fraudulent misappropriation of communal funds by the priest-leaders, which were in clear breach of both canon and civil law, the more unintentional cases of admixture of the communal and the personal were also problematic, in both a canonical and a pastoral sense. These problems arose

634 For example, one current-day Parish Priest in Southern Vietnam has invested the funds of the Parish in a water purification plant, and then sells the water to parishioners on an ‘at cost’ basis to ensure that all have access to clean drinking water.
635 Peters, 1917 Code, 500.
from two principal factors. The first was the relatively chaotic nature of public administration in the period, with the imperative to provide public and charitable funds to huge numbers of people with great urgency so as to ensure that their survival and successful resettlement was undertaken on an inadequate foundation of public infrastructure to complete the task. This meant that levels of accountability normally expected in public administration became de-prioritized against the need to create economically and socially viable communities as a matter of urgency. Second, the đặc di cut communities found themselves excessively reliant on priests to perform tasks of secular leadership, in repetition of the patterns of social structures which existed in many of their home communities in the North. The result of both the chaos and the excessive dependence on clerics meant that the niceties of Canon Law in relation to activities that were neither spiritual nor ecclesiastical were less of a priority than the imperative to get their communities viably resettled in their new southern environment. However, the lack of effective supervision, or prescription as to the extent of their secular roles, meant that the đặc di cut priests often acted contrary to canon law and outside of the parameters of their role as clerics.

This was not confined to either holding secular office, or to directly engaging in commercial activities. Another deeply problematic area was the question of decision-making by the đặc di cut clergy as to the non-spiritual affairs of the community. The two areas in which this issue most frequently arose were the inter-related issues of where the community would reside, and what economic activities it would undertake. The extent to which priests found themselves torn between the wishes of the government and those of their community has already been canvassed. But the Presidential archives relating to the PTUDCTN suggest that the priests also played a decisive role in deciding economic issues on behalf of the community as well. At the macro-economic level, priests decided whether the community would engage in rice-
growing, fishing, small industry, etc. At a micro-economic level, they also gave
instructions to PTUDCTN operatives over minutiae such as what brands of tractors
their community would use, or what species of rice-seedlings they would plant.

The archives do not, however, reveal the extent to which representations made by
these clerics came as a result of consultation with the community. Did the priests
really make the decisions, or did they act merely as conduits or spokespeople for the
community, presenting decisions which the laity had made themselves? In some cases,
the fact that the decisions produced widespread dissent within the community suggests
that they were not the product of a communal consensus. In any case, the question
arises as to whether this clerical involvement in decision-making over issues that were
not of a directly spiritual or ecclesiastical nature was in transgression of their role in
Canon Law. Here, the guidance which Canon Law provides is even more ambivalent
than that pertaining to issues of civil or commercial participation by priests.

By Canon 451 of the 1917 Code, ‘a pastor is a priest or moral person upon whom a
parish is conferred along with the care of souls to be exercised under the authority of
the local ordinary’. Whilst the bacak di cu priests were not officially parish priests
until after the resettlement period was completed, and they were incardinated into
Southern dioceses, the role that they were granted within their communities by
mandate of Bishop Chi was akin to that of a parish priest. What, then, does the ‘care of
souls’ – which Canon 464 states the pastor is bound to exercise - imply? Canon 462 set
out a number of liturgical and spiritual functions, such as the celebration of the Catholic
sacraments, the conduct of funerals, and so on. However, three following Canons
ceded to the Pastor a less specific range of functions:

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467(1). The Pastor must… know his sheep and prudently correct the erring, assist with paternal charity the poor and destitute, and apply the utmost care in the Catholic instruction of the young…

.....

468. The pastor must help the sick in his parish with sedulous care and unrestrained charity….

.....

469. The Pastor shall be diligently vigilant lest anything that is contrary to faith or morals be given in his parish, especially in public and private schools, and he shall foster or start works of charity, faith and piety.\(^{637}\)

The cumulative effect of these provisions makes it clear that the pastoral role of the priest as communal leader of lay faithful is not confined to spiritual issues narrowly defined, but rather extends into the localized incarnation of Christian values of charity, justice and love. But the canons give no indication as to what the outer parameters of that pastoral role might be. Can, for example, the choice of which communal economic activities to pursue, or of which brand of tractors to purchase, be regarded as being made pursuant to a legitimate exercise of a priest’s pastoral mandate? The particular circumstances of the transmigration, and the situation in which the bàc di cư communities found themselves, must be borne in mind. Many were comprised of large numbers of semi-literate peasants and agrarian workers, drawn from communities in which community leadership and administrations had been traditionally conferred upon the clergy. Finding themselves in a new and unfamiliar environment, under circumstances of traumatic flight, without significant concomitant lay leadership or alternative direction, their dependence on clerical leadership paralleled their need for spiritual sustenance. To provide such temporal leadership on a pro tem basis could be legitimately regarded as a function of pastoral charity, exercised pursuant to the canonical requirements to ‘know his sheep’ (canon 467(1)) and to ‘foster or start works of charity’ (canon 469). Whilst these canons might be invoked to provide legal

\(^{637}\) Ibid., 180-1. The 1983 Code of Canon Law reformulates the definition of a Pastor’s duties, stressing (at Canons 528-9) the broad and collaborative nature of the priest’s pastoral role.
justification for the priests’ non-spiritual or ecclesiastical activities, there must nevertheless be outer parameters, both in the nature of the activities themselves and in the timescale over which they are undertaken, beyond which they cannot be regarded as a legitimate exercise of a priest’s pastoral role.

A post-Vatican II theology of priesthood places greater emphasis on the need for priests to exercise their pastoral ministry in collaboration with the lay community, and not usurp functions properly reserved for the laity; functions which include both secular leadership and economic and commercial activity. The transmigration of the bàc di cùt, however, predated the pronouncements of the Council by nearly a decade. At that time, the emphasis was more on the spiritual pre-eminence of clerical leadership, and the subjugation of the laity to clerical authority, albeit notionally restricted to spiritual and ecclesiastical affairs. Given such an emphasis, it is unsurprising that the exercise of that authority, when undertaken in circumstances where close accountability and supervision was not readily available, often spilled over into areas not contemplated by Canon Law. This circumstance was by no means unique to the bàc di cùt clergy; indeed, it has been a recurrent theme throughout Christian history, most particularly of the Church’s evangelizing activities in mission lands. However, in a modern historical context, the activities of the bàc di cùt priests in the resettlement period should be regarded as fully testing the outer parameters of the pastoral role. That Bishop Chi was so anxious to ultimately dispense them from these duties in itself provides testament to the extent to which the priests’ roles as resettlement leader was at least potentially incompatible with their canonically conferred role.

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(b) North-South Relations

The role of the Parish Church

In an article on the bàc di cu and their camps in the anti-Diệm Saigon daily, Thời Luận, the Catholic journalist Nguyễn Đình Tạo contended that the priest/leaders within the resettlement camps were high-handed, autocratic, dogmatic, unyielding, self-aggrandizing, avaricious, and in some instances, corrupt:

Moreover, why is it that every parish and sub-parish must have a church, even when they are only a few hundred metres apart? Why can’t two or three parishes come together in one church? Outside of the North, one church is separated from another by fifty or sixty kilometres.

However, everyday the people are more zealous. But why is it that priests need to compete with one another, to lay claim to something better than the other parish priest?639

Such views are capable of multiple interpretations. On the one hand, the available reports of the PTUDCTN to Diệm make it clear that there were clear examples of misappropriation of funds and goods by priest-leaders within the camps, which would have been unacceptable to any Catholic community, irrespective of its inculturated concept of the role of the priest as community leader.

On the other hand, several former bàc di cu interviewed for the purpose of this thesis were dismissive of the above comments, indicating their belief that they represented a Southern version of Catholicism which was lax and compromised (Tạo was presumably a native Southerner). In their view, the building of a church was a communal priority demanding communal sacrifice. It was the task of the priest as communal leader to ensure that the resources were made available for this to occur. If some of those resources could be obtained from outside, then so much the better; but if not, then

639 For the full text of the article, see Appendix IV.
whilst human nature makes people reluctant to give up what is theirs to build a church, the priest had to overcome this reluctance.

What of Tào’s suggestion that God could be worshipped in any place? This may be true, they answered, and in the short term, most of the churches within the camps were indeed rudimentary. But as the camps stabilized, the realization dawned that they would not be returning to the North any time soon, and employment and commerce brought additional income into the camps, the need to build a more ‘appropriate’ church became a communal responsibility that the community had to uphold. They wanted to be proud of their church. As to the allegation in the Thời Luận article that some priests were haughty, arrogant, and authoritarian, interviewees conceded that this was sometimes, although rarely, the case. But, they pointed out, they were leaders, and leaders had to lead. That meant that on occasions, they would tell people what to do for the sake of the community as a whole. Although in any group, it would always be possible to find a few complainers or malcontents, the majority were happy to do what priests told them to in most aspects of their lives. It was not that they were being forced or subjugated by their priests; rather, they saw it as a natural component of the clerical role to take charge of the community and make decisions that affected its communal fate.

This dissonance in attitudes as to both the Church building, and the clerical role within the bac di cu communities, can only be fully understood in the context of the cultural history of North and North-Central Vietnamese Catholicism. The phenomenon of close-packed churches on major roads in bac di cu areas (such as Quốc Lộ Mộ [Highway One] through Hố Nai and Long Khánh), in seeming competition with one
another, can still be observed today. There are two explanations for this practice. First, each parish represented a northern community, which may have come from quite different areas above the seventeenth parallel. This geographic and cultural difference, rather than the fact that they were now physically neighbours, was what differentiated each parish communities, and necessitated the provision of a church building for each. Second, they are packed so tightly because each parish community wanted their church to be situated on the major road; typically, the parishes are long but narrow, with a depth far greater than their narrow frontages.

For the northern and north-central Catholic, the Church building was far more than a place in which God was worshipped. For people from rural Catholic villages (as most were), it was also the defining focal point of the community. It was not only the principle place of communal gathering and social intercourse; it identified the community as a Catholic community, partly in distinction to the non-Catholic world beyond, but also in competition with neighbouring Catholic communities. This occasionally aggressive assertion of Catholic identity through physical representation in the church building must be placed in the context of the history of Catholic persecution, a persecution which was withstood by fierce identification with their faith, strong mutual interdependence, and support for clerical leadership.

The individual could look upon the substantial village church with vicarious pride. A resplendent church was a sign of communal prosperity, stability, and dedication. Even if their own home was rudimentary or impoverished, this was seen as to a certain extent an acceptable price to pay for being able to share in the knowledge that they

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641 For example, communities from the dioceses of Hanoi, Thái Bình and Bùi Chu settled next door to each other in close proximity on Highway One at Hố Nai.
642 Dependence on French colonial support to rescue them plays a lesser part in their chosen historical interpretation.
had played their part in the creation of the church building, which it in turn assumed a central role in their lives. Many of the Northern and Mid-Northern churches were decorated with images of local saints or notable figures, in much the same manner as a non-Catholic đền [temple]. These served to explain and share the narrative of the community, to identify what was important to them, not only about the spiritual dimension of their faith, but also about the concrete role which their Catholic ancestors had played in it. As such, the church was a place that served to reinforce a sense of the individual’s identity and belonging within a communal history in a fulfilling manner, as churches had always done throughout Christian history. They have never been places of distilled spiritual experience alone.

Yet for the Southern Catholics, except perhaps for the minority who lived in wholly Catholic communities, the level of attachment to the church building was in some ways less visceral than with their Northern counterparts. They were less likely to live in the immediate vicinity of the Church; even as a physical presence, it was less likely to be an imposing and omnipresent influence. As a building of significance within the community, even substantial churches took their place with other civic and non-Catholic religious buildings; the chùa (pagoda), the đình (communal house), and so on. But most importantly, the presence of the church building did not mark their community off as a Catholic society, separated and distinct from a Catholic world beyond. On the contrary, its proximity to other places of religion provided modest evidence of the capacity of different faiths to co-exist without detriment to any. In these circumstances, the adoption by the Thời Luận journalist of the proposition that God could be worshipped anywhere as justifying the de-prioritising of the construction of a church makes sense when seen from a Southern Catholic viewpoint, yet denies a deeper set of realities for the bắc di cư. For the Southern Catholic, one’s spiritual life was lived in part within the Church; but for the pre-1954 Northern village Catholic, all
of one’s life referred back to the church building as a physical, social, and spiritual fulcrum. For the Southern Catholic, then, the church building derives its existential significance from being a place of worship, so that whilst its beauty and size may do well to magnify the glorification of God, its essential purpose could just as easily be served in more modest surrounds. For the bắc di cư Catholic, any diminution in the status of the church building reflected a form of self-diminution.

The construction of the church within the camps as a pressing initial priority served to perpetuate these realities. The church building would show that, whilst the community was physically displaced and uprooted, its roots remained strong and unbroken, its connection to its spiritual heritage and historical lineage undiminished. And a more resplendent church would show a sense of permanence which would enable the community to come to terms with the fact that its displacement was more than a temporary phenomenon; that this new location in the South was now a quê thứ hai (second homeland).

Religious practices

The all-encompassing nature of their clerical leadership, and the role of the Parish Church, were not the only factors which distinguished the bắc di cư from their southern counterparts. Religious practices, too, marked them off as coming from somewhere else. Until the Second Vatican Council, each diocese in Vietnam issued its own special book of domestic prayers and devotions which adherents within that diocese were required to use, both at home and in their họ đạo. These books could differ markedly from one diocese to the next.643 The Catholic journal Thằng Tiến noted that ‘they keep

643 The Parish Priest of a Hồ Chí Minh City parish with a mixed community of Southern and Northern Catholics told me in 2003 that the bắc di cư in his parish still prayed their Northern prayers at home, having passed them on to succeeding generations.
many liturgical customs for the celebration of Easter which are particular to their forefathers.  

This localism was compounded by regional devotions to particular saints, particularly to various Vietnamese martyrs, most of whom were martyred in the North in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and beatified in the first half of the twentieth. Many bắc di cư communities continued to mark their devotion to ‘their’ saints; through statues and portraits in their churches through festal days and processions, and through prayers seeking their intercession. They revered such local Northern figures as Anna Dế of Kim Sơn and Paul Lê Bảo Tình of Thái Bình, figures who at that time had far less resonance with southern Catholics. Whilst these devotions helped to reaffirm a sense of ongoing identity and continuity amidst the displacement and dispossession of the refugee experience, they also registered the bắc di cư as a community whose essence of existence lay elsewhere, and so emphasized their ‘otherness’.

Even the names of their settlements in the South revealed a natural yearning for their Northern past. The reuse of Northern locality names served to perpetuate their identity as an extrinsic and unassimilated cohort within Southern society. For example, the settlement district of Hồ Nai was comprised of parishes with names which bore northern references; Hà Nội, Thành Hóa, Bái Chu, Hải Phòng, Thái Bình and Kê Sắt.

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645 See illustrations 18 and 19. Southern Catholics had their own, rather more limited pantheon, with such as Matthew Lê Văn Gấm, a Southern Martyr. Both the transmigration, and the later canonization of 117 Vietnamese Martyrs in 1988, helped to broaden the cult for individual saints from beyond the local to the national, and even international level; See my Master’s Thesis, “Making Martyrs: A Study in Vietnamese Church-State Conflict” (M.A. thesis, Monash University, Melbourne, 2001).

646 “Hồ Nai Nội Chùa Đây Như Sống của Đồng Bào Tị Nạn” [Ho Nai is a place full of the vigour of our refugee compatriots], Thời Luận, April 13, 1955.
For those from the North-Eastern dioceses of Bùi Chu, Haiphong, Lạng Sơn, Bắc Ninh and Thái Bình, this sense of regional separateness was compounded by an ecclesiastical separateness. For more than three hundred years, these dioceses had been under the jurisdiction of Spanish Dominicans, as opposed to the clergy of the MEP who had evangelised and administered the Church in most of the rest of Vietnam. The Spanish Dominicans brought to their communities many distinctive devotional, ritual, and catechetical practices, different structures of parish management, and a
reputation for fierce religious fervour, much of which was passed on to the communities of bắc di cư formed from the four Dominican dioceses.  

Even today, both the architecture and adornment of churches in previously Dominican dioceses such as Bùi Chu reveal their Spanish and Dominican roots.

Illustration 19. St. Paul Lê Bảo Tịnh, a Thanh Hóa priest martyred in 1857. This statue sits in the grounds of Bà Lang Church in suburban Nha Trang, Khánh Hòa, a parish founded in 1954 by bắc di cư from St. Paul Tịnh’s quê of Thanh Hóa.

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647 Even today, both the architecture and adornment of churches in previously Dominican dioceses such as Bùi Chu reveal their Spanish and Dominican roots.

_Mutual Stereotyping_

The fact that the bied di cút were, in the main, settled in camps that were initially resettled in geographically isolated camps away from the mainstream of southern society, served to exacerbate their otherness, their apparent extrinsic nature within it. These settlements soon became re-creations of the village societies that the bied di cút had left behind; unsurprising, but hardly helpful in furthering the
process of integration into their new environment. It was something of a backhanded compliment when the Catholic magazine *Thẳng Tiến* [Advance Directly] observed:

These days, the northerners who came South from 1954, after four years of unceasing work to establish livelihoods on the paths of Vietnam, live united together in villages and neighbourhoods as if they were still living in the North. The impression [one gets] is that deep-rooted in their minds is a need to live together.\(^{648}\)

Even the issue of regional dialect served to emphasize the distinctiveness of the *bắc di cư*. The story of linguistic misunderstanding from the Parish Priest of St. Jeanne D’Arc, an old Chợ Lớn parish, serves to illustrate the point (see Appendix V). The different use of a particular term by Northerners and Southerners resulted in a perceived slight to a group of *bắc di cư* clergy by a well-meaning southern parish priest, Fr. Bùi Văn Nho, which even after the matter was explained and reconciled, had lingering attitudinal consequences.\(^{649}\)

The outcome of North-South contretemps were not always so benign. If they suffered from a sense of remoteness from their co-religionists in the South, the situation was worse with the majority *löông* population. The attitudes of any emigré group are at least in part formed by the attitudes towards them of the host society; they can either ease integration, or reinforce the perception of separateness. So it was with the *bắc di cư*. Southerners frequently reacted in an antagonistic manner when they perceived their economic interests to be threatened by the *bắc di cư*, or the resettlement camps which housed them. The government understood that social cohesion, already threatened by pressure from the DRVN and destabilization from the sects, could be further undermined if tensions between indigenous Southerners and *bắc di cư* became

\(^{648}\) “Sinh hoạt Phúc Sinh,” 12.

acute and widespread. On one occasion, when a conflict broke out between bâc di cut and a Southerner when the latter’s land was sequestered to make way for a resettlement camp, one of Diệm’s Ministers commented: “Moreover, at the present stage, I believe it is important to ensure that there is a harmony of interests between Northern refugees and [indigenous] Southerners, so that adversaries cannot take advantage to exploit or propagandise, or distort our policies”.

More generalized regional rivalries, mutual incomprehension, and cultural stereotyping had marked North-South relations well prior to the 1954-5 transmigration. But, whilst Saigon in particular was a city of immigrants, which had been subject to successive influxes of internal migrants and refugees, both the magnitude and the suddenness of the arrival of the bâc di cut meant that the consequences of this regionalism were more marked than ever before. Many southern reactions were typical of those ignited by the sudden influx of émigré cohorts in other historical and cultural contexts, and of regional rivalries between competing centres of population.

It is notable that regionalism was regarded as a taboo subject in the RVN, not mentioned at public gatherings or in the press, a phenomenon which continued on after the Diệm regime. Yet it was a very real factor in determining social relations in the RVN, particularly in the formation of negative attitudes towards the recent arrivals. Allegations of favouritism served to exacerbate this pre-existing regionalism, and to direct it principally against the bâc di cut. A 1962 survey of civil servants found:

650 Lê Xuân Khoa, Việt Nam 1945-1995, 1:266.
651 Nguyễn Văn Thời, Minister for Telecommunications and Land Reform, to PTUDCTN, December 10, 1955; PTTDNCH, 4415. Nevertheless, Lụtng dismissed the claim and sequestered the land.
652 See, for example, the account of North-South tensions in Saigon in 1946 in Nguyễn Duy Hạnh and Trần Đình Thọ, The South Vietnamese Society (McLean, Virginia: General Research Corporation, 1978), 74. See also Joiner, Politics of Massacre, 30.
Although a majority of interviewees from all sections agreed that antagonism exists, those from the South expressed it in the greatest number, and with the greatest intensity and feeling. All but one of them declared that southern civil servants generally regard the northerners as “too aggressive”, and consider them intruders without genuine loyalty or devotion to their new homeland in the South. The Southerners had only mild censure for civil servants from the centre, and the central interviewees who declared there was antagonism also reserved their harshest criticism for their northern colleagues. A majority of the northern interviewees said that the civil servants from the South and Centre are resentful because they cannot compete with the better educated Northerners; after all, they said, during the colonial period, the North was the centre of learning and culture, and the Tonkinese were the most experienced in high-level administrative responsibilities. In addition, a number of Northerners accused the president [Diệm] of giving preferential treatment to Southerners. Interviewees from each section accused civil servants from the other two sectors of being “clannish” and favouring employees from their own region, whilst discriminating against those from the other regions.\(^{654}\)

There is evidence to suggest that, rather than being disingenuous about regionalism (and its religious dimension), much of the Diệm administration was actually blind to the extent of the problem. Diệm understood the potential usefulness of the **bác di cư**, both as an economic force, and an anti-communist cadre within Southern society, and the exploitable potential for damage to the social fabric of the RVN if differences between the new arrivals from the North, and indigenous citizens of the RVN, became a source of significant conflict. In November 1955, Lương told Diệm:

> The differences in customs and thinking between Northerners and Southerners is something that the communists can try to exploit, but it has not yet become a problem. On the contrary, in the contact between Northerners and Southerners to date, there have been no serious quarrels, and instead there has been a good blending which will ultimately progress to assimilation in thinking, habits, and ways of eating, dressing and the use of language. Through daily contact, they are developing a mutual understanding, sympathizing more with each other, and in unperceived ways, are complementing each other so that they will merge in a tight and absolute unity. The campaign ‘empathy between Centre-South-North’

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\(^{654}\) Joiner, *Politics of Massacre*, 68.
proposed by the Commission’s Propaganda Unit will deal absolutely with this problem.\footnote{PTUDCT to PTT, November 22, 1955; PTTDNCH, 4042.}

This sanguine view of internal social relations was largely vindicated by subsequent history, though it also indicated anxieties as to the negative potential in the event of regional differences becoming causes of social dislocation; a potential which was to some extent realized after Diệm’s assassination in November 1963, when in the Buddhist-Catholic riots of 1964, \v{b}ăc di cu\text{\`u} centres were the major focus of attack.\footnote{See p. 290.}

Indeed, the failure of Lương’s memorandum to refer to the religious difference between the \v{b}ăc di cu\text{\`u} and the tam dạo religious amalgam that characterized the Southern majority is a notable omission. It was not only their clothes, food, language and habits that differentiated the Northerners; their Catholic faith, too, separated them off from the majority of Southerners. Perhaps the fact that this united them to Lương and Diệm – themselves members of the same religious minority – blinded them to the reality that their religion was a major distinguishing factor.\footnote{Though at a November 1956 conference, Lương conceded that “We must use all our efforts and abilities to resolve the conflict between Catholics and Buddhists. The Commission must remain neutral, and not have any bias, so as to avoid these arguments.” Minutes of meeting of November 27, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4399.}

Irrespective of their religious affiliation, there was considerable initial sympathy expressed for the humanitarian plight of the refugees, and the evident hardships they had been forced to endure in leaving their \textit{quê}; a sympathy expressed in organized and state-sponsored volunteer and fund-raising efforts to assist the new arrivals, as well as in individual and largely unreported acts of kindness and welcome.\footnote{Although opportunities for the latter were often restricted by the fact that most \v{b}ăc di cu\text{\`u} went directly from arrival to reception centre to resettlement camp without significant interaction with the Southern population.} The South – Saigon in particular – was itself a relatively new land within the context of the \textit{long}...
duerre of kinh (Vietnamese ethnic majority) history, its occupation having essentially begun in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Even in the 1950’s, Saigon retained something of the characteristics of a frontier town in which everyone came – at least not too far back in their ancestral tree – from somewhere else.

