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INTRA-FAMILIAL DYNAMICS AND THEIR IMPLICATION
FOR VIETNAMESE POLITICS

By Dr. Walter H. Slote

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Room 1636 NS

(Prepared for a meeting of the SEADAG Vietnam, Laos,
and Cambodia Panel to be held in New York on
December 10-11, 1971.)

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Historically we have regarded the politics of a nation as a slightly disreputable art form that has an essential life force of its own, confined to an arena that is definable. Integrally related to other dominant institutionalized structures, it is historically derived and patterned in a conceptualized format that is reflective of certain major strands of the cultural nexus.

However, in recent years the term "politics" has been adopted by psychology and it has proved extremely useful indeed for our purposes. We see it as an operant occurring between people on all levels of human intercourse, and as such we have borrowed the functional concept which has long been held by many political scientists. Essentially we have broadened it to include not only the interplay between a governing elite but as a dynamism which plays a vital role in all of man's associations. Psychologically it is seen as occurring within a network of relationships in which the focus is upon those interpersonal strategems whose base is derived from the power motive, a rather knotty quality which is present, in one degree or another, within everyone.

This expansion of definition is both significant and appropriate. It puts the issue squarely where it is: an interpersonal mode of relating between both individuals and groups. As such it has an established intrapsychic core which is rooted in both the conscious and unconscious of each of us. Historically, in its psychological sense, it incorporates much of what has been labeled as defense mechanisms or, a term which I prefer, security operations.

We politicize continually in the context of daily living in our dealing with our fellows -- for better or worse it is always with us. Not only is it a part of our interaction with the external world, it is a central element of the world within. It is reflected in our dreams, our fantasies, our ideation, and stylistically it appears in the myths and folklore of each culture. In the personal sense it is desirable to eliminate it whenever possible, to be consciously aware of using it when we do, and to confine it to ethical goals.

I trust that it is evident that I am not questioning either the utility or the validity of the structural definition. The structural construct has been well established and although my political science associates assure me that it is peculiarly recalcitrant to definition, a sort of will-of-the-wisp that as soon as it is confined confounds itself with exceptions, we all know, at least vaguely, what we are talking about. I am not certain that I can make the same claims, modest as they are, for the functional definition as appropriated by psychology, but most certainly it is worth our study.

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I would also like to make one other disclaimer. I am emphatically not suggesting that we can extrapolate from the individual to the national or international. This has been an error that has consistently been made by psychology and psychoanalysis and is the product of their isolation from the other social sciences. I am suggesting that we all put together our knowledge, our experience and whatever expertise we may have. I am saying that none of us, in our respective disciplines, have anything like a full answer -- a position that I assume would be faulted by few if any here.

In understanding the politics of a nation, the role of the individual, and I am referring here to the national, not only the national who governs, has been consistently underplayed. It is only of late years that psychology (a term I shall use for convenience, I also would include psychiatry and psychoanalysis) and political science have begun to recognize the relevance of the individual, in the collective sense to the political course of a nation. The individual is the product of many forces: biological, social, political, religio-ethical and, of course, the interpersonal. Under this last I include the family, both nuclear and extended and, if I may expand it beyond its usually accepted confines, those significant others who play a determinant role in the development of the child into an adult.

My impression at the moment is that the study of the individual per se, other than the national leader, is of extremely limited utility in understanding a nation's politics. This would certainly appear to be true for complex, modernized societies. Small tribal groups may be an exception. It seems to me that particularly in large societies, such as the United States, which encompass many of diverse ethnic and religious origin, we can learn little.

We can, however, learn a great deal about the politics of a nation if that nation has a relatively consistent common pattern of bringing up its young, if there is a traditional core which is still actively maintained. Thus although at present I see little to be gained by studying the individual as a discrete unit, I see a great deal to be gained by studying the various modes of interpersonal interaction, the political infrastructure of the family.

For the past several years I have been engaged in a study of the Vietnamese and there are several present at this meeting who have been instrumental in supporting this project. I am not attempting a statement of national character, an endeavor far beyond the scope of my research, and a concept in which I find I have increasingly diminished faith. I am attempting an investigation into certain psycho-dynamic structures in Vietnamese personality which occur with sufficient frequency to warrant generalization into possible ethnic patterns.

As these have evolved I have been struck with the similarities between the forces that operate within the Vietnamese family and the forms of political interaction that seem to operate on the national and regional level in Vietnam; the internal political dynamic appears to have a particular relevance for the external political scene. The interpersonal styles and the modes of relatedness which are found within the home, and the manner in which family members interact with one another, insofar as they reflect

commonly held cultural patterns, tend to be transposed on to the political arena. Conversely, patterns of political style, the ways in which a polity interacts within itself and with others, as well as the concepts it has of people and governance tends to be an extension of that which was learned in the home -- which is, of course, man's first and primary community. Thus not only the ways in which politics are conducted, but the primary and usually unquestioned statement of what is considered the valid domain of politics has natal roots. These roots, their implication for the internalized assumption of what is the field of valid political operation, the their parameters (which vary from society to society) have an implacable strength. Although they are always modified by exposure to experiences not covered in the home, by the exigencies of the historical moment, by the influence of new and changing ideas arising both within the society and external to it and by the impact of personalities and unforeseen conditions, the primary base exerts a powerful, continuing influence. My hypothesis is that this base can be defined and that its extension from family to nation can be traced.