At the same time, this did not prevent a level of bemusement, sometimes expressed as antagonism, towards the ‘otherness’ of those newly arrived, even when their ethnicity was in the broader sense co-terminus with the receiving community of kinh in the South. Nine years of war before the Geneva Conference had greatly limited opportunities for North-South contact, thereby limiting opportunities for inter-regional communication. Bemusement turned to antagonism when the émigré group were perceived as a threat to the economic interests of the local community. On occasions, they were seen as taking land, employment, and commercial opportunities from Southerners; other economic issues, such as fishing rights, agricultural trade, and the over-exploitation of forest timber reserves by bac di cu also became sources of conflict. This was exacerbated by the fact that Southern farmers grew crops (such as tobacco) and used equipment with which their northern counterparts were unfamiliar.

The sudden influx of new residents from the North also placed excessive demands on such infrastructure as schools, which local communities needed for their own use; their

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659 See, for example, the series of documents, both of complaints by locals, and investigations dealing with them, as to the activities of Fr. Phạm Ngọc, concerning deforestation in Long Khánh province; PTTĐNCH, 11916. His activities ultimately earned the intervention of President Diệm, who wrote to the Province Chief ‘I (Diệm) ask you to explain to the settlers one last time that my government has helped them a great deal concerning making a living, establishing agriculture, fishing, small industry, etc. They therefore have the capacity to make a living without the need to profit by destroying the forest. If anyone should disobey the forestry law, then they will be answerable to the State.’ Ibid.

660 For example, Rev. Định Xuân Hài of Bùi Môn camp expressed exasperation at the strangeness of southern agricultural practices for his parishioners; Thời Luận, April 30, 1955, 3.
sequestration, although temporary, caused frustration and resentment.\textsuperscript{661} On other occasions, resentment sprang from the belief that the \textit{bác đì cut} were receiving preferential treatment as a consequence of the welfare aid attracted by their refugee status, at a time when many indigenous Southerners had also suffered displacement, either from Việt Minh incursions during the preceding war, or as a consequence of conflict with the Bình Xuyên and the sects.\textsuperscript{662} As the American Jesuit Francis Corley noted:

> Minor frictions generated by cultural differences were aggravated in 1955 and 1956 by special treatment accorded refugees. Their need was desperate and their cause dramatic, so they received attention and care….Yet thousands of peasants in the South, who had lost their possessions during the guerrilla fighting, got nothing. They were bitter, and turned their resentment against the Vietnamese government and American aid, as much as against the refugees, until this was changed.\textsuperscript{663}

Robert Shaplen, writing later than Corley, was more specific:

> Catholic villages, through the influence of this burgeoning hierarchy, benefited most from relief and aid programs. They got the most land grants to build schools and hospitals with the help of assigned soldiers, were given priority loans under the government’s agricultural credit system, received official land grants to build schools and hospitals with the help of assigned soldiers, were given priority loans under the government’s agricultural credit system, received official permission to cut and sell lumber from carefully protected national reserves, and obtained export monopolies … [I]n the building of strategic hamlets, the Catholic population was often exempted from the necessary physical labour as a result of the intervention of the priests.\textsuperscript{664}

\textsuperscript{661} Although, as previously noted, the Diệm administration endeavoured to ameliorate this effect by resettling as many of the \textit{bác đì cut} as possible in rural areas with hitherto low population densities

\textsuperscript{662} Hính and Thọ note that the local populace regarded the \textit{bác đì cut} as a privileged group who took years to integrate into the mainstream of South Vietnamese social life; Nguyễn Duy Hính & Trần Đình Thọ, \textit{The South Vietnamese Society}, 75; McAlister, \textit{Refugee in Retrospect}, 4.


\textsuperscript{664} Robert Shaplen, \textit{The Lost Revolution: The Story of Twenty Years of Neglected Opportunities in Vietnam and of America’s Failure to Foster Democracy There} (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 191-2. The credibility of Shaplen’s conclusions is called into question by his quite erroneous assertion that “Catholics were given the best and safest areas near the coast to cultivate, whilst Buddhists were sent farther inland, where land was not only inferior, but life was a lot more dangerous under the shadow of the Viet Cong”; ibid., 192.
Haas contended that ‘they [the bắc di cư] were not eyed with admiration by the locals, who felt that they had received special favours and encroached on the ancestral land’. Like the PTUDCTN, Church authorities were also attuned to the negative possibilities of such perceptions, whether based in objective reality or otherwise. CRS, for example, ensured that a part of its initial budget was spent on poverty alleviation amongst local Southern communities. Harnett reported observations by CRS operatives that:

Other problems arose from the tendency of the relatively enclosed resettlement communities to trade amongst themselves, rather than to provide opportunities for interactions with local people. Generally speaking, the refugees [at Da Lat] get along well with the people of the South. There is, however, some normal dissatisfaction arising from the competition of the refugees with the Southerners in economic matters. In Blao, for example, the refugees sell their meat and vegetables from house to house, do their own butchering, and are not as yet fitted into the general taxation pattern of the country. Obviously, therefore, the influx of refugees has caused some hardship on the part of the local communities with which they have come in contact, and adjustments are necessary and are being made.

Diệm administration propaganda provided an unfailingly sanguine version of these North-South relations, whereby the reaction of local southerners to this new presence in their midst was one of unceasing compassion, whilst that of the bắc di cư was of concomitantly unceasing gratitude to their hosts. But the continued exhortations to the Southern populous to show compassion itself suggests that such fellow feeling was not always forthcoming. Thus the Ủy Ban Cứu Trợ Động Báo Bắc Cự [Committee to Assist Northern Evacuees] pleaded:

We fervently ask the entire Southern populace to enthusiastically assist the Committee in all of its duties. Now more than ever, we need to raise up the spirit of inter-dependence. This is an opportunity for us to open our hearts, to

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665 Haas, Vietnam: The Other Conflict, 24.
express a spirit of unity in helping our fellow countrymen in this time of misery and war.\textsuperscript{667}

Whilst fieldwork interviewees indicate that there was real compassion for the plight of the refugees in the initial stages of their arrival, more objective commentators than the government and its agents were less sanguine as to the level of mutual sympathy between the northerners and southerners now forced into cohabitation in the RVN. For example, MSU’s Wesley Fishel, writing in 1959, observed:

Initially, the influx of Northerners created frictions in the countryside, and in the towns as well. Nearly 300 new villages were created in the course of refugee resettlement. Towns became overcrowded; the population of the Saigon-Cholon metropolitan area burgeoned; and the southerners, accustomed to an easy, relaxed way of life, found in their midst some 850,000 aggressive, energetic, hard-working countrymen from North of the seventeen parallel, who spoke their language, but with a different pronunciation of the words. The misunderstandings and frictions which would be normal under such circumstances were given a subtle boost by Communist propaganda, as well as by the general feeling of uncertainty and uneasiness which gripped the truncated state at that time and gave every rumour, however wild, the currency of a sacred text.\textsuperscript{668}

Despite this more nuanced presentation, Fishel shared the RVN government’s optimistic predictions:

As the months have passed, however, there have been heartening signs that the fear, suspicion, and antagonisms that marked these initial contacts between the refugees and the original southerners are passing. Although the northerners tended to move south by whole villages, and tried to establish themselves once more as integral units apart from their neighbours, the artificial barriers between them and their Southern neighbours are breaking down. For one thing, the language is tending to become standardized.\textsuperscript{669}

\textsuperscript{667} “Ưy Ban Cứu Trợ Động Bộ Bắc Cực” [Committee to Assist Evacuees], Tiếng Chướng, July 31, 1954.
\textsuperscript{669} Ibid., 3.
Some of these observations proved premature. Continued geographic aggregation in
de facto segregated communities, where both northern linguistic idioms and intonation,
and imported cultural norms (such as place names, local saints, etc.) mark the cultural
‘otherness’ of the bắc di cư communities to the present day; even many of the younger
residents of such settlements as Hố Nai and Gia Kiêm still speak with a giọng bắc
[northern accent], and use northern idiom.670

This relative lack of admixture between indigenous Southerners and the bắc di cư –
eventually broken down by such factors as commerce, employment and inter-marriage
– served to exacerbate mutual incomprehension. There were notable exceptions, such
as Thành Triệu camp in the southern province of Bến Tre, of which Luong reported:

THÀNH TRIỆU. Established November 4, 1954, 1,120 residents living in
with the locals. Generally satisfactory situation, everyone has something to
eat, although as yet not enough. The camp has brought about a certain unity
between North and South, and they are cooperating in opposing
communism.671

From the nearby camp of An Hố, the leader, Rev. Anton Phạm Bá Nguyên, reported:

When we came [from the North] in September 1954, we originally camped in an
old school. The local authorities then provided us with houses, but we have not
been allowed to stay in them. Please allow us to stay there. We also care for many
Southern Catholic families, and they also want us to stay.672

Each side of the North-South divide had their pre-existing prejudices as to the
idiosyncrasies and deficiencies of the other. In 1966, Ellen Hammer took this

670 As I observed during my fieldwork there in 2003-4.
671 PTUDCTN to PTT, 6 November, 1955; PTTDNCN, 4042.
672 To PTUDCTN, May 6, 1955, PTTDNCN, 4414. Handwritten notes from Commissariat staff suggest
they were dubious of Fr. Nguyễn’s claim, and believe he was angling for a land grant or monetary
subsidy. This is the same Fr. Nguyễn who experienced difficulties in persuading his followers to move
differentiation a step further, providing observed stereotypes on the basis of the traditional tripartite North-Centre-South divide:

The Northerner: He sees himself as modern, progressive, scientific-minded, rational, and efficient. He sees the Southerner as lazy, dirty, dim-witted. The Centerite is considered snobbish, tradition-bound, and always concerned with the remote and largely unimportant past.

The Centerite: He sees himself as the only truly cultured person in Vietnam, the inheritor and protector of a great intellectual tradition, which Northerners and Southerners are able to neither to understand or appreciate. He regards Northerners as grasping, money-hungry, and overly sharp in business deals. The Southerner he sees as rustic, boorish and unintellectual.

The Southerner: He regards himself as pacifistic, in harmony with nature in a pastoral sense. Southerners appreciate nature and like to commune with it, thinking nothing of spending a Sunday afternoon meditating on a hillside, a pastime that strikes the Northerner as a waste of time and a centerite as faintly ridiculous. He strongly regards the Northerner as hot-tempered, aggressive and warlike. It is not uncommon to encounter in Saigon a Southerner who tells you that the First Indochina War was an unnecessary war, that it was started and pursued by hot-headed Northerners, who if they only had the patience of the Southerners, would have seen the French leave Indochina as the British left India. The Centerite is regarded as a person preoccupied with political intrigue, often for its own sake, circuitous and ambiguous in speech and deed.²⁷³

Whilst Hammer’s observations may be regarded as a caricature of a caricature, they do capture something of the essence of how regional differentiation is marked by ordinary Vietnamese, even unto the present.²⁷⁴ Not only language, but local custom also acted as markers of difference, which held within them the potential for conflict. Corley provided this example:


²⁷⁴ In contemporary Southern society, a further important distinction is between Bắc nam tử (“54 Northerners) and Bắc bày làm (“75 Northerners); both come from outside of southern society, but are very different in their political allegiances and affiliation to the present regime. ‘Bắc bày làm’ came as perceived conquerors, not as refugees.
Occasionally trifling mistakes stirred more serious trouble. One group of refugee fishermen were settled on a suitable strip of South China sea coast. When they started to bring in their catch of small whales they had traditionally hunted in the north, their neighbours to the south exploded with fury. The Southerners were animists who for centuries had worshipped the very whales the refugees were killing.

Notwithstanding the fear of dissention and fragmentation which a fermenting regionalism posed, both indigenous and bắc di cư residents of the RVN ultimately reached an accommodation whereby, whilst their prejudices as to each other were undiminished, and their cultural separateness retained, they could assume that they posed no threat to each other.

However, local resentments would over time come to be compounded by the seemingly excessive dependence of the Diệm administration on Northern Catholics, their over-representation in the higher ranks of civil and military administrations, and their disproportionate influence upon the polity of the Republic. These resentments, and the general perception that Diệm’s was a sectarian administration that favoured Catholic interests, led to anti-Diệm demonstrations in 1963, which became more specifically anti-Catholic (and anti-bắc di cư) demonstrations and violence in 1964; events which would give local resentment a more specifically religious dimension (see chapter eight).

Even in the early phase of resettlement, there were occasions when more primal communal antagonisms, perhaps fuelled by religious difference, became the apparent source of violent confrontations. In Bử Phát, a camp in suburban Saigon at close quarters with the local population, police were regularly called in through 1957 to

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675 Corley, “Our Helping Hand in Vietnam.” Similar anecdotes of cultural friction abound; for example, the Saigon bread-seller who abused a group of bắc di cư for trying to bargain down the price of his meat rolls, when he heard them talking with Northern accents; Dân Tự, August 30, 1954.
break up street fights between bắc di cut and local non-Catholic youth.676 Similar events also occurred elsewhere; at Cái Sán, at U Minh (Kiên Giang province), etc.677 Catholic bắc di cut elements sometimes acted as the provocateurs; Saigon Police reported breaking up disturbances on February 2, 1957, caused by the Catholic Youth League who were distributing a ‘scandal sheet’. 678

Such activities, whilst representative of only a small segment of the bắc di cut population, point to the fact that not all resentment and antagonism stemmed from the attitudes of the Southerners towards the Northerners; many of the bắc di cut held similarly negative attitudes towards their Southern counterparts, and showed little interest in integrating into Southern society.679 In the earliest phase, this was exacerbated by the belief of many of the bắc di cut that their time in the South would be short, and that they would return to the North to take part in the overthrow of the Communist regime in the DRVN after a relatively brief sojourn in the South. This ultimately mistaken belief mingled with the universal sentimental attachment of the immigrant for his or her quê. Corley observed:

Everywhere I inquired whether the refugees wanted to return north and how they got along with their new neighbours in the South. To a man they wanted to

676 Minutes of Conference at PTUDCTN, November 27, 1956, PTTDNCH, 4399; Huỳnh Văn Thành, Resettlement representative in Saigon, to PTUDCTN, re Bùi Phát Camp, June 21, 1957, PTTDNCH, 4800; Secretary of State to PTUCHVN, Jul 23, 1957, PTTDNCH, 4800. See also “Bắt Người Giam Cắm Trại Phát tại Bùi Phát” [Illegal Incarceration of people at Bui Phat Camp], Tờ Đô, April 30, 1957. These riots recurred in 1963 and 1964; see chapter 8.

677 For example, there was a series of disturbances between bắc di cut and locals at Khấu Bằng camp, in Bến Tre province, in September 1955, which Lương attributed to ‘misunderstanding between the refugees and the locals, with the refugees appearing to be alarmed’; PTUDCVN to PTT, November 6, 1955; PTTDNCHVN, 4042. As to U Minh, see Memo of Province Chief, Kiên Giang, July 23, 1957, PTTDNCH, 4800. As to Cái Sán, see Province Chief, An Giang, April 2, 1958, re riots between locals and bắc di cut at Cái Sán on March 26, 1958; PTTDNCH, 12731.

678 Trần Văn Tự, Director of Police, Report. of Police Activities in Saigon, February 1957; PTTDNCH, 124.

679 For example, the resettlement resident who told Luce and Sommer that ‘It’s good that the government gave us our own village. It would have been hard to live in the same village as the Southerners’; Vietnam: Unheard Voices, 141.
go back to their own fields, miniscule though these had been. Even though the prospects of a return to Tonkin seemed hopeless in the near future, they smiled at the very thought.  


In consequence, during the early transmigration phase, many saw little initial need to establish significant social or commercial interaction with their host community, nor to adapt themselves to southern social, cultural and economic mores.  For example, the minutes of a meeting convened by the PTUCTN in Pleiku on July 21, 1956 note:

680 Corley, ‘Helping Hand.’ See also Luce and Sommer, Vietnam: Unheard Voices, 142.
681 Their fears as to life in the South were no doubt fuelled by DRVN propaganda which suggested that on arrival, the women would be sent to domestic or sexual servitude, the men to corvéé labour in the
After Mr. Lam finished, everyone agreed that the plan to resettle them (bác điicut from elsewhere) in Pleiku was a good idea, but the problem was that they were reluctant to volunteer, because they still believed that their stay in the South was temporary, and they had the intention of quickly returning to the North after a short period here. For example, the district chief at Gò Vấp needs to move three quarters of residents at Xóm Mồi camp, but after reading a newspaper article about this, they didn’t want to go. At Tiên Thuận camp, a number had been resettled in Tây Ninh, but had returned to Xóm Mồi, and were refusing to leave again, even though they now had no official status, and hence no subsidy. Agreed that these would be the priorities, with a propaganda campaign.682

Moreover, the initial reluctance to accept that there was a need to put down roots in the RVN meant that many were initially reluctant to find employment, or otherwise establish a long-term means of economic existence; in particular, to plant crops such as coffee and rubber, which had a long lead-in time until first harvest provided an income.683 This led to the development of excessive dependence on the welfare payments made by the RVN government and its donors, and the development of a ‘hand-out mentality’, at least in the subjective judgment of the Diệm government, and much Southern opinion, thereby further exacerbating local resentment.

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rubber plantations, and the assets of middle and upper class Hanoians would be sequestered; Tiếng Chuông. August 23, 1954.
682 PTTDNCH, 4408.
683 Luce and Sommer, Vietnam: Unheard Voices, 142.
7. The Bàc di cụ’ and the Southern Church

(a) A chosen people?

The exilic experience as portrayed in scripture became something of a leitmotif of Catholic bàc di cụ’ writing and preaching. The Catholic bàc di cụ’ literature contains many scriptural allusions to the proposition that those who suffer, and particularly suffer the travails of loss of homeland, exile, and wandering, are in fact drawn closely into God’s providence and protection. This is by no means surprising. The use of a central, galvanizing image such as that of the refugee or exile, which can be found throughout scripture, provided not only a theological explanation and justification for their seemingly unenviable situation. It also gave the bàc di cụ’ a strong, resonant central image from which they could draw identity, coalescence and energy.

Many scriptural quotations used in writings by and for the bàc di cụ’ were employed as parallelisms between their fate and that of the people of Israel. At one level, this is no different to the phenomenon of Christians as a whole, justifying or rationalising their burden of suffering by the fact that it unites them to the experience of Christ on the cross, thereby enabling them to join in the ultimate victory of His resurrection (Rom 5). This enabled them to see their predicament as being at least in part a positive experience. At an individual level, such suffering could be interpreted as purifying and sanctifying, being at one with Christ in suffering. At a collective level, the Church often profited from such periods of persecution, providing its adherents with a strong narrative of heroism in the face of adversity, from which future generations could in turn derive inspiration. The central role of the Vietnamese Martyrs in Vietnamese
Catholicism’s historical narrative and contemporary devotional practice provides ample testimony to this phenomenon.

But the experience of fleeing from persecution, of seeking refuge, of sojourning in a strange place, and the theological significance of that experience, is for Christians more specific again. The bàc di cuí would have known these bible stories well; of Abraham, the father in faith, sent into exile by Yahweh [Gn 23:4]; Moses, leading the people of Israel to flee from oppression in Egypt to wander forty years in the desert [Ex 16]; the Judean community forced into exile and captivity in Babylon [2 Kg 25; Jr 39:1-7]; the Holy Family of Mary and Joseph, giving birth to their son Jesus in a stable in Bethlehem whilst fleeing from persecution under King Herod [Lk 2:1-8]. All of these stories spoke not only of privation, suffering and dispossession on the one hand, but of being uniquely blessed by God, with a special role in God’s plan for salvation, on the other.

Those writing and speaking to a bàc di cuí audience were quick to appropriate these central biblical events as metaphors for their own situation, pointing those in exile from the North to the explicit parallels between themselves and those who suffered exile in the scriptures. This was seen not only as a source of comfort, but also of justification. The role of the clergy was also rendered explicit in these parallels; they could be portrayed as Mosaic figures, providing divinely sanctioned leadership as described throughout the Book of Exodus, to the wandering tribes of Israel. The spiritual leader as determiner-of-destiny, an image seen throughout the patriarchal and prophetic literature of the Old Testament, took form once more in the social and administrative hierarchy of the bàc di cuí communities. As with the people of Israel, the temporal destiny of the community took on a spiritual dimension (at least as portrayed by the clergy), and hence was appropriately entrusted to their spiritual leaders.
At Christmas 1954, the widely read magazine of the Redemptorist Order, Đức Mẹ Hằng Cựu Giúp, comforted its bạ́c dí cù́ readers, experiencing their first Christmas away from their quế:

Are you a refugee? I know – because I have also suffered that fate – that you have met with many severe hardships, and are completely surrounded by troubles; without a home, without money, and with hundreds of unexpected occurrences. But here we must remember again the situation in former days when Our Lady fled from persecution under Herod to Egypt with her friend [sic] Saint Joseph, the Christ-child in one hand, the reins of the donkey in the other, without any possessions, but only poverty and travail. For Our Lady [and family], her situation was even worse than ours at present, because no local Egyptian would help them, and gave them only scorn. The suffering and scorn of Christ Jesus gave rise to the salvation of humankind, and His Mother is our co-Redemptrix. The glory of salvation which she has won for us comes primarily from when she too experienced suffering, scorn, and poverty. We in this present time should offer up [these things] to Our Lady, seeking sanctification, with the prize of the after-life guaranteed for us by the saving love of Our Lady, even in the miserable conditions which currently afflict our homeland.684

The strong message to be yielded from such writings was that for the exile, the place where they are received is a place where they do not belong, and where it is not their fate to ultimately remain. A Redemptorist priest, Jean-Baptiste Phúc, concluding a pitiable story concerning a young woman evacuee, wrote:

We pray that they will go with hope that one day, they will return. Nothing more [apt] than the words of the prophet Jeremiah can again bring for them a source of consolation; as in days of old, it salved the wounds of the people of Israel during their exile:

So, do not be afraid, my servant Jacob,
Yahweh declares.
Israel, do not be alarmed;
for look, I shall rescue you from distant countries

and your descendants from the country where they are captive.
Jacob will return and be at peace,
secure, with no one to trouble him.
For I am with you to save you, Yahweh declares. [Jer 30: 10-11]

These words, from the Book of Consolation within the Old Testament writing of the Prophet Jeremiah, have been used to comfort Judeo-Christian exiles for millennia. But they also raised for the **bặc đi cư** more disconcerting questions; ‘Am I in a strange and distant country? Or am I in exile within my own homeland?’

In the July 1964 edition of **Đức Mẹ Hành Cứu Giúp** (a special number to mark the tenth anniversary of the start of the transmigration), in an article entitled “Thần Phân Lưu Dày Trong Nhân Giới Thánh Kinh” [The condition of exile amongst the people of Scripture], the author returned to the Christian evaluation of the exile of the Patriarch Abraham as found in the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews:

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his descendants, and that he set out without knowing where he was going. By faith he sojourned in the Promised Land as though it were not his, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. He looked forward to the well-founded city, designed and built by God. [Heb 11: 8-10]

The fact that the exiles find themselves in a place that is not their own actually united them more firmly to their heavenly destiny, the aim and source of consolation offered by the Christian faith, even when by the values of this world, their situation was one of acute hardship. The author of the **Đức Mẹ Hành Cứu Giúp** article continued the Hebrews quotation:

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685 “Ra Đi” [To go out], DMHCG, August 1954, 233.
686 DMHCG, June 1964, 206-7. The conclusion to the article has been lost; the reference to a final page (223) does not accord with the actual publication. This is a shame, as it probably contained both the author’s name, and their endeavour to raise a hermeneutic conclusion for the **bặc đi cư** from the scriptural references.
All these died in faith, before receiving any of the things that had been promised, but they saw them in the far distance and welcomed them, recognizing that they were only *strangers and nomads on earth*. People who use such terms about themselves make it quite plain that they are in search of a homeland. If they had meant the country they came from, they would have had the opportunity to return to it; but in fact they were longing for a better homeland, their heavenly homeland [Heb 11: 13-15].

What effect did all of this contextualizing of their situation within that of the exiled peoples of scripture have on the thinking of the bàéc dòng? And in particular, what effect did it have on their attitude towards the new place they found themselves in, and the Southern church to which they would soon be beholden? The sense of separateness from their Southern counterparts which the Catholic bàéc dòng harboured, and perhaps nurtured, was compounded by the transmigratory experience itself. Indeed, many of them – particularly their priests – saw themselves as receiving a form of divine vindication in their plight which was theirs and theirs alone, separating them off from those who do not undergo such a scarifying experience.

The writer of the essay on the Holy Family quoted above believed that they should not regard the South of Vietnam as a strange land, but rather another part of their own quê hương [homeland]. Yet it was not only customs, accent, idioms, local devotions and saints, and the like, which separated them from their host community in the South, including the local Catholic community. Their hosts had not been through the experience of exile which they themselves had suffered. If those forced to take refuge in the name of God and of righteousness (as they would have seen it) were not only the bearers of suffering, but the chosen witnesses to salvation and a soteriological destiny,

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687 Ibid.
then what could be said of those – even co-religionists – with whom one lived, but who did not share in that salvific experience? How could people who had not undergone that experience hope to exercise ecclesiastical jurisdiction over those who had? This was not such a problem for those at the higher level of bắc di cư leadership, such as Bishop Chi, for whom the less prosaic requirements of Canon Law and realpolitik were more immediate determinants. But what of the ordinary Catholic bắc di cư who were constantly subjected to this proof-texting as to their own situation? Their priests, sitting in their resettlement camps, bound by a promise to recite the Divine Office (i.e., the breviary) several times each day, would have constantly read and re-read the words of the exilic Psalms, such as the famous Psalm 137:

By the rivers of Babylon
we sat and wept
at the memory of Zion.
On the poplars there
we had hung up our harps.

For there our gaolers had asked us
to sing them a song,
to make merry;
‘Sing us one of the songs of Zion’.

How could we sing a song of Yahweh
on alien soil?
If I forget you, Jerusalem,
may my right hand wither.688 [Ps 137 1-3]

Fieldwork interviewees made it clear that their priests, in the sermons provided at each Sunday Mass (as well as other occasions), returned again and again to the theme of how their communal experience was akin to those of the exiles of scripture. This vivid and familiar biblical imagery, and its pertinence to their current situation, was articulated clearly and astutely by the bắc di cư clergy. Interviewees told of how

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688 Also quoted in ibid.
these references gave them a sense of both comfort and purpose, reminding them that they were protected by, rather than abandoned by, the God in whose name they had fled. It was as if God understood what they were going through, and it helped them to realise that theirs was not a singular curse, but rather a repetition of biblical history. They thus regarded these references as extremely positive. But at the same time, most of these scriptural texts looked unfavourably upon the host cultures and places of sojourn of the biblical exiles. The desert that engulfed the wandering Moses, the Babylonians who scoffed at the heartbroken Israelites, the callous innkeeper of Bethlehem; none of them provided a template of hospitality and sympathy that accorded with the role of the host or recipient community to be found in the Diệm regime’s narrative of the exile-host relationship in the RVN.

The principal motivation of the bác di cu piston took in the scriptural references they read, was to feed them back to their communities in the confident hope of providing them with encouragement, fortitude, and solace. But the issue arises; did these allusions also cause them to reflect on how different their experiences were to those around them? The priests were never as gauche or impolitic as to suggest that their flock’s travails had somehow made them the spiritual superiors of their Southern Catholic counterparts. Similarly, the Catholic literature of the time – constrained by state censorship forbidding references to North-South comparisons or cultural conflicts – made no mention of what conclusions could be drawn as to the bác di cu t being any different to anyone else. Yet the many scriptural meditations put before some of the interviewees in the immediate resettlement period left a clear impression that somehow, they were different from those around them, and that the place in which they found themselves was not their pre-destined homeland, but rather a place of sojourn. This fitted in well with the initial belief that the righteous exiles would return to the North to repossess their lands from the Communist usurpers (as they saw it), as the
people of Israel had done after the Babylonian captivity. But as time went by, and the reality became clearer that this was not an immanent possibility, their relationship to their new place of abode needed to be redefined. So too did their relationship to the local Church.

(b) The formal end of the bác đĩ củ'era

The process of civil integration, whereby resettlement camps became villages, was paralleled by their religious embodiment in becoming parishes within their geographic dioceses. As the civic process entailed the passing of the camps from the jurisdiction of the PTUDCTN to that of the provincial authorities, so too did the ecclesiastical process involve the passing of the bác đĩ củ communities and their priests from the authority of Bishop Chi to that of the local church, usually represented by the diocesan bishop.\textsuperscript{689}

The timing of the two handovers largely coincided, but it need not have been so; there was nothing in either civil or canon law that required the two integration processes to be almost simultaneous.

The nature of the civil and ecclesiastical integration processes were, however, quite different. The government’s process, whilst required by ordinance to be completed by December 1956, in some cases took several months more, as provincial governments and local village councils struggled to get themselves into a state of sufficient readiness to enable the integration to proceed.\textsuperscript{690}

\textsuperscript{689} For members of religious orders, the competent authority would be the Provincial or Superior of their order.

\textsuperscript{690} In June 1956, Lựơng estimated that 523,694 camp residents, about 79\% of those to be resettled, would be integrated into the community by the end of the year. BVL to PTT, June 29, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4423. But he was still meeting with Provincial representatives in April 1957 to wind up those camps which had not as yet undergone integration; see minutes of meeting, April 2, 1957; PTTDNCH, 4928. The process effectively took until the end of 1957.
When the integration did proceed, the occasion was marked by a significant ceremony, witnessed by all residents, in which representatives of the PTUDCTN, the Provincial government, and the leadership of the bàc di .cut community (once again almost invariably the priest) were the principal participants. Marking the integration of the bàc di .cut community into the local province in such a public fashion served to fulfil a number of the Diệm regime’s aims. First, it served to reinforce the message that the indigenous southerners and the bàc di .cut were united as one in the common aims of resisting Communism and building a stable and prosperous Southern Republic. Second, it marked a discontinuance of government and non-government assistance channelled through the PTUDCTN, thereby proclaiming that the given community was financially autonomous and economically self-supporting. Thirdly, and most importantly, it gave Diệm’s local political and administrative infrastructure the opportunity to congratulate itself on the success of its refugee resettlement programme, thereby further consolidating (it hoped) the political support of its recipients.

By contrast, the process of integrating the bàc di .cut church into that of the South was undertaken without pomp and ceremony. On December 31, 1956, the UBHTDC ceased to function, and Bishop Chi relinquished his authority over the bàc di .cut clergy. The Committee of ten northern priests, representing the ten Northern dioceses, which had constituted the UBHTDC, remained intact throughout the 1950’s, 

691 The largest being a three-day celebration of the role of the bàc di .cut in the RVN, from October 11 to 13, 1956; see programme and press released for each day; PTTDNCH, 18965.
692 Which in a number of cases was simply incorrect. The Government representative in the Central Highlands, Phạm Như Phiện, told Lọòng in a letter of July 4, 1957, that “Although the camps will revert to the province after the ceremony, the reality is that the local authorities are not in management control; moreover, in a number of camps there are many problems still to be resolved, in which it will be necessary for you [the Refugee Commissioner] to play a part;” PTTDNCH, 10850.
693 He was appointed in November 1960 to the vacant South-central diocese of Qui Nhơn. He was also active in the establishment of the Pontifical University at Đà Lạt, and the propagation of the philosophical doctrine of nhân vị, which became the ideological basis of the Diệm regime.
but with its role purportedly reduced to advising the Southern bishops on *bắc di cut* affairs.

The jurisdiction of Chi over the *bắc di cut* clergy and of the Committee over *bắc di cut* affairs generally, had always rested on tenuous canonical foundations. Had it not been for the ostensible consent of all parties (the southern bishops, the *bắc di cut* clergy, and the Holy See), then the arrangement would have been of doubtful canonical validity. Irrespective of whether the local church Ordinary (leader) and pastor was an Apostolic Vicar (as in Vietnam until 1960) or a territorial Bishop, their powers and authorities were generally exercised over those members of the Church who resided or operated within the territory of their diocese. But what happens when, as with the *bắc di cut* Bishops, circumstances led to their being dispossessed of their diocese? What rights do they have to operate as Bishops within a territory to which they were not appointed? Moreover, if either their clergy or the lay faithful from their dioceses fled with them, did they retain jurisdiction over them? If so, then how does this interact with the jurisdiction of the local bishop? Canon 201 of the 1917 Code of Canon Law provided that:

1. The power of jurisdiction can be exercised directly only over subjects.
2. Judicial power, whether ordinary or delegated, cannot be exercised on one’s own behalf or outside of one’s own territory….
3. Unless it is established by the nature of things or by law, voluntary power of jurisdiction, that is, non-judicial power, can be exercised on one’s own behalf or while outside of one’s own territory and over subjects absent from one’s territory.

‘Subjects’ are to be regarded as people having a domicile or quasi-domicile within the given territory. These provisions are normally exercised in relation to migrants or

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694 Peters, *1917 Code*, 87-8. Other provisions of the 1917 Code, relating to judges of courts of Canon Law, made explicit the possibility of exercising jurisdiction over ‘subjects’ on an extra-territorial basis, so long as the territorial ordinary (usually Bishop) was notified. Canon 1637; ibid., 545.

immigrants who leave their homeland, and who require pastoral care in a new environment; the equivalent Canon in the 1983 Code, Canon 136, makes specific reference to peregrini (literally, ‘travellers’). Whilst Canon 201, especially sub-clause (3), appears to give at least partial jurisdiction over the bàc di cu Catholics to the Northern bishops and priests to whom they were ‘subject’, it also leaves open the issue as to whether they continued to be ‘subjects’ of the place from whence they had come, and at what point in time they transferred to the jurisdiction of the territory in which they now find themselves. For participants at the time, both the temporary legal foundations of the de facto partition of Vietnam, and the subjective mindset of many of the individual bàc di cu, suggested that their migration was quite transitory, and that after a short period of time, Vietnam would be restored to a unitary entity, and the bàc di cu would return to their normal place of residence in the North. It was only in the longer term that it became evident that these expectations would not be rapidly fulfilled. This in turn suggests that the bàc di cu remained extra-territorial subjects under Canon 201 (2), and that their clerical leaders, both bishops and priests, legitimately exercised authority over them under Canon Law. By Canon 92 of the 1917 Code, domicile is acquired in a territory if one’s presence there ‘is either joined with the intention of remaining there perpetually…, or is protracted for ten complete years’. Quasi-domicile – another means by which one becomes a ‘subject’ – is acquired by presence ‘for the greater part of a year’.

The issue of whether the bàc di cu were peregrini, or ‘subjects’ of the Southern bishops where they were now domiciled (or quasi-domiciled) under Canon Law was of far more than semantic significance. If Canon Law was to be interpreted as transferring

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696 ibid., 88.
697 Peters, 1917 Code, 54.
698 Ibid, 54. In the 1983 Code, the period required to qualify for domicile is reduced to five years. Sheehy, Canon Law Letter and Spirit, 58.
them from the jurisdiction of the Northern bishops to their Southern counterparts, then the Bắc di cư Bishops could have been left without an effective pastoral role. In particular, the activities of Bishop Chi and his committee, such as the appointment of priests to positions of leadership in the resettlement camps could have been severely circumscribed, if not rendered entirely ultra vires under Canon Law. As it was, the specific provisions of Canon 201(3) meant that the Canonical jurisdiction of Bishop Chi and his clergy was not complete. First, it was exercised ‘voluntarily’; that is, it did not have a foundation in juridical authority, which remained with the territorial Ordinary. Second, the presumption of extra-territorial jurisdiction could be reversed by ‘the nature of things or by law’. What is contemplated by the former is unclear, but the latter is a specific reference to Canon Law limitations on extra-territorial actions; for example, assisting at a marriage outside of one’s own territory could only be permitted by the territorial Ordinary.

Another area of potential difficulty was the erection of places of worship within the camps. Even the rudimentary wooden thatched chapels that were often the initial places of worship, before more substantial structures were erected, came within the definition of a ‘church’ as provided by Canon 1161 of the 1917 Code. Catholic Churches cannot be licitly built at will. By Canon 1662(1), ‘No church will be built without the expressed consent of the local ordinary’. As previously noted, Bishop Chi and his committee built a prodigious number of places of worship in the Bắc di cư camps, many of which were later to become local Parish Churches once the process of civil and ecclesiastical integration into the Southern community was complete. At a canonical level, Bishop Chi had no authority to undertake such works, unless it was

700 Ibid., 396. This is made clearer in Canon 1215(1) of the 1983 code, which requires the ‘express and written consent of the diocesan bishop’, Sheehy, Canon Law Letter and Spirit, 686.
701 The majority of Parish churches in both the Archdiocese of Hồ Chí Minh City and the Diocese of Xuân Lộc were built by Bắc di cư communities.
voluntarily provided to him by each of the Southern bishops within their dioceses. It appears that he was given a ‘blanket’ dispensation, either by the Southern bishops or the Apostolic Nuncio, to build places of worship in every bàc di cut camp.\textsuperscript{702}

The potential minefield of canonical complexity in relation to the interaction of the Southern Church with the influx of bàc di cut Catholics and their clergy was largely navigated by the Southern bishops consenting to the operation of the bàc di cut as an autonomous entity within their territorial jurisdiction. Their reasons for so consenting were both practical and canonical. At a practical level, the Southern Church would not have been capable of providing for the pastoral, spiritual and material needs of such a vast and rapid influx of Catholics had it not been for the assistance of the bàc di cut leadership, and particularly of Bishop Chi and the UBHTDC. Any endeavour to have accommodated them within the pre-existing parochial and other structures of the southern dioceses would have ended in their collapse under the stress of coping with a group of adherents who were far more numerous than, and in many ways culturally distinct from, their own local parishioners. Even the financial burden on the southern Church would have been intolerable had it been left to its own material and logistical resources to meet the needs of the bàc di cut.\textsuperscript{703} Moreover, the policy choices made by the Diệm administration, and the bàc di cut themselves, to settle the majority of them into geographically distinct areas away from centres of southern population where the southern church had erected its parochial infrastructure, meant that the existing parishes would not have met the needs of the newcomers in any case. The

\textsuperscript{702} It is also possible that he could have ignored Canon Law and the sensibilities of the Southern bishops’ altogether. However, given his apparent observance of Canonical requirements and protocols in relation to the transference of priests from his jurisdiction to the Southern dioceses at the end of his Committee’s functioning, this seems unlikely.

\textsuperscript{703} In this regard, it is important to remember that both the stipending of bàc di cut’ clergy, and the erection of the churches within the camps, were attended to entirely by Chi’s Committee, which had significant funds at its disposal, largely made available by the Catholic Church in other parts of the world; see Table 5.7, p. 186.
demographic patterns of bắc di cut resettlement, and the pre-existing southern diocesan parochial structures, were not designed for each other, and hence were mismatched. It required the intervention of the likes of Bishop Chi and his Committee to establish a parallel Church structure to serve bắc di cut needs. Rather than being seen as an unwelcome intrusion into local ecclesiastical autonomy, the southern bishops seem to have genuinely welcomed his activities as a solution to a problem which they would not themselves have had the means to resolve.

However, had they not done so, and instead been minded to see the bắc di cu’s autonomous presence within their own territory as an unwelcome and uncanonical intrusion, they would have been effectively prevented from taking any effective action against them by the deficiencies in their own powers under Canon Law. As mentioned above, the entirety of their authority as Apostolic Vicars was exercised vicariously on behalf of the Holy See. Once Rome decided – as it clearly did – that the work of Chi and his Committee was worthwhile and appropriate, then it had legal authority to direct the Apostolic Vicars to provide them with all necessary cooperation.

The extent to which Rome’s reserve power over its Southern Vietnamese Apostolic Vicars had to be called on to ensure their co-operation is unclear. Whether their consent to the establishment of a de facto autonomous church (albeit a temporary one) within their territories was freely given, or coercively extracted, will only become known once the archives of either the Vatican Secretariat of State, Propaganda Fide, or the individual Southern dioceses are made available. ⁷⁰⁴ What is clear is that canonical considerations relating to the inter-relationship of the Southern Church with the bắc di cut Catholics did not constitute a significant impediment to the latter’s activities.

⁷⁰⁴ The level of real acceptance by the Southern bishops did not really emerge from oral interviews conducted for this study. It was made clear, however, that many of the relevant diocesan and parochial archives were destroyed – often by their fearful curators – in 1975.
Just as Bishop Chi and the bác di cư clergy may have been the primary motivating force behind the establishment of the UBHTÐC as a virtual parallel church, it also appears that they were the primary proponents of its ultimate disbandment when (or slightly before) the Diệm government moved to disband the PTUDCTN and bring the settlements under provincial administration.\(^\text{705}\)

As with its earlier establishment, it is unclear whether this movement from Chi and his committee was prompted by pressure from Rome (whose legate announced the decision), or the Southern bishops, or whether it was purely their own initiative. If the Southern bishops felt any disquiet over the continued presence of this parallel ecclesiastical organization, their views on the matter were never made public. But whatever the principal source of advocacy, the consequence of integration was that the number of lay Catholics and clerics under local jurisdiction increased suddenly and dramatically. This was particularly so in the Archdiocese of Saigon, where most of the settlements were located; the number of parishes there rose from forty six at the start of 1954 to 231 at the start of 1964.\(^\text{706}\)

The effect of this change in status on the religious life of the majority of lay bác di cư Catholics would not have been immediately momentous, although there were some initial concerns as to whether financial subsidies and separate bác di cư schools would continue once the Committee was dissolved.\(^\text{707}\)

\(^{705}\) See page 193.

\(^{706}\) Compiled from \textit{Niên Giâm 1964}.

\(^{707}\) “Thông cáo của Văn Phòng Ủy Ban Họ Trợ Định Cư,” [Communique from the Committee for Resettlement Assistance], \textit{Thông Tiện}, November 1956, 7.
Chaplaincies became parishes, chapels became parish churches, and bāc di cut diocesan clergy became priests of the diocese in which they now resided. They were now ministers to a Southern parish, and the bishop who visited them on formal occasions, such as the administration of the Sacrament of Confirmation, was the local territorial bishop, rather than one of the bāc di cut episcopacy. Yet there is no evidence that any of these Southern bishops made any significant attempt to alter the religious practices of mode of parochial life of the bāc di cut parishes, or to enforce assimilation with pre-existing southern church communities. To have done so would probably have been a futile exercise in any case. Both the relatively isolated locations of the majority of bāc di cut settlements, together with the lack of adequate personnel and resources to enforce such assimilation in the face of resistance, would have conspired against the success of any such endeavour.

As it was, the bāc di cut parishes continued on as largely unreconstructed manifestations of Northern Catholicism. The northern references in parish names, the devotional prayers from northern dioceses, the statues of beatified martyrs from the North; all were as much a part of the bāc di cut parishes after the formal integration into the southern church as they were before it. The canonical formalities may have changed, but the underlying mindset and sense of self-identity had not. Lay interviewees reported that the principal difference caused by integration into the Southern church was twofold. First, it provided stark confirmation that their hopes of an immanent return to the North were now dashed, and that in the absence of an early military defeat for the DRVN (an increasingly unlikely prospect), their permanent destiny lay in the RVN. However, the civic integration of the villages into the local

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708 The only exception to this is that over time, the structures of parochial governance and administration in the bāc di cut parishes were altered to conform to Southern models. Here again, though, the effect on daily parish life for the average parishioner caused by these changes would not have been great.
administration, and the removal of the PTUDCTN, was seen as more influential in marking the movement from transition to permanence. This change in mindset as to their term of residence within southern society presaged the second change, namely their beginning to provide permanent physical and social infrastructure for their newly created parishes. Schools and clinics were established, or transformed from temporary to permanent arrangements. Roughly-built timber chapels were replaced by brick and stone churches designed for permanence; many of the churches in bâ¢ di cut parishes date from the 1957-63 period.\(^{709}\) It should be emphasized that the mindset change did not impact on the sense of belonging in the South. They still did not consider this to be their quê; rather, they were now simply resigned to the reality (in some instances still unpalatable) that fate and God’s will determined that this would be their place of existence for some time to come.

The jurisdictional change had a more profound significance for the bâ¢ di cut diocesan clergy. In a process known as incardination, every diocesan priest at ordination makes a promise of fidelity to his diocesan bishop, and thereby becomes a priest of that bishop’s diocese.\(^{710}\) For the period up to their integration into the Southern dioceses, they had remained as priests of their home dioceses in the North, even though effective control of their activities was vested by the Holy See in Bishop Chi. With ecclesiastical integration, the priests had to be excardinated (i.e., removed) from those northern dioceses, and incarnated into their new diocese. In most cases, this meant belonging to the diocese in which their settlement was situated (usually the Diocese of

\(^{709}\) Indeed, there is a distinctive style of ecclesiastical architecture, characterized by simplicity of design and economy in structure, which constitutes a specific bâ¢ di cut style, and can still be found in many of their parishes. See examples of the bâ¢ di cut architectural style in Nguyễn Nghị et al., eds., Nhà Thờ Công Giáo ở Việt Nam [Catholic Churches in Vietnam] (Hồ Chí Minh City: NXB Tổng Hợp TPHCM, 2004), of many examples, see especially 226-45.

\(^{710}\) Canons 111-7 of the 1917 Code.
Saigon, where most camps were located).\footnote{Though there were some cases of priests seeking to move with their communities when the latter were subject to relocation as part of the Diem administrations’ ‘third phase’ resettlement programme. For instance, Lưòng asked Diệm to intervene in August 1956 with the Bishops of Hue and Qui Nhơn to seek the transfer of bàc di cu解析 priests to the Diocese of Kontum; PTUDCTN to PTT August 18, 1956, PTTĐNCH., 4408.} They were now accountable to a bishop of whom they knew little, and part of a local Church to which they had only recently been introduced.

Ecclesiastical integration produced practical consequences for the bàc di cu解析 clergy. They were no longer called on to liaise with the PTUDCTN, to administer resettlement subsidies, to advocate for relocation to new settlement sites, or to otherwise be a part of the resettlement bureaucracy. This does not mean that their role in temporal leadership of the new parish communities ceased. On the contrary, they now had new challenges to deal with. Despite the cessation of funds from government and international subsidies and aid projects which they had administered, the priests still retained much of the responsibility of ensuring the communities’ continued economic viability.\footnote{And, in localities affected by incursion and military conflict, of organizing efforts to ensure their physical security.}

Moreover, now that settlements were no longer places of restricted entry, and that the residents no longer had the incentive of government subsidies to remain, the pressure on the priests to preserve the unity and identity of their communities, and prevent their dissolution via assimilation, intensified. The natural inclination of the bàc di cu解析 to remain together in their original communities, together with the geographic isolation of many of their settlements away from their Southern counterparts, slowed the process of assimilation. But there were also many ‘pull factors’ operating to tempt individual bàc di cu解析 into the mainstream of Southern life. Those seeking higher education, positions in academia and the professions, and opportunities in commerce, were drawn into...
Saigon and the cities as the economic disincentives against doing so were removed. Many young bác đi cuts joined the Army of the ARVN, and were thus taken away from their home communities. Inter-marriage between bác đi cuts and southern Catholics, whilst slow at first, eventually became accepted. There was never any religious or canonical proscription against them; rather simply issues of clannishness and culture. Finally, the exclusivity of many of the bác đi cut settlements were slowly broken down by the process of intrusion into the settlement areas by the surrounding community. In part, this came about through urban growth and suburban encroachment. Settlements previously situated in rural areas of Gia Định province in particular, such as Gò Vấp, Hóc Môn and Thủ Đức gradually found themselves to be amidst the outer suburban residents of an expanded Saigon. It also came about as a consequence of the gathering military conflict. In some areas, bác đi cut communities were dispersed, or forced to relocate, as a consequence of communist incursions. In some places, the settlements were recipients of other displaced people, who were themselves fleeing from conflict, or (from 1961 onwards), part of the Strategic Hamlet Program.

This process of assimilation was, as usual, one of bilateral exchange. The bác đi cuts were not merely recipients of change, reacting to external circumstances to ensure their autonomous survival; they were also an assertive force within southern society, and in particular the southern church.

This is in sharp distinction to the attitude towards marriage of non-Catholics, which was (and in Vietnam still is) frowned upon, unless the non-Catholic party is prepared to undergo catechesis and be baptized into the Church prior to marriage. But this was not particular to the bác đi cuts; it remains the norm throughout in the Church throughout Vietnam.
(c) The influence of bắc di cư Catholics in the Southern Church

The dissolution of the UBHTDC, the establishment of bắc di cư parishes, and the incardination of their clergy into the Southern diocese, did not mean that all institutions of the bắc di cư church thereafter disappeared. There were still many remaining manifestations of bắc di cư Catholicism which made them a distinguishable presence within southern society in general, and southern Catholicism in particular. The bắc di cư were never an evangelical force, in the sense of endeavouring to persuade others from outside their own cohort, Catholic or otherwise, to live out their faith in the way they did themselves. But they were nevertheless to exert an enormous influence on the Southern Church; not merely numerically, but in the dimensions of their socio-religious existence which were eventually appropriated by the Southern Church. Some of these manifestations remained particular to the bắc di cư for many years, and continued to mark them out as a separate entity. But over time, many others became integral to the Southern Church’s practices, institutions, leadership, and identity.

On coming South, each of the ten dioceses set up a diocesan centre; in effect, a diocesan administration in exile. These centres – sometimes a religious house, sometimes an office-style building – were presided over by either the diocesan bishop from the North, or the priest-delegate from that diocese to the UBHTDC. These centres served as places of co-ordination for activities relating to both the resettlement of bắc di cư from a particular diocese, and for the processing of such intelligence as was available about the situation of the Church in their home diocese in the North. Some included a home for retired clergy from that diocese, who instead of being accommodated in similar facilities for their southern counterparts, could spend their latter years housed amongst their compatriots from their home diocese. The existence of a Northern diocese’s centre in the RVN also served to assert and preserve the separate identity of the northern community of a given diocese in its new southern
surrounds. Whilst its ostensible purpose lay in providing support for the bắc diocese from the given northern diocese, it also had much of its initial focus on the day when they could return to the North; hence a diocese-in-exile, as it were. Even after the effective dissolution of the UBHTDC, and the slow realization that return to the home diocese was not immanent, these centres remained as tangible reminders of their ultimate hope that they would be at one, not with the Catholics of the South, but with those who had remained behind in their quê. By 1964, the Niên Giám listed seven of the centres as still in existence; Hà Nội (located in Chợ Lớn), Thái Bình (in Thị Nghè, Gia Định), Phát Diệm (in Phú Nhuận, Sài Gòn), Lạng Sơn (in Xóm Mới, Gò Vấp), Thanh Hóa (in Phan Thiết), and Bùi Chu and Vinh (both in central Sài Gòn).

Seminary formation

An even more evident manifestation of their desire for a reunification and restoration of the Northern Church was the existence of bắc diocese houses of religious formation in the South. In nearly every Northern diocese, the proportion of seminarians and seminary staff who fled to the South exceeded the proportion of clergy doing so. Individual Catholics, or even Catholic priests, might take their chances of remaining under a Communist regime, but to leave seminary formation exposed to the perceived negative possibilities of life under Việt Minh control was, as they perceived it, to risk the entire future of the Northern Church. As with many other bắc diocese Catholics, the seminarians and their formators saw their separate formation as a necessary precondition to a return to ministry in the North. In the initial stages of resettlement, they were preparing not to minister in bắc diocese communities, but in their reclaimed northern congregations. An Ninh College, the minor diocesan seminary of Huế, had been based in Quảng Bình Province since 1802; attacked several times by the Việt

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714 The centre for the diocese of Bùi Chu also served as headquarters of the UBHTDC until its dissolution. At the time of writing, the Centre, located on the renamed Lương Hữu Khánh Street, still exists; so do the centres for Vinh and Phát Diệm.
Minh, it was moved to Hue in May 1953. The representatives of the Archdiocese of Hanoi established a new seminary, Pius XII, in Chợ Lớn, notwithstanding that Archbishop Khuê – alone amongst the Northern dioceses – continued to maintain a seminary in the North. The bác di cư churches from Buí Chu and Bắc Ninh each established seminaries at Gia Định; Thái Bình’s seminary was located at Phan Rang, in the Diocese of Nha Trang, whilst that of Haiphong was at Mỹ Tho, in the Mekong Delta.

### Table 7.1

**Bác di cư seminaries in the Archdiocese of Saigon, 1964**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminary</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Home Diocese</th>
<th>Seminarians</th>
<th>Diocese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pius XII</td>
<td>Chợ Lớn</td>
<td>Hanoi</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>Hanoi (53), Vinh (33), Thái Bình (11), Bắc Ninh (7), Kontum (7), Qui Nhơn (6), Danang (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Paul’s</td>
<td>Phú Nhuận</td>
<td>Phát Diệm</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>Phát Diệm (61), Thanh Hóa (20), Haiphong (24), Thái Bình (7), Lạng Sơn (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Francis Xavier</td>
<td>Gia Định</td>
<td>Bửi Chu</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>Bửi Chu (45), Thanh Hóa (28), Haiphong (10), Thái Bình (11), Hưng Hoà (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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716 Niên Giambi 1964, 180-1. Notwithstanding Archbishop Khuê’s prohibition, all of the staff of the former diocesan seminary of Xuân Bình left for the South, so that he had to find both new staff and new premises; See also Bửi Văn Nho, Những Trang Sử Đâm Mổ Hội Cầu Hoa Chủ Lồn Việt Nam. [The pages of history of the sweat and blood of Cholon Parish, Vietnam] (Saigon: Jeanne D’Arc Parish, 1972), 100-2. Fr. Nho suggested that Archbishop Khuê specifically sought the establishment of a Saigon-based Seminary for the Archdiocese of Hanoi.
717 Niên Giambi 1964, 186, 189, 193, 195. Phát Diệm also maintained a seminary at Phú Nhuận in Saigon; ibid 198.
718 Compiled from the Niên Giambi 1964, 309-313
These transplanted seminaries retained all the characteristics of the erstwhile institution in the North. A seminarian at, say, the Thái Bình seminary, now relocated in Phan Rang, would have lived almost entirely with Thái Bình colleagues, been taught by Thái Bình professors, lived according to regulations of the original house in Thái Bình, and employed the devotions, prayers and local customs of Thái Bình. In the end, their regional character proved these seminaries’ downfall, and the last of them – the Thái Bình seminary – was dissolved in 1964. So long as there was some residual possibility of the bắc di cư returning home to replenish the northern dioceses, there was some logical purpose to keeping seminaries open for this purpose. But as the chances of such an immanent returned waned, the raison d’etre for these institutions diminished with them. The reality was that those bắc di cư candidates ordained to priesthood would for the foreseeable future exercise their ministry in the Southern Church. It made better sense that they were formed for that ministry in the institutions established by the Church in which they would serve. Southern bishops, who had canonical authority over these Northern seminaries once Bishop Chí was transferred to Qui Nhơn in 1957, became disenchanted with both the expense and the divisiveness of maintaining parallel houses of formation for northern and southern students when one foundation could accommodate and form both groups. Moreover, the pool of candidates for the bắc di cư seminaries began to diminish; young men seeking priestly ordination, who bore no more than receding memories of life in the North, were by the early 1960’s increasingly content to be formed for ministry in their adopted locale.

719 Ibid., 193; Tông Đô, June 15, 1962, 22
Religious Orders

On the other hand, the religious orders that moved from the North proved far more resilient in retaining their original identity. Men’s orders such as the Cistercians, Dominicans, Redemptorists, Salesians, Xuân Bích [Saint Sulpice], De La Salle brothers, the Động Công [Co-Redemptrix] Fathers, and of course, the MEP, were all strongly represented amongst the male religious who moved from North to South. So too were such women’s orders as the Augustinians, the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, the Our Lady of the Missions Sisters, and the Dominican sisters.

But the indigenous Vietnamese women’s order, the Đờn Mến Thánh Giá (Lovers of the Holy Cross) provide the most striking example of this resilience. Established in the Đặng Ngọai (the North) in 1670 by Bishop Lambert de la Motte, their specific charism was to assist in pastoral care within a given diocese. Their organizational structure reflected this; their vows were made to a diocesan bishop, and their Province (the religious order’s unit of geographical division) corresponded with their home diocese. All of the northern houses of the Mến Thánh Giá sisters headed South in 1954-5; upon arrival, they re-formed in various Southern localities, usually at the behest of the priest-delegate of their home diocese on the UBHTĐC, so that they once again served in

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720 Niên Giám 1964, 397-480
Illustration 22. Sisters of the Order of the Lovers of the Holy Cross (Đồng Mến Thánh Giá) at a religious rally in Saigon, 1959. Their signs proclaim them to be bac di cu from the northern dioceses of Bùi Chu, Phú Đệm, and Thanh Hóa. (From Đức Mẹ Hằng Cứu Giúp, April 1959).

Moreover, as Illustration 22 indicates, the bac di cu provinces of Sisters retained the identity of the diocese to whose bishop they had sworn allegiance, even though they were no longer able to serve in his territorial jurisdiction.

Of the seven provinces of Mến Thánh Giá sisters operating within the Archdiocese of Saigon in 1964, five of them were from Northern provinces.  

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721 Some sisters from Phú Đệm remained and reformed a convent in Lưu Phượng Parish, adjacent to the Cathedral, which continues to the present.

722 Phú Đệm, Bùi Chu, Thanh Hóa, Thái Bình, and Hải Phòng; see Table 7.2.
Table 7.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home Diocese</th>
<th>Houses in South</th>
<th>Southern Headquarters</th>
<th>Southern Diocese with M.T.G. presence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Đà Lạt</td>
<td>Đà Lạt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiphong</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hồ Nai</td>
<td>Saigon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thái Bình</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thủ Đức</td>
<td>Saigon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bùi Chu</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bùi Môn</td>
<td>Saigon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phát Diệm</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Gò Vấp</td>
<td>Saigon, Đà Lạt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanh Hóa</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bảo Lộc</td>
<td>Saigon, Đà Lạt, Nha Trang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cam Lắm</td>
<td>Nha Trang</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These Sisters were a highly visible presence of the Church, undertaking such tasks as teaching in and administering schools, caring for orphans and the disabled, teaching catechism, and often asserting a hidden influence with the laity as potent as that of the clergy to whom they were ostensibly accountable. Moreover, their official retention of their northern identity was a clear sign that, even after its notional assimilation into the southern church, the autonomous entity of a de facto Bắc di cư church was a continuing reality.

Schools

It was not only in seminary education that the Bắc di cư had configured an education system that was separated from that existing in the RVN. From the time of the transmigration, whole secondary colleges and tertiary faculties had moved from the North (particularly Hanoi) to the South (particularly Saigon). Student camps were established in several locations, including a camp for tertiary students at Phú Thọ Lều (Phú Thọ Tent Camp). The United States’ NCWC, parent body to the CRS, paid school fees for students in two ‘student’ camps, on Lamothe Road (Pavie) for boys (450 students) and Mayer (Marie Paul) for girls (24 students). All of the students in these

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723 Compiled from the Nhiên Giảm 1964, 469-74.
724 Report of PTUDCTN to PTT, May 19, 1956, PTTĐNCH, 4405.
camps came South without their parents or families. Their situation in the camps was very difficult, and not conducive to study. Physical conditions were poor; many reported being uncomfortable, vulnerable and lonely.\textsuperscript{725} The student camps operated under the auspices of the PTUDCTN, with bàc\textit{ di cuô} priests as their directors. At the same time, the students also established their own leadership structures which, whilst subordinate to the clerical leadership, helped to coordinate the activities of, and maintain security and order within, the student camps.

Bishop Chi’s Committee, and the network of bàc\textit{ di cuô} clergy, were at the same time responsible for the construction of a network of primary and secondary schools designed specifically to cater for bàc\textit{ di cuô} children who had come South with their parents and now resided in the resettlement camps. They were mainly staffed by bàc\textit{ di cuô} adults who had worked as teachers in the North. The teachers who came south had qualifications and registration that were not immediately accepted elsewhere in the RVN. Many were restricted to working solely in bàc\textit{ di cuô} schools until the matter was resolved, the PTUDCTN intervening with the Ministry of Education to ensure the eventual recognition of the Northern teachers.\textsuperscript{726}

The provision of school infrastructure within the camps was notionally undertaken by the PTUDCTN, but this was often in practice left to the priest-leaders. In many camps, the UBHTDC undertook the building of the school from funds provided by the overseas Church. Once the schools commenced functioning, the public schools were under the notional jurisdiction of the RVN’s Ministry of Education, and both church and other private schools were subject to MOE inspection. But in reality, even many of the public schools within the resettlement camp operated in effect as church schools.

\textsuperscript{725} “Hiện Tình Trai Học Sinh Phú Thọ” [The Present Situation in Phú Thọ Students Camp], \textit{Tuổi Doi}, April 22 and 29, 1956.

\textsuperscript{726} PTUDCTN to PTT, January 21, 1956: PTTDNCH, 4041
Moreover, prior to integration into the wider community in 1957, the restricted access policy relating to the camps meant that schools located within them were effectively segregated, and de facto reserved for bắc di cư children alone, thereby providing another inhibitor to integration into the broader community. Whilst notionally under the control of the Department of Education, they were largely funded and administered by the bắc di cư clergy and their foreign church-based donors. They maintained little more than a notional accountability to either the state education authorities (except through inspection and audit) or the southern dioceses and their pre-existent parochial education system. By October 1956, there were 1,555 classes educating 71,829 primary school students in the resettlement camps.

In his report to Điểm of September 1956, Lương advised:

In Saigon-Cholon, refugee children continue to study in five secondary schools for Northerners, for which the Department of Education has responsibility; Nguyễn Trãi, Chu Văn An, Hồ Ngọc Cân, Trần Lực, and the Trường Vương Girls School.

In a number of provinces, refugee children continue to learn in privately established schools. There are three private secondary schools; one at Tây Ninh, established by priests, one at Củ Chi (Gia Định) with money given by Figaro, and one at Thủ Đức, established by priests from Bắc Ninh. In addition, the Nguyễn Bá Tông school on Bùi Chu Road, Sài Gòn [next to the offices of Bishop Chi and the UBHTDC], was established with American aid.

These schools notionally ceased to be bắc di cư schools at the cessation of the resettlement period (i.e., from about the beginning of 1957), at which time they reverted to actual state control, or in the case of the private schools, were placed under the authority of the local diocese. However, in reality they very much retained a bắc

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727 Even after formal integration, the process of mixing the education of bắc di cư and indigenous students was a long and complex one.
728 PTUDCTN to PTT October 22, 1956; PTTDNCH, 4401. Given that integration into local administration had begun my then, it is unclear whether the schools in integrated areas were excised from these numbers.
diệt character, with both their staff and students still drawn largely from the bắc diệt community in which they were located. Whilst this broke down a little with the admission of non-bắc diệt students over time, fieldwork interviewees claimed that these schools (Nguyễn Bá Tông was nominated in particular) were seen as a manifestation of bắc diệt exclusivity, and hence as a sign of division. Their connection to the Church was also seen as giving them a sectarian character of twofold divisiveness between northern and southern students; both geographic division, and religious division. When this was added to the natural tendency of adolescents to aggregate and to self-define by means of belligerence towards the other, it is unsurprising that schools such as Nguyễn Bá Tông became flashpoints of conflict between Catholics and non-Catholics in the riots of 1963 and, in particular, 1964.729

By that time, a significant network of schools that were essentially reserved for bắc diệt Catholic students operated throughout the RVN, but most particularly in Saigon and Gia Định. These schools were under the jurisdiction of the Southern diocese in which they were located, or of the religious order who established them. But some were still run by the remnant Committees of Management of the various Northern dioceses in exile that had previously composed the UBHTĐC. Nguyễn Bá Tông (run by the Bùi Chữ priests) and Lê Bảo Định (Thanh Hóa) in Saigon, Đức Minh (Bắc Ninh) and Nguyễn Duy Khang (Thái Bình) in Gia Định, all came into this category.730 Other secondary schools were under diocesan sponsorship, but their bắc diệt names declared their northern origins; Phát Diệm, Bùi Phát, Lạng Sơn, Bùi Môn, Bạc Hà, Kim Sơn, Hà Nội, Bùi Chữ, and the like.

The official status of these schools as reserved for bắc diệt students had ended with the dissolution of the PTUDCTN and the UBHTĐC. Some did take in not only

729 See p. 292.
730 Niên Giám 1964, 331-3.
Southern Catholics, but also luông students. Yet geographic considerations, in the case of rural areas, and self-selection in urban areas, meant that these schools were still seen as essentially bắc di cut institutions.

Lay Movements
A similarly influential sign of the bắc di cut presence in the Southern Church were the various lay Catholic movements which had been imported from the North. Such movements did exist in the Southern Church before 1954; the charitable Society of St. Vincent de Paul, for instance, was far more influential in Saigon than it had been in the North. However, the majority of these movements had a stronger footing in the North, and after the transmigration, were rapidly re-established by the bắc di cut church in the South. Whilst open to any eligible Catholics, they often had their principal base within bắc di cut communities, who in turn dominated their membership. This Northern domination of the lay movements can be attributed to two principal factors. First, the geographic concentration of Catholics in the chretientés of the North enabled sufficient numbers of people to come together to form branches of these organizations. Second, the activism of Archbishops Khuê, and Bishops Tử and Chi, and in promoting these lay movements bore fruit, and ensured the success of many in their Northern dioceses.

The 1950’s were a ‘golden age’ of Catholic Lay Movements throughout the world. It was no different in Vietnam. The movements there offered something for every category of lay Catholic, binding people in solidarity with the Church and with each other, enabling their mobilization for causes both religious and quasi-political. For children, there were the Thiếu Nhi Thánh Thể (Eucharistic Youth Groups), and for older teenagers, the Phong Trào Thanh Niên (Youth Movement; it had begun in Hanoi

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732 This perhaps accounts for their rapid prohibition after the fall of the RVN in 1975.
in 1936) and the Thanh Lao Công (Young Christian Workers). University students congregated under the Liên Đoàn Sinh Viên Công Giáo (Catholic Students League, which began in the North in 1937). The Hội Bà Mẹ Công Giáo (Catholic Mothers’ Association), founded in 1948 by Archbishop Khuê when he was still a Parish priest, catered for women; in 1964, it had 7,000 members. Other sodalities founded not around age, gender or occupation, but rather specific devotions or purposes, also flourished. These included the Hiệp Hội Thánh Máu (association of the Holy Mother; 23,000 members, originally formed in Phát Diệm), the Liên Minh Thánh Tâm (Society of the Sacred Heart; 3,200 members, established in Hanoi in 1950), and the Đạo Bình Đức Mẹ (Legion of Mary; 30,000 members).

This list is a far from exhaustive account of the various sodalities, fraternities, pious, charitable, social, intellectual, and quasi-political organization to which a Catholic in the RVN might belong. What distinguishes the above list is that they were amongst the largest and most successful Catholic lay movements in the RVN; that before 1954, they were all stronger in the North than the South; and that they were largely associated in the RVN with bắc di cư Catholics.

All of these movements operated under explicit and formal Church patronage. But two other forms of Catholic lay association did not. First, the Catholic militias, which had been such a feature of làng Công Giáo in Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu during the First Indochina War, also reappeared in the RVN. In the relatively stable military environment of the 1950’s, there was less need for para-military self-protection. But as the Second Indochina War gathered momentum in the early 1960’s, and insurgency by National Liberation Front forces became more widespread, the RVN government,

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734 Niên Giám 1964, 348. All figures for membership of the lay movements are taken from the Niên Giám 1964, 331.
735 “Một Giáo Sứ Sĩ Học,” Giáo Hội Công Giáo, ” 3:349-52; Niên Giám 1964, 349-51. The Legion of Mary did, however, establish a significant presence throughout nearly all Catholic parishes in the RVN.
under both Diệm and his successors, encouraged villages to assist in their own self-defence. In Bắc đícö villages, this often involved the resurrection of pre-existing paramilitary structures.

The other informal but pervasive Catholic movements transplanted from North to South were the giáp.\(^{736}\) As they had been in the North, their existence in the RVN remained largely undocumented. But fieldwork interviewees confirmed that Catholic giáp were rapidly re-formed amongst Bắc đícö men, particularly in settlements where a northern village had left together, or re-formed on arrival. In these cases, the old giáp would simply resume its previous activities in its new surroundings. As in the North, the giáp would bind its members in mutual support and solidarity, re-affirming their mutual interdependence. Interviewees commented that, whilst Southern Catholics could have notionally been admitted into these giáp, in reality this did not occur. The giáp had a geographic basis, and outside of urban areas, indigenous Southern Catholics seldom lived in proximity to their Bắc đícö counterparts. Thus the continuance of the giáp, whilst largely hidden from outside view, served to strengthen the participant’s sense of ongoing northern identity, and of separateness within southern society.

**Music**

Whilst the coming of the Bắc đícö had a significant effect on the culture of the southern Church in areas such as architecture, literature, and the press, perhaps their area of greatest cultural influence was in music. In the early twentieth century, the development of an indigenous Catholic repertoire largely centred on the North. Composers such as Hùng Lân, Phương Linh and Tâm Bão, were based in the North, where they wrote and encouraged the performance of popular Catholic hymns in the vernacular, such as Mùa đông năm ấy [Winter that year], Tôi dâ thấy ngươi [I have

\(^{736}\) See page 40-41.
seen him], and *Bèlem oi* [Oh Bethlehem]. These hymns were performed in Catholic Choral societies, such as the Lê Bảo Tỉnh Choir, throughout the larger Northern dioceses. All of this was occurring at a time which coincided with the rise of Catholic Nationalism as described previously.

Come 1954-5, all of these composers, and most of the choral societies, headed south. They introduced a new, and identifiably northern, musical repertoire into southern Catholicism. Moreover, each of the northern dioceses formed a choral society in the South, which retained a Northern identity; apart from Lê Bảo Tỉnh Choral Society from Hanoi, (reformed in 1960), there were the Ca Vĩnh (from Bùi Chu), Ca Thành (from Phát Diệm), Tiếng Chuông Nam (Thanh Hóa), Thiên Cung (Haiphong), and Thành Gia (Bắc Ninh). All had a profound influence on music in the Southern Church, which came to adapt much of this vernacular repertoire.

There was also an identifiable body of popular music, outside of that composed for church use, which came to be identified as a *bắc di cư* repertoire. The lyrics of these songs were characterized by an intense nostalgia for all things Northern and the pain of forced separation from their quê. Songs such as *Biệt Hải Phong* [to leave Haiphong], *Chờ Anh em Nhé* [wait for me], *Chuyến Đò vĩ tuyến* (Boat trip across the parallel {border}], and *Sầu Ly Hưởng* [Sadness of leaving home], all became popular in the South.

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738 Choral societies as opposed to Church choirs, which were still largely required to sing the Latin accompaniments to the Tridentine Mass. The musical personnel, however, would largely have been the same.
741 Gibbs analyses these songs at length, identifying these recurrent lyrical themes; ibid.
742 For a more comprehensive list, see ibid.
Bishops and priests

The bàc di cut priests of the Northern dioceses, who had led their parishioners to the South, and established the resettlement communities, were by 1957 fully accountable to the bishop of the southern diocese in which they had settled. Before much longer, the outbreak of the Second Indochinese War effectively extinguished their hopes of an immanent return to the North. These priests now had to make the adjustments that were necessary to minister permanently in the South, and to understand that they were ministering in fraternal relationship with their southern counterparts, under a southern leadership. There is little if any evidence to suggest that Bishop Chi continued to exert influence of the workings of the bàc di cut church after the dissolution of the UBHTĐC; he was too preoccupied administering his new diocese of Qui Nhơn (thereafter Danang), and promoting the socio-political doctrine of nhân vị on behalf of the Diệm regime. Whilst the priests were still informally affiliated to the diocesan centres of the ten northern dioceses ‘in exile’, these held no authority over them. Like it or not, they were fully members of the Southern Church.

It remained the usual practice for the Southern Bishops to appoint bàc di cut priests to bàc di cut parishes, certainly, indigenous southern priests were seldom appointed to parishes in such bàc di cut heartlands as Hồ Nai or Gia Kiệm. But by the early 1960’s, these priests were joined by men from the northern dioceses who had experienced the transmigration as boys or youths, but had been formed for priesthood in either the now-dissolved bàc di cut seminaries, or in the seminaries of the Southern dioceses. Like young migrants anywhere, they were a blend of the culture of their quê, the experience of migration, and the imperative for inculturation in their adopted place of residence. They were in many ways the bridge between the unreformed clergy who lived and ministered predominantly in the essentially autonomous settlements of the

743 Even to the present, this remains largely the case.
bac di cut parishes, and the wider Southern Church. Many of this younger, transitional generation of bac di cut clergy were appointed at different times to bac di cut parishes, composite parishes, and entirely local parishes, thus ensuring that they had a wider and more representative experience of the Vietnamese Church than had been afforded their forebears. A combination of the old and the new bac di cut priests would numerically dominate the presbyterate of several Southern dioceses.

Table 7.3.
Composition of Southern clergy by place of origin (i.e., local, bac di cut, and foreign missionary), 1964.\textsuperscript{744}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIocese</th>
<th>LOCAL</th>
<th>BAC DI CUT PRIESTS</th>
<th>MISSIONARY PRIESTS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hue</td>
<td>107 (87.0%)</td>
<td>4 (3.3%)</td>
<td>12 (9.7%)</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qui Nhơn</td>
<td>54 (69.2%)</td>
<td>20 (25.6%)</td>
<td>4 (5.2%)</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nha Trang</td>
<td>22 (19.3%)</td>
<td>69 (60.5%)</td>
<td>23 (20.2%)</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kontum</td>
<td>18 (16.8%)</td>
<td>50 (46.7%)</td>
<td>39 (36.5%)</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danang</td>
<td>26 (50.0%)</td>
<td>24 (46.2%)</td>
<td>2 (3.8%)</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saigon</td>
<td>92 (16.8%)</td>
<td>442 (80.7%)</td>
<td>14 (2.5%)</td>
<td>534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cần Thơ</td>
<td>44 (58.7%)</td>
<td>30 (40.0%)</td>
<td>1 (1.3%)</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Đà Lạt</td>
<td>7 (8.4%)</td>
<td>54 (64.3%)</td>
<td>23 (27.3%)</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mỹ Tho</td>
<td>31 (58.5%)</td>
<td>20 (37.7%)</td>
<td>2 (3.8%)</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Xuyên</td>
<td>20 (19.2%)</td>
<td>84 (80.8%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>497 (35.1%)</td>
<td>800 (56.4%)</td>
<td>121 (8.5%)</td>
<td>1,418</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table indicates that, like the numerical dominance of the bac di cut as a whole, the proportion of northern clergy varied significantly from diocese to diocese. In the Archdiocese of Hue in particular, very few bac di cut priests remained by 1964 (3.3\%); most had by then resettled in the Central Highlands.\textsuperscript{745} Qui Nhơn (25.6\%) and Vĩnh Long (8.3\%) had few bac di cut clergy, because few northern communities settled there in the first place. On the other hand, some dioceses, such as Saigon (80.7\%),

\textsuperscript{744} Compiled from the \textit{Niên Giảm}, 1964.

\textsuperscript{745} Although many Hue priests would have undergone internal displacement within the Archdiocese as a result of Việt Minh activity during the first Indochina War.
where most bắc di cut settled, and Long Xuyên (80.8%), where the priests who settled communities on the canals of Cái Sân, outnumbered the few local clergy drawn from an area with a hitherto negligible Catholic population. In time, these priests (particularly those in the Archdiocese of Saigon) assumed leadership in non-bắc di cut parishes, a process which assisted in breaking down the division between the host and immigrant churches.

The influence of the bắc di cut clergy was not merely numeric. Some, such as Paul Nguyễn Văn Hòa, currently Bishop of Nha Trang, or Joseph Trần Xuân Tiểu of Long Xuyên, were bắc di cut ordained in the South, and then sent to study in Rome; always a clear predictor of likely future appointment to Episcopal leadership. Many others were appointed to positions from which they could influence the course of the southern Church, such as seminary professors, press editors, and chaplains to academia, the military, and the lay Catholic movements. Eventually, after a further generation, bắc di cut clergy would come to be strongly represented in the Vietnamese episcopacy.

Both Appendix X and the following table indicate the extent to which the bắc di cut clergy have now assumed the leadership of the Vietnamese Church through their representation in the Vietnamese Bishop’s Conference:

Table 7.4
Vietnamese Bishops, 1955-2008; place of origin.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Vietnamese bishops 1955-2008</th>
<th>Bishops currently serving 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>Southern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27 (32.1%)</td>
<td>34 (40.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>84</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

 Compiled from the Niên Giảm, 1964.
The proportion of bắc di cư clergy on the Bishop’s conference has increased over time, and is probably now at its zenith. Whereas some 27.4% of Vietnamese bishops appointed since 1955 came from bắc di cư origins, this has risen to 46.7% of those currently serving in 2008; a proportion in excess of bắc di cư clergy within the Vietnamese Catholic presbyterate.\(^{747}\) This increase has occurred notwithstanding the fact that bắc di cư Catholics, and their priests in particular, are said to be over-represented in the successive waves of emigration from Việt Nam after the downfall of the RVN in 1975.

This does not necessarily imply that these bishops bring a style of leadership to the Church that characterized the bắc di cư communities; all have been subject to multiple formative influences, in an era when internal migration, inter-marriage, and other social factors have softened the distinctions between them and other members of the Church community. Nevertheless, it does show the extent to which the bắc di cư communities proved not only a fertile ground for religious vocations, but for those with a capacity to assume positions of senior leadership. It is particularly notable that in recent years, the Vietnamese government has allowed the appointment of bắc di cư bishops back to Northern dioceses; for example, Archbishop Kiệt in Hanoi, and the Salesian Bishops Joseph Hoằng Văn Tiến and Peter Nguyễn Văn Đệ in Bửi Chu.\(^{748}\) In this way, the greatest desires of their forbears were fulfilled; that they might complete the cycle of transmigration by returning to the North, so as to revive the fortunes of the Northern Church.

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\(^{747}\) Precise data on the proportion of bắc di cư amongst priests is not available. But extrapolating out from the known figure of 56.4% of priests in the RVN in 1964 being bắc di cư, then allowing for priests in the DRVN, and for emigration, a proportion of about 40% seems likely.

\(^{748}\) The present Vietnamese government continues to insist on the right to vet the appointment of Bishops to dioceses, and priests to parishes.
8. Conclusions

(a) Bác di cu in the Southern Polity.

By mid-1963, discontent with the Diệm regime had come to a head. Demonstrations, led by lay and clerical Buddhist leadership, and provoked by the self-immolation of Thích Quảng Đức and other Buddhist clergy, broke out in both Saigon and the Central Coast, particularly Hue. The immediate precipitating cause of this discontent was a prohibition on the flying of Buddhist flags in Hue, shortly after flags of the Vatican City State had been flown in honour of Archbishop Thúc’s twenty-fifth anniversary of episcopal consecration.\(^{749}\)

But beneath this ostensible reason lay a range of grievances relating to favouritism by the Diệm regime of members of the Catholic minority, most particularly of bác di cu. By 1963, they were no longer in receipt of the domestic and international subsidies which had enabled their early resettlement, and at the same time provoked local resentment. But some had used the opportunities provided to them to move into positions of political and social influence within southern society. Many bác di cu had risen to prominence in academia, the professions, government administration, politics, and the military, to a point where they were believed to have achieved disproportionate predominance. A number of factors can be advanced as to why this occurred. Some had held similarly significant positions in Hanoi prior to the establishment of the DRVN. Others took advantage of the Catholic education system, which had been a predictor of advancement since earlier times.\(^{750}\)


\(^{750}\) Scigliano points out that this contrasted to the public service in Cochinchina during colonial times, were even relatively minor ranks were dominated by the French, thereby diminishing the pool of potential employees when Diệm had to essentially put a public service together from scratch; Robert Scigliano, *South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress*, 53.
However, public perception was that under Diệm, Catholics received preferential treatment in appointment to public office to the detriment of non-Catholics, and that Northerners – most particularly those from Diệm’s native North-central region – were preferred to local Southerners. Of the 1962 survey of public servants previously referred to, Joiner wrote:

> Also creating dissatisfaction among class A [senior] officials, but to a lesser extent than sectional rivalries, is the conviction that the regime favours Catholics. In answer to a question whether Catholics received preferential consideration in the bureaucracy, over forty percent said “yes.” Most of those arguing in the second, qualified their answer by saying first, their comments did

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751 Eleven of the seventeen members of Diệm’s first cabinet were from his own North-Central region; Tiếng Chuông, July 7, 1954. Scigliano notes that fifty three out of sixty two senior government officials were from Central Việt Nam; South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, 52.

752 According to Scigliano, “The Departments of National Education and Foreign Affairs, the National Institute of Administration, and the Special Commissariat of Civic Action and General Directorate of Information are regarded by many in Saigon as ‘Northern agencies’ because of their composition; ibid., 52. He might well have added the Secret Intelligence Service under Trần Kim Tuyên, a Phát Diệm Catholic; Karnow; Vietnam: A History, 246. See also Shaplen, The Lost Revolution, 191.
not apply to low-ranking officials, that partiality to Catholics, though clearly
discernable, was not excessive. Nevertheless, they maintain that the number of
Catholics in high positions is disproportionate to their number in the total
population... Some believed that he [Diem] feels Catholics are more likely
than Buddhists to be anti-communist, and personally loyal to him. Ordinarily,
they said, wherever the government has a choice between appointing or
promoting a Catholic or Buddhist to an important position, it will, all other
factors being equal, favour the Catholic. For this reason, a considerable number
of civil servants are said to have adopted Catholicism in the belief it would give
them competitive advantages... The interviewees (thirty four percent) who did
not feel Catholics are receiving preferential treatment admitted that the charge
of favouritism had wide credence, but no substance in fact.753

In many ways, the subjective impression referred to was more significant than the
relative lack of empirical data in support.

There was also public resentment over laws to enforce Catholic morality which were
seen to be out of step with Vietnamese traditions, such as in the area of divorce.754
Other irritants to non-Catholics included compulsory attendance by non-Catholic
government officials at Catholic liturgies,755 the consecration of Vietnam (accompanied
by lavish ceremonies at public expense) to the Virgin Mary,756 the use of public
vehicles to transport Catholic dignitaries,757 the promotion of nhân vị (personalism) as a
de facto state ideology,758 and the practice of the Diệm cabinet to meet at provincial
Vinh Long in order to enable them to consult with Bishop Thúc.759 Scigliano
concluded:

The Diem regime has assumed the aspect of a carpetbag government in
its disproportion of Northerners and Centralists, in the case of access to

753 Joiner, Politics of Massacre, 69.
754 Ibid., 69; Trần Văn Đôn, Việt Nam Nhân Chống [Vietnam Witness] (Los Alamitos, Cal.: NXB Xuân
Thu, 1989), 160.
756 Joiner, Politics of Massacre, 69.
758 Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, 55; Gheddo, Cross and the Bo Tree, 120-1.
759 Which annoyed even Nhu; Harvey Neese and John O’Donnell, Prelude to Tragedy: Vietnam, 1960-
65 (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2001), 67.
high positions granted officials from the Hue area, and in its Catholicism. These imbalances have been a strong source of support for Diệm and a foundation for a strong anti-communist policy. The vehement anti-communist programs of the government have been carried out by the Department of Information... which is packed with Northern Catholics. The Southern people do not seem to share the anti-communist vehemence of their Northern and Central compatriots... The characteristics which marked the báéc di cuò out within the Southern Church, such as their cohesion, strong self-identity, internal discipline, and responsiveness to clerical leadership in non-religious matters, also made them a potent voting bloc, capable of delivery at the behest of the priests. At the 1956 elections, seats were specifically reserved for báéc di cuò, who did not vote as part of the local electorate. Even after their official integration in 1957, in both Presidential and congressional elections, their vote was provided to parties allied to Diệm, and thereafter survived him as an ongoing political force.

On November 2, 1963, Diệm and his brother Nhu were assassinated, and the Ngô clan were replaced by a series of governments led by non-Catholics, which were either hostile to Catholic claims, or beholden to Buddhist elements determined to exact retribution against Catholics for what they saw as the discrimination suffered by Buddhists during the Diệm years. These unstable governments saw the overthrow


761 Dân Chữ, February 23, 1956.

762 For example, at the 1961 Presidential election, Catholic clergy allegedly distributed a letter supporting Diệm’s candidacy; Scigliano, Nation Under Stress, 55. Scigliano also noted that in 1963, twenty seven out of 123 legislative deputies were Catholics; 22%, against about 10% of the population as a whole; ibid., 54.

763 Lê Cung, Phong Trào Phát Giáo Miền Nam Việt Nam, Năm 1963, [The Buddhist movement in South Vietnam, 1963] (Hanoi: NXB Quốc Gia Hà Nội, 1999). Archbishop Thúc, overseas at the time, was sent into permanent exile, as was Nhu’s wife. Cảm, the last member of the clan, was arrested, tried, and executed in May 1955.
of both Presidents and Prime Ministers, such as Nguyễn Ngọc Thọ, Nguyễn Khánh, and Phan Huy Quát, in rapid succession.

The period also saw a significant readjustment in the fortunes and political alignments of the bắc diệt Catholics. The channels to easy preferment in positions of government patronage were no longer open to them. At the political level, too, their allegiances were now less clear. It was no longer a facile matter of delivering votes to Diệm, but rather of steering a course for survival in an unstable and hostile political environment. Rather than leading to a weakening of the bắc diệt Catholic’s political solidarity or resolve, the so-called ‘Northern Refugee bloc’ became an important constituent amongst the multitude of competing political forces which was to characterize the RVN until its demise in 1975.

They were not merely an identifiable entity within the legislature and the political system; bắc diệt Catholic leaders in the military also came to be seen as an identifiable faction, as intent on defending their known interests as they were the Republic as a whole, and particularly hostile to any concessions either to the National Liberation Front, or the DRVN. A CIA report commented:

The possibility of a Catholic-instigated coup attempt cannot be fully disregarded in view of the contacts maintained by militant Catholic refugee circles with the ringleaders of the February 19 [1965] coup, who are still at large in the Saigon area.

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765 Bắc Diệt military officers, led by General Lâm Văn Phát, staged an unsuccessful coup on September 13, 1964; Đoàn Thêm, 1945-65, 406. The same bắc diệt faction led a further coup on February 21st, 1965, this time under the leadership of Colonel Phạm Ngọc Thảo; D. J. Sagar, Major Political Events in Indo-China, 1945-1990, 71.


766 Ibid., 403.
These political developments in the overlapping spheres of the legislature and military served to reinforce negative stereotypes of the bàc di cư held in wider society; that they were insular, self-interested, extrinsic to the broader flow of Southern Vietnamese society, and subservient to a clerical elite who controlled their religious, political, and social allegiance.

Illustration 24. A polling booth (Phòng Dấu Phieu) at the Bác Hà resettlement Camp, Hồ Nai, for the 1956 elections seems to have been established in a Church building.

Like most stereotypes, this involved the accretion of hyperbole and exaggeration around a smaller kernel of truth. It is true that several bàc di cư clerics became prominent political agitators in the post-Diệm RVN, in support of Catholic interests, and against any concession to Communist forces. Most notable amongst these was Fr.
Hoàng Quỳnh, former leader of the Phát Diệm militias, who from the fall of Diệm onwards led a vocal political campaign from his power-base in Bình An Parish, in South-west Saigon.  

It is also true that in traditional bâc di cut areas such as Hồ Nai, Gia Kiệm, Long Khánh, Gò Vấp and Thủ Đức, candidates who stood in support of bâc di cut interests, both religious and economic, received an overwhelming share of the vote. Interviewees also said that the communities in bâc di cut parishes would gather to discuss political issues, and that their parish clergy would indicate how they thought their parishioners should vote.

But this does not necessarily imply a supine acquiescence to the will of politically volatile clerics, some of whom (such as Rev. Quỳnh) were operating at the extreme edge of the political debate. Rather, it suggests that in the post-Diệm era, the bâc di cut Catholics saw their interests as being under sectarian threat, which called for a self-protective, but potentially sectarian response.

That they should have reacted in this way is hardly surprising, seeing that much anti-Catholic anger was targeted directly at bâc di cut interests. In 1963, the Ngô clan were both the cause and the target of anti-Catholic anger, fermented by elements of the Buddhist leadership. But with the assassination of Diệm and Nhu, and the obliteration of the former regime, this pent-up Buddhist resentment – far from mollified or exhausted – now needed a further outlet. The bâc di cut, as a readily identifiable face of what the dissatisfied Buddhists regarded as unacceptable Catholic domination, now became the principal target of anti-Catholic hostility.

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768 Ibid., 267.
769 Though some commentators have argued – as Diệm’s government did – that Communist influence also lay behind the civil unrest, and that the Buddhists had become the unwitting agents of communist efforts to destabilize the RVN; for example, Phan Thiệt, Đất Việt, Người Việt, Đạo Việt, [Vietnamese land, Vietnamese people, Vietnamese faith] (Virginia [city?], 1995), 120.
The 1964 riots

Much historiography of Buddhist-Catholic conflict in the RVN era focuses on the 1963 riots, which played an important part in precipitating the fall of the Ngô clan. But whereas the 1963 riots were principally directed against the government, the 1964 riots had a more sectarian, intercommunal nature, with members of both Buddhist and Catholic (particularly bảéc di-cut) communities fighting against each other.

On June 7, 1964, a large crowd of Catholics – largely bảéc di-cut\(^7\) - demonstrated in Saigon against religious discrimination by the government of Nguyễn Khánh, and against proposals by militant Buddhists associated with the Ăn Quang pagoda to have Buddhism declared the state religion of the RVN.\(^7\) They held banners proclaiming “unmask the clique who exploit the revolution to oppress Catholics”, and “support the Catholic struggle in Central Vietnam.”\(^7\) A CIA situation report concluded:

> Political repercussions arising from religious animosities continued last week. A long-planned Catholic demonstration, organized by politically-minded Father Hoàng Quynh and estimated by the embassy to have included 50,000 persons, was held in Saigon on June 7. Its underlying purpose was to protest what Catholics consider to be injustices against them as a result of pressure from Buddhist extremists bent on revenge against the old Diem regime, and under alleged Viet Cong influence. The demonstration took the form primarily of speeches exhorting the government to mount a more effective anti-communist effort, but a minority element carried banners hostile to the Buddhists and to the American ambassador. This element caused some minor scuffling. Documents

\(^7\) Đoàn Thêm, presumably drawing on contemporary press reports, claims that the demonstrators were drawn from “twenty nine parishes of Hồ Nai, together with tens of thousands of Catholics from the Capitol”; 1945-65, 393. He quotes an estimate the crowd at 100,000; ibid.


were also circulated demanding that the government rectify certain grievances.\textsuperscript{773}

By August, sustained sectarian street violence broke out between Buddhist and Catholic youth, the latter largely comprised of residents from bàc di cut areas, and/or students from bàc di cut schools. Phú Nhuận, an area then dominated by bàc di cut from Phát Diệm, was effectively barricaded by Catholic youth.\textsuperscript{774} On August 21, a crowd of young Catholic bàc di cut, again purportedly brought to Saigon from Hồ Nai, Gia Kiệm, and Long Khánh, burnt down the headquarters of the Buddhist-based Vietnamese Students Association.\textsuperscript{775} Retributive actions immediately commenced against Catholic interests:

Rumours abounded: pagodas will be burnt, Notre Dame Cathedral will be burnt, etc. The Buddhist youth mounted a guard at the Hố A Đạo Institute, and at the statue of Quách Thị Trang. Catholic [i.e., bàc di cut] areas were also at boiling point; many houses prepared staves, knives and hammers. A demonstration was held outside the American Military base in Danang; there was such a commotion that American soldiers fired in the air. There were scuffles, and the mob then ran to the nearby village of Thanh Bồ. The Catholic self-defence militia there thought they were under attack, and countered; the result was eleven dead, forty-two injured, and many houses burnt.\textsuperscript{776}

These attacks and counter-attacks continued until August 29, when some order was restored as a consequence of earlier statements from both Catholic and Buddhist religious leadership calling for calm and an end to street violence.\textsuperscript{777} For present purposes, the most significant aspect of these riots is that bàc di cut interests were the central focus of the Buddhist actions; rather than churches, diocesan or parochial...


\textsuperscript{774} Ibid., 403.

\textsuperscript{775} Keesing’s Research Report, \textit{South Vietnam}, 56.

\textsuperscript{776} Đoán Thêm, \textit{1945-65}, 402.

buildings, or other identifiable Catholic institutions, it was **bác di cưt** interests that became the principal target of Buddhist resentment. In Saigon, the Nguyễn Bá Tống School, which primarily educated **bác di cưt** students, and the offices of the **bác di cưt** newspaper **Xây Dựng** (To Build), edited by the militant Northern Catholic priest, Rev. Nguyễn Quang Lâm, were subject to sustained attack, and were significantly damaged.\(^\text{778}\) As had happened in 1955-57, Catholic **bác di cưt** youths from Bùi Phất parish fought street battles with their Buddhist neighbours; similar violence broke out in the **bác di cưt** parishes of Nghĩa Hòa, Tần Sa Châu, and Xóm Mới in Saigon, as well as the **bác di cưt** centres of Tam Toà, Thanh Bố and Đức Lợi in Đà Nẵng.\(^\text{779}\) **Bác di cưt** Catholics were not only the principal victims of such attacks; they were also prominent in counter-attacks and demonstrations in defence of Catholic interests, and on occasions in provocations against Buddhists; the Archdiocese of Saigon had issued statements on both May 23 and 24, urging Catholics not to demonstrate on the day of **Lễ Phật Đản**; the birthday of the Buddha, Buddhism’s principal day of celebration.\(^\text{780}\)

**Bác di cưt** Catholics formed both the principal force of Catholic action against the post-Diệm governments, and were in turn the target of anti-Catholic resentment from militants within the Buddhist majority. It was as if the northern migrants were seen as emblematic of, or even synonymous with, the problematic aspects of Vietnamese Catholicism. Why was this so? In part, it was because indigenous Southern Catholicism was a less visible, and less identifiable target. Dispersed throughout the community, they offered few visible focal points for attack (with the exception of churches, which were not harmed during the street violence). The **bác di cưt**, on the

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\(^\text{778}\) L桷 Giang, **Những Bi Ẩn Dòng Sau các Cuộc Thanh Chiến tại Việt Nam**, [Secrets of the Holy Wars in Việt Nam] (Garden Grove, Cal.: Self-Published, 1994), 316; Lacouture, **Vietnam: Between Two Truces**, 207-8; Fall, **Viet-Nam Witness**, 287-8.

\(^\text{779}\) L桷 Giang, **Những Bi Ẩn Dòng**, 316; Nguyễn Thế Thảo, **Công Giáo Trên Quê Hương**, 2: 512-3; Hinh and Thọ, **The South Vietnamese Society**, 91; Karnow, **Vietnam: A History**, 395.

\(^\text{780}\) Đoàn Thêm, 1945-65, 391. The statement made it clear that the Church did not claim the power to insist that lay Catholics cease all demonstrations, but nor did it support them; ibid.
other hand, were readily identified and located; living in aggregated communities with a multitude of social institutions, they were ready and obvious targets.

But the reasons for the bắc di cư bearing the brunt of the attacks in the 1964 riots went beyond the merely logistical. Resentment against the Diệm regime’s practice of favouritism sprang not simply from the fact that the favoured cohort were Catholics, but that they were northern (and particularly North-central) Catholics, hence doubly removed, by both religion and birthplace, from the bulk of Southern society. It was they who were perceived, rightly or wrongly, as having deprived Southern lùng of positions of importance in government and wider society to which they believed they were entitled. With the givers of those preferments now gone, the recipients became the natural targets of retribution.\footnote{Haas, \textit{Vietnam – The Other Conflict}, 30.}

Finally, there was something about the nature of the bắc di cư’s practice of Catholicism that was seen as particularly strident and virulent, and hence offensive in the eyes of those who bore a grudge against Catholic interests in the first place. It was seen as self-assertive, self-protective, and most particularly, intolerant of other religions and their adherents. The tactics of such bắc di cư figures as Rev. Hoàng Quỳnh did little to allay these prejudices. They gave the appearance of combining religious affiliation with political intriguing, mass street demonstrations, and even paramilitary capability. Whereas local Catholics were viewed largely as cohabitants with a different but tolerant religious affiliation, bắc di cư attitudes were viewed as polarizing and antagonistic, indicative of a closed mentality.

All of this can regarded as having historically determined origins. These negative outward impressions by non-Catholics towards bắc di cư Catholicism bear remarkable
similarity to the motivations of the lựong majority in turning against Catholic Chrétientés in the late nineteenth century. In both instances, the objections were partly political. The Catholics were accused of collaboration with a supposedly unpopular, superimposed, and pro-Catholic government (the French in the earlier instance, the Ngô clan in the latter), from which collaboration they gained economic and political benefit. Their antagonists, on the other hand, were often portrayed as manipulating religious bigotry of the lựong majority for purposes of political advantage. But the resentments in each case transcended the political, and entered the religious realm as well. In the nineteenth century, the Chrétientés were seen as a threat to the religious harmony that existed more often as an ideal than a reality between the tam dao [three faiths] of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. In the 1950’s and 60’s, the insular nature of bắc di cư Catholicism, which combined a theological rejection of Buddhism with an apparent desire to live apart from the mainstream, once again was seen as a threat to religious harmony.

Such criticisms ran in both directions. Militant and politicized Buddhism, which became a dominant political force in 1963 and 1964, was as susceptible to insularity, chauvinism, intolerance, and a desire to see the elimination of their erstwhile religious opponents, as were the bắc di cư Catholics. But this only serves to strengthen the parallels between the attitudes of religious hostility underlying the intercommunal religious violence of the Văn Thàn and Cân Viáng movements in the nineteenth century, and the riots of 1963-4.

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782 In the case of the events of 1963-64, by communist sympathizers and their backers in the DRVN. This view was advanced both by Diệm, and by Diemist historians; see, for example, Phan Thiệt, Đại Việt, 120.

783 The Diệm era was a period of significant Catholic proselytizing, when an abundance of new converts from the tam dao were baptized into the church. In many cases, these conversions were insincere and opportunistic attempts to take advantage of the prevailing political-religious climate. See the comments of the interviewees in the 1962 MSU survey, at p. 233.
Although targeting the bặc di cư as being an extrinsic entity within Southern society, the anti-Catholic aspect to the events of 1963-4 actually served to further their integration into the southern Church. The southern bishops – most particularly Archbishop Nguyễn Văn Bình of Saigon – felt compelled to issue a series of statements, including one timed to coincide with the mass rally on June 7, 1964, calling on the government to respect Catholic rights. These statements were seen as particularly supportive of the bặc di cư Catholics, who no longer had an episcopal leadership of their own, but who were especially vulnerable to attack. At the same time, the Bishop’s call for moderation, for tolerance and reconciliation between religions, and for a cessation of all violence, was in part an exercise of episcopal pastoral authority by the Southern bishops over their newly acquired bặc di cư flocks. That this authority was exercised successfully, and led to a subsidence in violence, served to partially marginalize the more militant bặc di cư clerics, such as Hoàng Quỳnh, who were seen to be out of step with legitimate ecclesiastical authority to whom they were notionally subject. At the end of the 1964 events, the bặc di cư continued to throw up militant leaders, and continued to be viewed as an identifiable strand within the Southern Church, often out of political alignment with the church’s hierarchy. But the sense of mutual destiny, of common purpose, and of being accountable to a single episcopal leadership, was now much stronger than before.

(b) Just another migrant church?

There are aspects of the story of the bặc di cư that are common to many migrant groups, particularly those who leave their homeland as refugees. Being forced to flee

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as a consequence of war, adverse political change, and religious persecution, are all central to the refugee experience. Many such groups go through an early refusal to accept the permanence of their departure, followed by a slow acknowledgement of, and accommodation with, their new situation. They are marked by a strong attachment to the past, a sense of yearning for the place they have left, and a preoccupying desire to intervene and rectify the perceived wrongs that led them to leave in the first place. Many suffer initial dependence upon the kindness of hosts, which ultimately gives way to autonomy and self-sufficiency. The host community may look upon the new arrivals as separate, and highlight the differences in culture, language, social practice and organization, etc, that mark them out as separate. Resentment and suspicion by some within the host community simply serves to exacerbate those differences, driving the emigré group back into an insular, self-protective pattern of internal reliance and non-integration, a pattern that breaks down over time due to interaction and consequent mutual acceptance by both groups.

The religious dimension of the *bác di cư* story is similarly redolent of that of many transplanted, emigré faith communities. Having religious affiliation as the principal identifying factor and raison d’être of the migrated community, in which the Church building becomes the community focal point, not merely of worship, but of communal cohesion, is also common. High levels of dependence on, and obedience to, a strong clerical leadership only slowly give way to a more generalized sharing of responsibility. This clerical leadership is often expected to bear the principal responsibility of liaising and intervening with the outside world, including in matters outside of the religious or ecclesiastical sphere, particularly as other members (including less educated members) develop linguistic and cultural capabilities which enable them to interact effectively with the surrounding society. Emigré religious

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786 Indeed, are amongst the factors regarded as defining a refugee within the meaning of the Geneva Convention on Refugees of 1951.
minoteries often remain separate, not only from the religious mainstream, but from the host church who, whilst accepting them as co-religionists, can be unfamiliar with, and perplexed by, the practices particular to the micro-culture of the migrant church. The initial impulse to keep faith practice and social organization exactly as it had been in the home area, remaining as an unreconstructed church-within-a-church, only slowly starts to blend with a sense of common purpose with the indigenous local church. Factors such as inter-marriage, linguistic familiarity, common education of children, commercial interdependence, and the maturing of a young generation with a lesser attachment to the homeland, eventually soften both the rigorous hierarchy of their internal social structure, and their sense of separateness from the host church. Yet this does not negate the desire for ongoing recognition and celebration of their affiliation and solidarity with the Church in their homeland.

Almost any item within the above description can be applied to the experience of the transmigrated northern Catholics in the RVN. And yet, there were dimensions of their experience which were quite unique.

First, the bắc di cư left not for a different nation, to live within a host culture with a different racial profile, language, ethnicity, and religious mix, but simply to another place within their home nation. True, their departure coincided with the de facto temporary partition of that homeland into two separate states (although neither recognized or accepted that partition), and the historical and cultural development of

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787 In the period after 1975, many bắc di cư did flee overseas. Working in asylum camps in Hong Kong and the Philippines in the early 1990’s, I met people who had fled the North in 1954-5, been resettled from Đồng Nai to the highlands in Diệm’s resettlement scheme, were then forced to flee as a result of communist insurgency, left Việt Nam after 1975, and were now seeking resettlement from the asylum camp to a receiving nation. Whilst no figures are available, there is strong anecdotal evidence to suggest that bắc di cư Catholics are disproportionately represented in the post-1975 Vietnamese diaspora. This can certainly be said of their representation in the Vietnamese migrant chaplaincies in Melbourne.
Đặng Trọng was different to that of their quê. But for other emigré groups, whatever their other incomprehension and misunderstandings, one fact was clear; they were now in a separate and foreign place, forming part of the diaspora of their home community.

But could this be said of the đặc di cư? At an official level, they were almost always referred to as dòng bao di cư, or dòng bao ty nan [refugee compatriots]; a term which verges on the oxymoronic. The refugee is by definition an outsider, initially dependant on the kindness of strangers. But the đặc di cư were both kinfolk and strangers at the same time. From the subjective view of the individual đặc di cư, how did they see themselves; as integrated compatriot, or as alienated refugee? The diaspora experience, which normally leaves the first generation of displaced people with a clear sense of separate identity, was an equivocal experience for the đặc di cư. Were they simply a relocated group within Vietnam, or were they a North Vietnamese diaspora?

The authorities, both church and civil, were equivocal in their response. Both spoke of assimilation, of common purpose, and of a deep national unity between Vietnamese of all regions.\(^{788}\) Yet the actions of both undermined this aspiration. Overwhelmed by both the logistical and ideological challenges caused by such a dramatic, sudden, and largely unexpected influx, the impulse of both church and state was to keep the đặc di cư separate. In the case of the civil authorities, this meant keeping the majority of them in isolated refugee settlements administered by a separate government authority, to which the bulk of indigenous Southern society had only limited access. For the Church, it meant assenting to the erection of an essentially non-canonical, pseudo-territorial church to run parallel to that serving the Southern Catholic community. True, both of these forms of de jure segregation were gone by the end of 1957. But it was in those initial four years that the pattern of future development of the đặc di cư in

\(^{788}\) The Church stressed that, in the case of Catholic đặc di cư, this national unity was augmented by a spiritual and ecclesiastical unity between Northern and Southern Catholics.
Southern society, and within the Southern church, were laid. This early encouragement of separation, counter-intuitive to the normal practice of trying to meld the refugee group into the host church as seamlessly as possible, is a further striking aspect of the bàc di cu experience.

This is not to say that the reaction of the Southern church hierarchy was in any way blameworthy. It should again be stressed that they were in the extraordinary situation of taking in a church considerably larger than their own, with a functioning episcopal hierarchy, and separate ecclesiastical micro-culture, in less than a year. This marks out the phenomenon of the bàc di cu as quite different to other diasporic church communities. Whilst the host-recipient dichotomy will always break down over time, and members of the diasporic church may well come to play a significant role in the church of their adopted homeland (for example, the Irish in the United States or Australia), few if any have become as dominant in the affairs of the host church as have the bàc di cu in the church in Southern Vietnam. Moreover, it is in the nature of the migration experience – whether as refugees or by more orderly departure - to leave as individuals, or in groupings based on locality or even faith affiliation. But to leave, as many of the bàc di cu did, as whole ecclesiastical communities of parishes and dioceses, with the intention of re-establishing themselves in a manner as near to identical as possible to the structure, is exceptional. Similarly, it is nothing unusual for clerical leadership to join the departure; in the case of Catholics, for priests, or even bishops, to join their departing flocks, either because they themselves are targets of religious persecution, or to serve the needs of their new diasporic community. But for them to establish a fully functioning church which eclipses in size the church of the host is unique.
It would be wrong to simply equate the bâc di cut with Vietnamese Catholicism as a whole. On the one hand, nearly a quarter of the bâc di cut were not Catholic at all. On the other, Vietnamese Catholicism is comprised of a far more diverse range of elements than that constituted by its bâc di cut component. Yet at the same time, the influence of the bâc di cut on Vietnamese Catholicism has been profound. Their effect on the Southern Church, their geographic epicentre, where they continue to constitute the majority of the Catholic population, has been one of mutual influence and interaction. As their micro-culture, through which they lived their faith, came into contact with that of Southern Catholics, their mode of religious existence both changed that of the local church, and at the same time was changed by it.

Their tight social cohesion, and tendency to aggregate in specific localities, changed the demography of the Southern Church. The phenomenon of the identifiably Catholic villages, so common in the North, now became a feature of Southern society as well. This in turn made the Catholics a more readily identifiable cohort; a process exacerbated by their high visibility (and corresponding focus of resentment) during the Diệm regime.

The bâc di cut also altered the balance of power within the Southern Church in favour of the Archdiocese of Saigon. The Archdiocese had previously been a largely rural-based church with a small metropolitan core, more or less in parity with the other Southern dioceses. The huge numbers of bâc di cut settling in Saigon and its immediate outskirts changed this demographic weighting. Not only the numbers of lay Catholics, new churches, and additional parishes contributed to this power-shift. The presence of senior northern clerics, the establishment of houses of religious orders, seminaries, Catholic institutions and lay movements; all tended to congregate in and around
The informal authority of Archbishop Bình and his Archdiocese were greatly enhanced.

The coming of the bài đê cut also coincided with the Southern church becoming more assertive, and more aggressive in its defence of Catholic rights. Again, it is difficult to disentangle the effect of the bài đê cut presence from the events of the Diệm years and the consequences of his downfall. But whilst the Southern hierarchy (most notably Archbishop Bình) always maintained a more conciliatory tone towards the Buddhists than would have been natural to the northern Church, the more assertive stance, and the ostentatious use of the Catholic population as a political weapon, certainly owed much to the historical practices of the Church in the North.

This in turn led to a level of polarization in the Church. The advent of the lối thứ ba [Third Way], which came at a time later than the scope of this study, brought a dissentient Catholic element into the polity of the latter years of the RVN which was diametrically opposed to the strident anti-Communism of the likes of Fathers Quỳnh and Lâm.

The bài đê cut presence, when allied with the overt catholicity (and occasional sectarianism) of the regime of Ngô Đình Diệm, also changed external perceptions of Catholics within RVN society. The relatively benign general view and facile acceptance of the Catholic presence in the South was transformed by the coming of the bài đê cut, who presented an essentially unfamiliar image of Catholicism to the majority of the southern population. Whilst the principal focus of subsequent historical analysis of that presence has revolved around its political and military implications, these aspects should not blind us to the even more profound religious ramifications of their

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789 The establishment of the Papal Delegation (and thereafter, a Nunciature) in Saigon also contributed to this process.
effect on Southern society. For more than three-quarters of them, it was their religious
affiliation that united them, that both externally and internally identified them, that
provided them with their leadership, and that kept them as a differentiated element
with Southern society.

At the present time, in a period of relatively easy internal movement within Vietnam,
*bác đì cut* Catholics are also returning to the North; the appointment of *bác đì cut*
bishops to Northern dioceses is the most visible manifestation of this trend. The
movement of parish clergy from well-served Southern dioceses to those in the North
that lack priests is occurring more slowly, but there are indications that both civil and
church authorities are increasingly open to this possibility. And, as noted previously,
*bác đì cut* Catholics are disproportionately represented in the Vietnamese diaspora, so
that many migrant chaplaincies and national parishes serve predominantly *bác đì cut*
congregations. Hence the influence of *bác đì cut* not only as a population cohort, but as
proponents of a particular mode of Catholic existence, spreads beyond the territory of
the former RVN, both into the North of Vietnam, and into the overseas Vietnamese
communities.

Generalized assertions about Vietnamese Catholicism, whether at home or in the
diaspora, often fail to take into account the diverse and pluriform nature of the
Vietnamese Church, and of the different historical strands that are represented within
it. The factors that caused the *bác đì cut* to be relatively resistant to a facile integration
into Southern Catholicism are precisely the same as those which lead it to still be an
identifiable (albeit more assimilated) element within Vietnamese Catholicism today.
Any failure to acknowledge the significance of their role, and the historical factors
which shaped it, will lead to a diminished and inadequate understanding of the
Vietnamese Church of the present.
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Appendix I

Select bibliography of pamphlets, books, booklets and pamphlets published in the DRVN concerning the transmigration. Most were accessed at the National Library in Hanoi. I hold a copy of each item.

*Bộ Phần Đồng Công Dân Di Cu Sài Tiếp Tục Bi Đưa Ra Trước Pháp Luật.* [Reactionaries Forcing People to Leave Continue to be Brought Before the Law] DRVN: 1956, no other publication details.


*Dòng Báo Bị Cưỡng Bức vào Nam Trở Về Tố Cáo Giặc* [Accusations By our Compatriots Forced to Go South Who Have Now Returned]. DRVN: 1955, other publication details unknown.

*Dòng Báo Công Giáo Cầm Xuyên Hà Tĩnh Đã Đáp Tan Ẩm Máu Của Đế Quốc Mỹ và Bể Lưu Tây Sai Dự Đỗ và Cưỡng ép Giảo Đàn Di Cu Vào Nam.* [Catholic Compatriots in Cam Xuyen, Ha Tinh, Have Responded to the Plot of American Imperialism and the Puppet Clique to Force and Seduce the laity to go South]. Ha Tinh: Tý Truyền Truyền Hà Tỉnh, 1955.


*Pháp Luật Triệt Trừ Bọn Cưỡng érique Dư Đô ergus Di Cu* [The Law Punishes the Gang Who Force and Seduce People to Go South]. DRVN, Publication details otherwise unknown.


Hoàng Linh, Tội Của Đế Quốc Mỹ Trong Việc Bắt Ép Đông Bảo Di Cự Vào Nam. [Crimes of American Imperialism in Forcing our Compatriots to Transmigrate to the South]. Hanoi: NXB Sự Thật, 1955.


After the Geneva Convention, in the North [of Vietnam], The Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Dooley, saw that a great many of the flock had decided to leave, and so appointed Bishop Phạm Ngốc Chi, together with a number of Catholic leaders from the ten dioceses above the seventeenth parallel, to look after the evacuation and resettlement of Catholic compatriots (together with non-Catholic compatriots who wanted to go together with the Catholics).

Upon reaching the South, this Catholic delegation established its headquarters at the Huyện Sĩ Church, and liaised with official bodies such as the Prime Minister, the Department of Social Welfare, and after that, the Commissioner for Refugees, in order to be active in receiving and comforting them.

In late October 1954, the government introduced a policy to disband a number of camps which had been established in schools within the capital [Saigon], and lead the refugees to the outlying provinces. The Catholic Delegation referred to above took the name of the Committee for Resettlement Assistance, with the aim of helping the government to implement its policy.

The Committee worked through Catholic channels. The Central Office in Saigon was headed by Bishop Phạm Ngốc Chi, together with ten priests who represented the ten refugee dioceses as commissioners. At each Catholic resettlement camp there was a priest appointed as Spiritual leader. These priests, who usually had been the Parish Priest of their compatriots in the North, had the responsibility to assess and choose places which would be suitable for the resettlement of their flock, and to suggest them to the Commissioner, or to [resettle] directly, or through the Central Office of the Committee.

On arrival at the place granted [for resettlement], the Spiritual Leader had to assume the role of Camp Director, supervising construction and organizing security, as well as [organizing] daily life in the camp, and distributing to families the land, subsidy monies and goods supplied by the Commissioner or by charitable organizations. Outside of this, the Camp Directors regularly liaised with the Central Committee for Resettlement Assistance, with the Commissioner, with the various international charitable organizations, either to fulfil the expectations of their compatriots, or to seek assistance.
to do so. Outside of the task of overall leadership, the Central Committee also appointed priests to deal with religious matters, and to assist the Commissioner on matters of public opinion as to resettlement throughout the entire nation. On the other hand, the Committee was also active in forming international public opinion concerning the transmigration, working with overseas Catholic organizations from friendly countries to expose the inhumanity of the Viet Cong. This led to the refugees receiving strong material and spiritual support. In this regard, the Committee, whilst having no legal status, received assistance from twenty two Catholic organizations from democratic nations. Aside from physical gifts such as clothing, food and medicine, it received $12,159,800 from Catholic Relief Services in America, France, and Vietnam, as well as from the International Red Cross, which was distributed to the camps to build nearly 300 churches.

On April 10, 1956, following the change in emphasis in the tasks of the Commissioner, Bishop Pham Ngoc Chi sent a letter to the priest-Directors, requesting that they hand over administrative powers to committees established by residents of the camps, and to return instead to duties of an entirely spiritual nature, pertaining solely to religion.

In accordance with this principle, the Committee saw for itself that its mission was almost completed, although because of the special situation in a number of newly-established camps, such as Cái Sán, and at areas in the Highlands, priests in those camps in reality continued to provide management assistance until December 31, 1956. It can be said that the Committee’s only activities were in the sphere of refugee assistance.
Appendix III

From the Uỷ Ban Hỗ Trợ Định Cư [Resettlement Assistance Committee] to President Ngô Đình Diệm, October 7, 1955. PTTDNCH 4042

Esteemed President,

We, the ten undersigned priests, are representatives of all the priest-leaders of the Catholic refugee Camps belonging to the 10 dioceses of North Vietnam (Bắc Ninh, Bùi Chu, Hải Phòng, Hà Nội, Hưng Hóa, Lạng Sơn, Phát Diệm, Thái Bình, Thanh Hóa, and Vinh), who met together at the office of the Committee for Resettlement Assistance at 1 Bùi Chu Street, Saigon, at 9.00 a.m. on October 1, 1955, under the auspices of Bishop Phan Ngọc Chí, the Bishop with responsibility for refugees [to the South]. We respectfully advise you as to our observations and decisions in relation to the transmigration and resettlement.

1. The basic and most important mission of priests lie in the sphere of spiritual activities, following on from the principles of the Gospel, and the dictates of Canon Law. But because of the circumstances of our nation, for the happiness of our compatriots, for the freedom of our people, and in accordance with the pressing severity of our situation at the present time, the priests have reluctantly agreed to undertake the coordination of the material aspects of the transmigration and resettlement. We will do so regardless of the hardship and suffering involved, regardless of the distortions and vile slanders of scoundrels who would harm the nation and the people, and regardless of doubting attitudes, who are sometimes also accompanied by the authorities.

2. The situation in the camps is currently one of temporary stability; our involvement in resettlement runs the risk of solidifying. The priests are attentive to their spiritual mission, at the same time retaining a pure standpoint; we will not cling to power, contrary to the dishonest arguments of reactionaries who seek ways to commit sabotage, and in particular to destroy order in the resettlement camps.

For the above reasons, we, the priest leaders of the resettlement camps, unanimously resolve that we will withdraw from the task of controlling the resettlement in the administrative sphere and return it to the authorities from December 1, 1955, or for the latest camps, from January 1, 1956.
In order that work might continue uninterrupted, we respectfully advise you to prepare and organize the administrative machinery in such a way as to deal in a timely manner with every contingency.

Sincerely

(Rev.) Ngô Văn Yên  Representative of the Diocese of  Bạc Ninh
  Vũ Minh Thái        Bửi Chu
  Lê Quang Ngọc        Haiphong
  Đỗ Đăng Khoa         Hanoi
  Nguyễn Thái Hân       Hưng Hóa
  Vũ Văn Mạch         Lang Sơn
  Trần Cao Đâm         Phát Điểm
  Nguyễn Duy Nhất      Thái Bình
  Trịnh Viet Yên        Thanh Hóa
  Nguyễn Việt Khai      Vinh

(Most Rev.) Phạm Ngọc Chí
Appendix IV

Nguyễn Đình Tạo, “Các Vị Trị trưởng Kẻ cả Những Vị Linh Mục Cần Lắm Sáng tỏ Hành động Của Minh” [Camp authorities tell the priests they need to clarify their activities], Thời Luận, July 26, 1955.

Many refugees complain about the supply of goods; this place gets a little, to this a lot. That camp has, this camp doesn’t. There are a lot of different opinions amongst the masses. In that place, the leaders cut down supplies to the people; in this, the priest leader has cut down supplies in order to decorate the church, or to make his private residence more attractive.

For example, there is a camp in which the priest keeps 200 or 300 dong of every 3,000 given by the Commission to build houses, in order to build the Church. Supposing the refugees had work already, or were comfortably off financially, then it would be worthwhile to save some money so as to contribute to a place of worship to God.

However, it is sad to see most of the refugees in the camps, who are hungry and nearly out of money, have their money further trimmed to a considerable extent. Although the Catholics readily submit to their leaders, they don’t dare to directly cry out. They only discreetly tell stories every day. “God is everywhere, God reigns over every place. So we could pray to him in a humble shack of canvas and thatch, so long as our hearts and spirits eternally loved God. God doesn’t need a large building if it doesn’t show faith in God”. They were words told to me by a cleric in my younger days. Because of the influence of these fine and true words, and despite my being a loyal Christian, I opposed Fr. Ngu of Cánh Lắm parish, and his proposal to abolish a row of old houses to build a modern church amidst people dying of hunger and periodic bouts of malaria, which makes people shake like guns. In the end, the diocesan bishop accepted my view and forced Fr. Ngu to abandon his costly plan.

These days, the refugees have been here for nearly a year already, but most don’t have enough of a living to ensure that later on they can by a small piece of land to farm, and little hope of being able to till the soil, yet they are building grand churches and presbyteries, exceeding the scope of what they should be.

Moreover, why is it that every parish and sub-parish must have a church, even when they are only a few hundred metres apart? Why can’t two or three parishes come together in one church? Outside of the North, one church is separated from another by fifty or sixty kilometres.
However, everyday the people are more zealous. But why is it that priests need to compete with one another, to lay claim to something better than the other parish priest?

I ask the priests to consider the needs of their flock, so that they can avoid the propaganda of Communist cadres who perhaps are still operating in the camps. The fathers should share the bitter with the sweet, the sour with the pleasant, together with their flock who have left their homeland. They need to be more sympathetic with the privations and sufferings of their people in order to give them spiritual consolation.

Fathers shouldn’t stray far from the question of adequate food and drink, just as with other areas, from the refugees. In particular, there are a small number of priests whose everyday behaviour separates them off from their flock.

How can a cleric be so bossy and arrogant? If a priest is authoritarian, and his parishioners obsequious and subservient, then how can they unburden their souls to such a priest? It isn't impossible if, between the cleric and the layperson, there is a lack of spirit of unity such as God had intended.

Concerning the supply of goods and supplies, every camp needs the camp leader to announce clearly and immediately [the goods arrival] at their office, in order to ensure the integrity of the priests as camp leaders. And to dispel any doubts the people may have, it is suggested that the amount of the goods received, and the number of families they will go to, also be publicly announced. This should be as clear as daylight to each and every family. In fact, the refugees are very grateful to those of the clergy who are willing to bear responsibility for their people, so that the people might enjoy the good fortune they have found [in the South]. There are only a small number of priests who have smashed through this place or that in order to build a church.
On July 31, 1954, at about 5.00 am, as the first bell of the day tolled, I opened the door of the presbytery, and saw a group of men coming towards me wearing clerical attire. I thought to myself ‘why have these seminarians arrived so soon’? But as they approached, I saw that they were not seminarians, but priests. One introduced himself as a spokesman for the group: ‘We are fifty priests who have just come south. We came by plane, and are being housed in a nearby Primary School. With us fifty priests are two thousand laypeople, who are also staying at the school. May we please celebrate Mass here’? I replied ‘I am honoured to welcome you and your people, but the Church only has three altars [dana thang]. So please, make yourselves at home, feel free, [thong than], there’s no need to ask permission’.

So saying, I asked the Sacristan to prepare the altars; and for my part then celebrated Mass at 5.30 am. When I finished, it was after 6.00 am, but I couldn’t see any of the other priests celebrating Mass. They continued to stroll around the Church, reading their breviaries and reciting the Rosary. I went up to one of the priests, Fr. Chát,... and asked ‘Why haven’t you celebrated Mass yet? There are only three altars here, and with more than fifty priests, I’m afraid you’ll end up very late’.

Fr. Chát replied ‘We wouldn’t dare, after you as Parish Priest told us to wait [thong than]’. Hearing this, I immediately understood, and replied “Thong than” in Southern dialect means, ‘please feel free’ (I said it in Latin, ‘Libertas’). Fr. Chát answered ‘But in the North, “Thong than” means ‘wait, don’t hurry’ (He also said in Latin, ‘Lente’).

At that point, we both began to understand; this was a case of divergent language. So the priests then began to take turns to celebrate Mass at the three altars. At the presbytery, we made breakfast for the fifty priests, and after they had celebrated Mass, they came over to eat with us, their minds now at peace. As we ate breakfast together, we all began to discover how complex their story was. I reiterate that there were not only the fifty priests, but also 2,000 laypeople who had migrated from the North, and had also come to the Church to attend Mass. They saw their own Northern priests walking around the
Church, not able to celebrate Mass, and they asked why. They were told ‘the Parish Priest told them they had to wait [thong thà]’. They began to seem highly dissatisfied.

During this breakfast, many stories went around ‘thong thà’, with much talk and laughter until we parted. But prattle about ‘thong thà’ caused suspicion to travel through the Refugee Camps.... and people didn’t understand there were good intentions; they thought it showed I was uncooperative, and so spread a rumour that ‘the Parish Priest of Cholon doesn’t like Northerners; he disparaged us by his procrastination, made things difficult for our Northern priests, and wouldn’t permit them to celebrate Mass. They went to him to ask permission, and he told them they had to wait’.

On discovering this, Fr. Phạm Ngọc Biêu, the priest deputed by the Archbishop of Hanoi to build a camp for [Northern] seminarians in St. Joan of Arc Parish, had to spend several days going around all of the refugee camps to tell people ‘The Parish Priest of Cholon has never disparaged refugees. On the contrary, he has just given us land to build our seminary’. 791

Appendix VI

Various reports from PTUDCTN to PTT arising from camp visits.

(a) Report from PTUDCTN to PTT on visit to South-central Highlands, June 6, 1956.  

a. Camp Đà Minh.  On edge of Đà Lạt township. Established by LM Đỗ Trọng Bích, on 2.11.54. 225 families, 1,030 people.  Followed Cha Bích to Đà Lạt from Hà Bi.  No future because no land, no means of earning income.  Most are fishermen, not suited to the highlands.  Built a church, but no other public buildings.  Temporary school, using materials supplied by priest.  Recommend: Split them up, farmers to agricultural district, fishermen to river/sea.  210 people have already applied to go to Cái Sân, but no place for them as yet.  A number of families have banded together to make a list to go to Cái Sân or La Ngà, although a number who made a living making soya bean curd have asked to stay.  A number criticized Fr. Bích, and suggested that the camp be dissolved, so that the fishermen and their families could go to Cái Sân and La Ngà.  I recommend the dissolution of the camp, the transfer of fishermen to La Ngà, of farmers to Fyan or the land given over by the Pasteur Institute.

b. Camp Đư Sìn.  Established by LM Bửu Dựong, est. 26.7.55, 1 km from Đà Lạt, 1,792 people in 269 families, including 67 Buddhist families.  137 houses built to date.  Camp has no future in agricultural production.  Despite leadership of Cha Dựong, a number of residents have farmed incompetently.

c. Camp Lạc Lâm.  LM Trần Mạnh Khoa established 23.10.55, 10km from Dran, declared population 4,116 people in 886 families, investigations showed 4,386 people in 925 families.  All are Catholic.  856 houses built, 9 are tin-roofed, the others thatched.  All are of solid build.  Camp has a good future.


Established on French-owned tea plantation land near Dran, 16km from Đà Lạt.  1,428 people in 285 families.  All are Catholics from Bửu Châu and Phát Diệm who before this were in Gia Kiêm and Vũng Tàu.  No church built as yet.  Future not certain.  Send those who want to go to Pasteur Institute land.

e. Camp Tùng Lâm.  Est. 21.9.54 by LM Benôit, 6km from Đà Lạt.  432 declared residents, but in fact 466 in 96 families.  All are Catholic, mostly farmers.  96 houses, 2 2-storey.  All are fibro-cement with tin roof.  A church already, also a market, office, granary, school with 2 sisters teaching 180 students.

792 PTTDNCH, 1089.
f. Camp Kim Thanh. 22.2.55, also est. by Fr. Benoit. 8km from Đà Lạt. 500 people declared, actually 488, in 111 families. 90 small houses, 4 2 storey houses. Dam built by priest. Also a church, 3 wells, and a centre.

g. Camp Đà Thanh (Thành Mậu). Est. 27/9/55 by LM Mạnh Trọng Bích, 4 km from Đà Lạt. 549 people in 122 families, all from Khu IV, came from Camp Tâm Hương B, Phan Thiết province, and Bình Đông II. 61 houses. No cultivatable land, no public buildings. PTUDCTN built a dispensary.

h. Camp Saint Jean, LM Nguyễn Quang Nhungen, est. 1.9.55, 5 km from Đà Lạt, 320 people, 58 families. 40 houses built. No public buildings as yet.

i. Camp Nam Sơn (Nùng) Established by Nùng tribes people 1.5.55, 1,200 people in 288 families. Note: No clerical leadership. 165 houses.


l. Camp Phú Hiệp (Ourgand). Est. LM Trần Văn Tuấn, 16.12.55. All Catholics. 1015 people, 184 families. 142 houses, Church, school, etc.

m. Camp Lam Sơn. Established by Ven. Thích Mật Chi [a Buddhist monk], August 1955. Declared at 362 people in 75 families, in fact 369 people in 88 families. 40 houses, another 7 without roofs. A number of very lazy residents who disturb order. No enterprises, a number work on nearby tea plantations. No communal fund as yet. Good land, but ‘the camp lacks order, because the spiritual leader (i.e., the Buddhist monk) is seldom in the camp and the internal committee is still non-functioning’. It is suggested that the office and the Buddhists (?) instruct THÍCH MẬT CHI to always be in the camp, so as to provide guidance to his compatriots’.

n. Camp Thánh Tâm. LM PHẠM TÚ ÂN TRANG present leader, having replaced LM ĐƯ, est. 1.2.55. 1,912 people, 378 families registered, in fact 1,675 people now shown, more than 200 having left. Real number is 1,546 in 351 families, more than 129 people in 27 families having arrived without registering. LM Trang has recently arrived, and doesn’t have a firm grasp of refugee law, he allowed several people to enter the camp without permission of the office of PTUDCTN. 333 houses built, also an orphanage (now dissolved), school, and temporary information centre. Good ground for establishing a centre. Spiritual leadership in the camp has undergone great change, but houses continue to be built and land cultivated, demonstrating the resourcefulness of the inhabitants.
Appendix VI (b)

Report of Inspections Office re refugees in Ninh Thuận, November 25, 1955

5,822 refugees in Ninh Thuận. Many demobbed soldiers and families, also Nùng tribal people. 3,008 in camps, 2,814 dispersed. A committee at Phan Rang under provincial leader established to help refs. Also, another at Quản Bửu Sơn, as all the ref camps are concentrated there. Each camp has a committee, comprised of a secretary, 2 members, and the Priest as ‘spiritual leader’. Allowances for refs as at Khánh Hòa.

Inspectors visited 2 camps in Ninh Thuận, Mỹ Đức and Đồng Mẹ. Houses were built by a good method. The houses at Mỹ Đức lack spaciousness and solidity, unlike those at Đồng Mẹ. There are inadequate means of earning a living at Mỹ Đức, unlike at Đồng Mẹ, where families have cleared the land and are farming corn, vegetables, and fruit. At Dong Me, 600 ha of good land is available, and of this 200 hectares has been used immediately, each hectare costing 2,500 to clear. 2339 people in 330 families at Mỹ Đức, 669 in 89 families at Đồng Mẹ. Plans to transfer some from one camp to another.

Appendix VI (c)

Bùi Văn Lượng to PTT, October 7, 1955, Re visit, together with French and United States delegates to Bến Tre, October 5 and 6.

1. Visited the following camps:
   a. THÀNH TRIỀU. Established November 4, 1954, 1,120 residents living in with the locals. Generally satisfactory situation, everyone has something to eat, although as yet not enough. The camp has brought about a certain unity between North and South, and they are cooperating in opposing communism.
   b. AN HIE Ро (quận Châu Thành). Est. 16/7/55, with 1,642 people who before were in Cù Lao Giêng Camp, Long Xuyên. The camp is situated on 223 ha, some of which has been bought for them. Although new, the residents of the camp have made great efforts to build it. They have built 333 houses, 18 fish ponds, together with fruit orchards, and 30 hectares of rice.
   c. BÀ TANG (Quận Ba Tri). Est. 16.11.54, on a narrow strip of land. There were previously 1,552 people here, but now only about 700. The morale has deteriorated here, as aside from weaving, there is no means

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793 PTTĐNCH, 4039.
794 PTTĐNCH, 4041.
of employment, with no cultivatable land. The residents asked to be 
moved to another location. This will be sent to the ‘Resettlement 
Consolidation Committee’ (UB Kiến Toán Định Cư) for urgent decision. 
The Province Chief of Bến Tre has promised to investigate the 
possibility of moving them to Giòng Trôm, an area with cultivatable land 
about 20 km away, which perhaps can be purchased.

d. TÂN THỦY. Est. 11/10/54, on the floodplains of the Hậu Lương River, 
comprising 2,205 residents who live by fish breeding and agriculture. 
Catholic aquaculture from the US (?) gave 250,000 [d. $?] to buy 10 
large boats and 30 small ones, the fishing is good, and they harvest 
between 5,000 and 7,000 per day. As to agriculture, they have cleared 
100 HA, 1/3 rice and 2/3 reeds. They plan to clear another 190 ha. This 
camp has great hope for the future. Experts should investigate the 
request of residents for:
i. More money for further boats
ii. Help with the transportation of fish to Saigon
iii. Help to stop seawater entering into 500 ha which could otherwise 

be used for cultivation

e. KHÂU BẢNG A (Quận Thành Phú). Est. 30/10/54, 523 residents. On a 
piece of land about 5,000 square metres, in the midst of locals. Life is 
very difficult, only means of living is cutting palm branches, as they 
have no cultivatable land. On 30,9/55 there was a misunderstanding 
between the refugees and the locals, with the refugees appearing to be 
alarmed, but the local authorities brought things to a satisfactory 
conclusion. I met with people in the camp, and with locals, to allow 
them to explain, and encourage them to unite. I have also asked 
experts to investigate the situation in this camp.

f. KHÂU BẢNG B (Quận Thành Phú). Est. 30/10/54, 562 residents, 500 

sq.m. Same as the above camp, and I have asked for an investigation to 
try to find them another means of livelihood.

g. CÔN HỮU A (Quận Thành Phú). Est. 1/12/54, with 3,935 residents. 
They live off farming, fishing, carpentry and tailoring. Thanks to the 
resourcefulness of the camp’s Chaplain, the camp appears spacious. 
About 1/3 of residents gather firewood, 80 families involved in fish 
farming, the others selling various things. They are leasing 100 ha of 
farming land, but they have not yet ploughed it. To consolidate the 
employment base of this camp, I and overseas experts will investigate 
their request for aquaculture equipment, and to build a 5 km 
embankment around their rice field.

h. CÔN HỮU B (Quận Thành Phú). Est. 20/10/54 with 3,522 people. A 
good situation as with Camp A, with several means of living. Although
they have borrowed only 50 ha. of farming land, they have already surrounded it with an embankment to protect it from seawater. Their future is bright.

i. CÂU VÀNG (Bắc Ninh). Est. 13/10/54. 800 residents, 1/3 fishermen, 2/3 farmers. Because the people are not resourceful, they have only limited means of making a living. The Catholic Chaplain has thus requested that they be permitted to move to another site, because there is no cultivatable land, and the fishing spots are far away. I will investigate the resettlement of this camp.

j. CÂU VÀNG (Tự Nhân). Est. 20/2/55, 811 residents who are Buddhist, but are associated with the above camp. The living conditions are as at the other camp, but the residents here are more resourceful, and have leased 57 ha. of land, and have ploughed 44ha. Their future appears solid.

After 2 days visiting these ten camps, I am of the opinion that only Bà Tang, Câu Váng (Bắc Ninh) and Khấu Bằng A & B need attention concerning earning a means of living. The situation in the other camps is satisfactory.

Appendix VI (d)

Bùi Văn Lượng to PTT, July 10, 1956, Re Situation in La Ngà Camps.795

a. Trà Cổ (Cao Cang district), LM Hoàng Phúc Thiện established. 1,674 people in 290 families. 218 houses completed, 70 others very poor quality. At present construction is slow, but with about 10, 15 fine days, it can be completed.

b. Phúc Lâm (LM Liễm is leader) on the Banks of Dak Cha creek, 2km from Trà Co. 1,480 people, 304 families, 165 houses, 200 others poorly built. Residents of Phúc Lâm are jealous of those at Lộc Lầm, as their houses are nearly finished.

c. Lộc Lầm, LM Phạm Sỹ Khìm, 918 people, 208 families. Next to Phúc Lâm camp, everyone has at least temporary housing.

d. Đa Kai. About 5 km from the highway, situated on a riverbank. Đa Minh camp residents moved to here, an abandoned army base. Most residents are from Bắc Ninh, under leadership of Fr. Bích, but he has not come with them. There are about 550 of the 6089 Đa Minh residents here. I will ask Bishop Chí to appoint a priest to Đa Kai to provide spiritual leadership.

795 PTTĐNCH, 4407.
Appendix VII

Difficulties facing Bùi Văn Lương as PUTDCTN; his handwritten note to file, March 1955 (PTTDCH 4041)

Difficulties.
1. A number of refugees are selling all the things that were given to them.
2. The distribution of money is difficult; the people want it quickly, but the heads of camps often have no formal procedures; their staff should be following legal formalities.
3. A lot of houses have been burnt down; 110 at Khu Đực, 800 at Biên Hòa, 130 at Hồ Nai, all due to carelessness.
4. There is a great need for seeds, as the rainy season is about to arrive.
5. People in many camps complain that the priests don’t allow them to go to another place.
6. A lot of professional staff are trying to go somewhere else:
   Total number of staff: 1,333
   In Saigon 657 (49%)
   In other places 676 (51%)
who have established 13 services.
Appendix VIII


Saigon, August 20, 1956.

Dear Monsignor,

I am pleased to advise you, and all relevant persons of the wise decisions made by the Holy See concerning the *di cự* priests and seminarians.

Before announcing those decisions, the Holy See, through the authority of Propaganda Fide, wish to convey warm thanks and congratulations to Bishop Pham Ngoc Chi, for the matters he has brought about over these past two years. Despite many difficult obstacles, he has worked tirelessly in these special circumstances on behalf of the *di cự* people, and most particularly of the priests, in both material and spiritual aspects.

On the occasion of recognizing these two years, and after careful and mature consideration of the special situation of the Church in Vietnam, Propaganda Fide had decided to return the *di cự* clergy and people to normality, and in accordance with Canon Law, to regularize their relationship with the local [church] authorities in the areas where they now reside.

Because of our aim of concluding this harmful situation which harmed the authority and discipline of the clergy, and for the advantage of the laity, and at the same time to assist the propagation of the Gospel in the South, Propagandas has decided that:

1. All *di cự* priests will from now on belong under the local authorities in the areas in which they now reside.
2. All seminarians who wish to continue will still belong to their former dioceses, but prior to ordination, must find a diocese below the seventeenth parallel, and submit to the authority of the ordinary there, and be looked upon as a priest of that diocese until such time as they can return to their own diocese [in the North].
3. Propaganda grants to the local ordinaries in dioceses with seminaries the authority to accept these seminarians. They are to be introduced to the seminary rector by the Ordinary of their own [original] diocese.

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Source: ĐMHCĐG, November 1956.
To assist in making the liaison between the *di_cut* clergy and the local Ordinaries easier and more advantageous, we have established an Advisory Committee consisting of the ordinaries of the ten Northern vicariates now in the South, to advise the local ordinaries. This Committee will report on the situation and assist with ideas to help integrate the care of the *di_cut* laity in each of the [southern] vicariates.

Fr. Vincent Tran Ngoc Thu (from the Phat Diem Seminary, 98 Chi Lang Street, Gia Din), will be Secretary to that Committee. Local authorities should contact him in relation to any issues concerning the *di_cut* problem.

I am sure that everyone will happily welcome these wise decisions of the Holy See. I am also confident that everyone will work co-operatively with the local ordinaries for the greater advantage of the Church and people of Vietnam.
September 1, 1956.

Dear Fathers,

It was the will of God to lead you and our brothers and sisters from above the seventeenth parallel to enter into Free Vietnam. I am confident: God wants to use you to open wide his kingdom to those of our compatriots who are outside of our faith.

For these two years, I have asked you to work with all your strength under the far sighted control of Bishop Pham Ngoc Chi in what I would call the temporary stage of resettlement.

The Holy See has arranged everything in accordance with the general structure of Canon Law, and has promulgated a new edict, as explained clearly to you by your superiors. I would ask you to be willing to work with the southern clergy to look after our faithful, and to bring non-Christians to God.

I wish to advise:

1. The matters arranged by Bishop Chi concerning sacral authority in the camps, I will keep as they have been previously: confession, the celebration of Mass, and [the appointment of] Deanery Coordinators, Parish Priests, and Assistant Priests.

2. To assist me in exercising sacral authority within the camps, I have appointed Fr. Vincent Tran Ngoc Thu as Vicar General. Please report to him at….. and request faculties

3. Concerning marriage inquiries from those belonging to the ten [northern] dioceses, if you know which diocese these people belong to, please continue to send them to the Superior of the diocese for assistance.

Yours in Christ,

Simon Nguyen Van Hien
Archbishop of Saigon

Source: ÑMHCG, November 1956.
## Appendix X

### Origin of Vietnamese Bishops appointed from 1955 to 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diocese/Bishop</th>
<th>Period of Service</th>
<th>Origin</th>
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<td><strong>Bắc Ninh</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph Marie Nguyễn Quang Tuyền</td>
<td>1988-2006</td>
<td>North</td>
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<td><strong>Buôn Ma Thuột</strong></td>
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<td>Pierre Nguyễn Huy Mai</td>
<td>1967-1990</td>
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<td>Paul Nguyễn Văn Hòa</td>
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<td>Joseph Trịnh Chính Trực</td>
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<td>Joseph Nguyễn Tích Đức</td>
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<td><strong>Bà Rịa</strong></td>
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<td>Thomas Nguyễn Văn Trầm</td>
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<td><strong>Bửi Chú</strong></td>
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<td>Joseph Maria Phạm-Năng-Tinh</td>
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<td>Jacques Nguyễn Ngọc Quang</td>
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<td>Stephanus Tri Bửu Thiện</td>
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798 Compiled from “Giáo Hội Công Giáo” [The Catholic Church] tinhthan.tripod.com, (accessed October 18, 2007), and “Catholic Hierarchy – Vietnam” catholic-hierarchy.org/country/vn.html (accessed October 18, 2007). Where bishops have served in multiple dioceses/roles, they are listed only for their final appointment.
Danang
Francois Xavier Nguyen Quang Sach 1975 - 2000 South
Paul Nguyen Binh Tinh, P.S.S. 2000 - 2006 Bac Di Cu
Joseph Chau Ngoc Tri 2006 - South

Haiphong
Pierre Khut Van Tao 1955 - 1977 North
Joseph Nguyen Tung Cuong 1979 - 1999 North
Joseph Vu Van Thien 2002 - North

Hanoi
Joseph-Marie Trinh Van Can 1963 – 1990 North
Paul Joseph Pham Dinh Tung 1963 – 2005 North
Paul Le Duc Trong 1994 – 2006 North
Joseph Ngo Quang Ket 1999 - Bac Di Cu

Hue
Philippe Nguyen Kim Dien 1961 - 1988 South
Etienne Nguyen Nhu The 1975 - South
Francois Xavier Le Van Hong 2005 - South

Huong Hoa
Pierre Nguyen Huy Quang 1960 - 1985 North
Joseph Phan The Hinh 1976 - 1989 North
Joseph Nguyen Phung Hiieu 1990 - 1992 North
Antoine Nguyen Huy Chuong 2003 - Bac Di Cu

Kontum
Alexis Pham Van Loc 1975 - 1995 South
Pierre Tran Thanh Chung 1995 - 2003 South
Michel Hoang Duc Oanh 2003 - Bac Di Cu

Lang Son
Vincent de Paul Pham Van Du 1979 - 1998 North
Joseph Dang Duc Ngan 2007 - North

Long Xuyen
Nguyen Khac Ngur 1961 – 1997 Bac Di Cu
Jean-Baptiste Buu Tu Anh 1975 - 2003 Bac Di Cu
Joseph Tran Xuan Tieu 2003 - Bac Di Cu
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<tr>
<td>Vinh</td>
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<td>Pierre Marie Nguyen Nang</td>
<td>1971 - 1978</td>
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<td>Pierre-Jean Tran Xuan Hap</td>
<td>1979 - 2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul-Marie Cao Dinh Thuyen</td>
<td>1992 -</td>
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<td>Paul Nguyen Dinh Nhiem</td>
<td>1963 - 1969</td>
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<td>Vinh Long</td>
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<td>Antoine Nguyen Van Thien</td>
<td>1961 - 1968</td>
<td>South</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jacques Nguyen Van Mau</td>
<td>1968 - 2001</td>
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<td>Xuan Loc</td>
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<td>Joseph Le Van An</td>
<td>1965 - 1974</td>
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<td>Dominique Nguyen Van Lang</td>
<td>1974 - 1988</td>
<td>Bac Di Cu</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Marie Nguyen Minh Nhat</td>
<td>1988 - 2004</td>
<td>Bac Di Cu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominique Nguyen Chu Trinh</td>
<td>2004 -</td>
<td>Bac Di Cu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>United States of America: Orange County, California</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dominic Mai Luong</td>
<td>2003 -</td>
<td>Bac Di Cu</td>
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<td>Apostolic Nuncio to Chad</td>
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<td>Pierre Nguyen Van Tot</td>
<td>2002 -</td>
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## Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number (Percentage)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>27 (32.1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>34 (40.5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bắc Di Cự</td>
<td>23 (27.4%)</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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## Bishops currently serving – 2008

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number (Percentage)</th>
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<td>Northern</td>
<td>7 (23.3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>9 (30.0%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bắc Di Cự</td>
<td>14 (46.7%)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
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Appendix XI

Fieldwork Report
of Interviews undertaken in
Ninh Binh Province, Vietnam
September 30 – October 3, 2003

Phat Diem Parish (September 30)
Participants: Mr. Lai Văn Huy
Mr. Nguyễn Văn Hằng
Mr. Trịnh Văn Cạnh
Mrs. Nguyễn Thặng Huệ
Mr. Nguyễn Bà Học
Mr. Trần Đình Diện
Mr. Trần Thái Hoàn
Mr. Trần Văn Đức

The youngest of these participants was 68 years old. All retained memories of the Parish at the time of the transmigration. Phat Diem is the Cathedral Parish of the diocese. Before the transmigration, it had a dean and 3 priests, as well as the Bishop. After the transmigration, there was only one priest, Fr. Kim. Before the transmigration, there were about 7,000 in the parish, of whom about 4,000 left to go South during the 1954-5 period. After that there were not enough priests to serve the remaining people. Previously, there had been three masses a day in the Church, but afterwards, one priest had perhaps four parishes. Babies went unbaptized, and parents had to teach catechism. Few if any people who stayed left the faith but perhaps their patterns of religious practice changed; there was more praying at home, less at church.

(Per Mr. Đức): Many people had already left by the time of the official migration period. For example, his brother had already left (now a priest; Fr. Trần Minh Phú, of Văn Nái Parish, Long Thanh, Đồng Nai province).

No one had any memories of any outsider (southern or otherwise) coming into the Parish to attempt to persuade people to move south. Laypeople left because of the influence of their priests, or of the Bishop (who had a particular influence in his home Parish). Younger people usually followed the will of their parents. Although there was some dissention and conflict within families as to whether to stay or go, no one in our families criticized us for staying. They just said ‘that’s your choice’.
Since 1975, several people who left for the South have come back to see us again. But no one has actually moved back into the parish from the South.

**Luu Phuong Thuong Parish (October 1)**  
Participants: Mr. Hoàng Kim Sơn  
Mr. Nguyễn Đình Ngọc  
Mr. Nguyễn Văn Đình  
Mr. Mai Văn Thuần

At the time of the transmigration, there was one priest in the Parish, Fr. Trần Trọng Bầu. Luu Phuong Thuong was never a big parish, about 1,500 prior to 1954, of whom about half went South. Fr. Bầu left to go South, but he left without telling anyone. He didn’t take anyone with him. Although he was the Parish Priest, he had only been there a short time, and so didn’t have as much influence as he may have done had he been there longer.

It was known that some parishes moved South as a whole bloc, but this wasn’t one of them. Some of those who went South settled in Phú Nhựu district of Sài Gòn, others in Sài Gòn’s district 8.

Most of those who stayed behind had wanted to go, but they couldn’t because they didn’t have the conditions (either enough money or the necessary permissions). Most of the farmers wanted to stay because they wanted to look after their land. But they all thought it wouldn’t be too long until the Viet Minh were defeated, then they could come home again, so a lot of farmers went anyway.

One of the biggest motivations to go was fear of Viet Minh reprisals for those families who had members who were ‘fighting for the French’ [query: does this actually mean the French army, or the local Catholic militias who fought with them?]. Many families had sons who were doing so; this made them very fearful.

One Sunday (1954; not sure exactly when), Fr. Bau got up and said ‘please pray for me’. He didn’t say why; we were all very puzzled. He didn’t try to influence anyone to go with him; we didn’t even know he was going.

Families made their own decisions as to whether or not to go. People listened to priests and bishops, but we didn’t hear much here about people telling us to stay or go.
A lot of families split over the migration, with some going and some staying. But this was often done by agreement, to ensure that some part of the family remained safe somewhere.

In the short term, the transmigration made things difficult for the Parish. We didn’t get another priest until Fr. Trần Hưng Sỹ came in 1957. During those 2- years, we only had Mass in the parish 2- times a year. But that wasn’t too bad, because Phat Diem Cathedral and other churches aren’t too far away. No one abandoned the faith. Parents taught their children the catechism.

All had heard rumours that the Americans would drop a nuclear bomb on North Vietnam, but none believed this. Mr. Thuần could remember picking up a propaganda leaflet, presumably dropped by an American plane. He can still remember the doggerel on the leaflet. However, he wasn’t influenced by these leaflets, and he doesn’t believe that anyone else was either, even those who chose to go South (others present agreed).

Convent of the Dong Men Thanh Gia (Lovers of the Holy Cross Order) (October 1). This was not a place for organized interviews in accordance with the above formula. It was just to show me the convent and let me meet the sisters (I had actually visited there on an earlier occasion). I had a brief, informal, unsupervised conversation with the acting Superior, Sr. Hoa. She told me that before the transmigration, there had been 300 sisters; only 33 remained afterwards. She was not herself a sister at the time, being a young girl. Those who left established a house in Sài Gòn. Sisters there are still called members of the Phat Diem Province, even though they are so far from home. These days, some of those sisters are descendants of Phat Diem families, others are ‘native’ Southerners.

Phú Hậu Parish (Hưng Tiến locality) (October 1) 
Participants:  Mr. Nguyễn Văn Hùng  
Mr. Trần Xuân Lý  
Mr. Trần Văn Hiền  
Mr. Nguyễn Thăng Long

Apologies were offered for the fact the small number of participants, due to the fact that October 1 was National Day for the Elderly (I had indeed earlier in the day witnessed a colourful procession of elderly residents of Phat Diem in traditional dress).
Before the transmigration, there were about 6,400 parishioners, a little over half of whom left. The Parish is now quite small, with only about 1,300 members.

The parish Priest at the time of the transmigration was Fr. F.X. Đặng Đức Vương. Most people left for political reasons; they did not like the Viet Minh, because the priests warned us against them. (But another participant argued that people didn’t listen to Fr. Vuong, and that priests were only followed on spiritual matters)

People left in different stages, as individuals or as family groups, not as a whole parish community. Several families were split over the transmigration, it caused a lot of arguments. In some families a wife left, a husband stayed behind, or vice versa. This wasn’t by arrangement, it was because of disagreement. People who stayed did so because they believed they had an obligation; to their land, their ancestral graves, and to the Parish. Religious life continued for those who stayed, although there was a great shortage of priests. It was very difficult for the split families, as they felt like they were torn apart.

No one who stayed left the faith. There were no pamphlets dropped in the Parish, and no one came from outside to try to persuade us.

**Tôn Đạo Parish (An Hoa locality)**

Participants:
- Mr. Phạm Minh Cường (Chair, Local People’s Committee)
- Mrs. Nguyễn Thị Phần
- Mr. Trần Văn Truoái
- Mr. Nguyễn Mạnh Khuyến
- Mr. Trần Văn Triệu
- Mr. Nguyễn Văn Thất
- Mr. Nguyễn Văn Lân

There are now 1,160 residents in Ton Dao Parish, out of a total of 1,250 in An Hoa locality, of whom 80% Catholic. Prior to the transmigration, there were about 3,800 parishioners in Ton Dao. Approximately half that number left for the South. Because it was quite a large Parish, it had two priests prior to the transmigration; Fr. Đỗ Thành Tùng was the Parish Priest, with Fr. Vű Già Khác as his assistant. They had been in the Parish about ten years and five years respectively.

One Sunday, Fr. Tùng (others thought it was Fr. Khac) got up during Mass and said that ‘God had gone South’. Definitely ‘God’, not the Virgin Mary (No one ever mentioned the Virgin Mary in this context). He urged people to leave and then left himself (both priests left).
People didn’t go in a single group, because it was difficult to get to Hai Phong, but most people wanted to go at that time. We heard that later on, most of them had gathered at a place in Gia Kiem, Dong Nai Province. We think that it was with Fr. Tung as their priest again, but not sure. Not sure either if the new parish was called Ton Dao.

(Per Mr. Lan). It’s not true that everyone went to Gia Kiem. My brother went to Go Vap by himself. When the priest said that God had left the North to go South, I didn’t believe him. I was afraid of the Communists, we had seen fighting in this area. But I thought “the priests used to tell us that God is everywhere. How can they now be telling me that God isn’t here anymore. That doesn’t make sense.” So I didn’t believe Fr. Tung any more.

Many left because they were afraid of the communists, others because they heard that the Americans and French were going to bomb this area (not sure where they heard that). We also heard that there were good things being offered in the South, particularly land and buffaloes. Those who didn’t have children were more likely to stay, because they were less worried about the future. Quite a lot of people left because they had relatives who fought for the French.

Bishop Tu did have influence in this Parish. We saw him sometimes, and our priests went to meet him often. We listened to his words, and we know the priests did too. The Parish had an association with the French, because missionaries built the Church, although there had been none here since WWII.

Didn’t leave because we were worried what it would be like in the South. We weren’t confident about what would happen here, but were more fatalistic; if we live we live, if we die we die.

For a little while, we received postcards from our families in the South (none of these were kept). They stressed that they would only be in the South for a short time, then they would come back. We thought that too.

After the transmigration, we had no priest for several years. We had to travel about 6km to Phuc Nhac Parish. During this time, we taught catechetics to our children in our homes. We had to go to Phuc Nhac for all of the sacraments.