I further believe that unless the structure and interactive patterns of the family are understood, we cannot fully understand either the political structure or the interactive patterns of a nation. Without this data I think that we end up with a two-dimensional picture of what is a three dimensional phenomenon. One then tends to see national politics as a discrete operation, a skill learned in adulthood. Rather it is a continuum: its preparation begins in childhood, it is expanded in adolescence, intensely accelerated in young adulthood and eventually matured in one's later years. A polity which is antithetical to a nation's teaching or its young is eventually doomed to failure. A revolutionary jump may introduce an entirely new dimension in political organization and philosophy, but it must remain consistent in basic essentials with certain crucial values that have been ingrained in a society's perspective of itself. For example, this accounts for the dramatic success of Ho Chi Minh and Mao Tse Tung (as well as all other successful innovators). Their revolutionary statements have always been consonant with not only the primary values of the people, but in accord with the elementary interpersonal dynamics which were a central ingredient of every Vietnamese and Chinese child's early learning.

It is conceivable that this might also bear on the unique style in which these nations deal with other nations, although on this level one can speak with far less assurance inasmuch as the communal pattern of other nations might well tend to precipitate new, unrehearsed political styles in the first. After all, man is malleable and most certainly can become that which he was not taught to be in his earlier years.

This approach, I have reason to believe, can be specifically applied to Vietnam, a country which, although it is embarked on a transitional phase, still operates out of a traditional base. It specifically applies to those who determine its politics today because most, in their youth, were brought up in the traditional manner. Thus Vietnam meets the test of sufficient homogeneity to warrant a study of the applicability of this hypothesis.

The Vietnamese family must be seen within its full cultural context. It is one foundational element within a triad, the two other dimensions being the village and the religio-ethical complex upon which both are based. Traditionally they functioned as a unified whole, an integrated and essentially harmonious blend which provided a solid substrata that gave substance and meaning to life. They served as a unity against which the choreography of individual existence could be firmly molded and confidently predicted. When it operated well, it did so without discord. It was one of the most impressive amalgams of structure and function that mankind has known. Although the Buddhist-Taoist-Confucianist religio-ethical system was imported, as with all effective and enduring systems it was a psychological fit and was modified to conform to the nature of the people. Of the three, Confucianism was and is the most influential and it was Confucianism, with its emphasis upon filial piety, hierarchal alliances, proper conduct, personal responsibility and role assignment that had the greatest impact upon government, both in content and in man's relationship to ruler, father, ancestor, community and to his fellow man.

The political structure, the styles of interaction within that structure and the specific forms of political conduct arose from this triadic base. And although the irresistible tide of modernization and the devastation of the war has had both an erosive and expansive effect, these remain the core elements which determine human conduct, social structure and government.

Within this triad, however, it is the family which is the primary point of contact. Culture and society are abstractions. It is the family which is the first and most important interpreter of these abstractions and it is they who are the primary transmittal agents for the culture. In Vietnam, the structural linearity of the family was, in microcosm, a replica of the authoritative pattern, the code of rights and privileges, and the interpersonal operants of the external world. Therefore not only was the family itself a product of community and nation; in turn it perpetuated the system and prepared the young to fit into it. Although this is an universal assignment of families everywhere, Vietnam and Sinic societies in general added a vertical, structural, integrated sameness which is not the condition in most western nations.

The central consideration within the Vietnamese family for the political scene is the nature of authority and the power structure. The content of this structure and the conflicts that it engenders, both within the psyche of the participants and in their relationship to each other is of profound significance and is the origin of much that we see reenacted in the broader panorama of national life. Moreover it is a central dimension of the self image, and the personal identity of most, if not all Vietnamese. As such, it has far reaching consequences in terms of the manner and style in which they deal with one another in adulthood, and the inner convictions with which they carry out their assignments.

We are all familiar with the traditional role of the Vietnamese male, his perogatives and his responsibilities. Most are less aware, however, of the burden that this represents, and the psychological conflicts that this creates. The Vietnamese man inherits, simply by virtue of being male and adult, a position of great statutory advantage. Within the family he has, if he chooses to exercise it, almost unlimited authority. This is established by the culture and supported by the society. The father's authority is

unquestioned and exacting. Not only is it acceptable that he be an autocrat, he has the responsibility to be so. It is a lonely role and although the society demands it, many are not adequate to it and therefore do it badly. Most, in all societies, see it as a position of great advantage and in many obvious respects it is indeed that -- and I shall certainly not add to the voluminous literature in this area. But few recognize the burden that it carries, the inner uncertainties that it uncovers about oneself to oneself, the melange of doubts that it calls forth.

Consciously most men cherish it. In a world of insecurity it provides at least one anchor that is not eviscerated by either performance or intent. It is assigned, accepted and one has only to grow to adulthood, marry and bear children to achieve the power and mastery that automatically is conferred. Yet subconsciously it is an awesome burden indeed. Although the young male grows with the knowledge that his familiar role is predetermined and in preparation he carefully observes the manner of authority that his models provide, at a particular juncture in life he is catapulted into a decision-making position that few in any society are qualified to assume. And inasmuch as most Vietnamese marry young, they tend to be in the midst of their own identity crisis.¹ Traditionally there was a period of preparation, for the young Vietnamese remained in his parent's home for at least the first year. And although most Vietnamese women, in fact most oriental women in the cultures which demand this, describe the experience as excruciatingly painful and torturous because of the exploitation by the mother-in-law and their relegation to the role of servant, it did provide a breaking-in period for the young

¹ The identity crisis, as defined by Erik Erikson, is a culturally determined phenomenon. In western societies it occurs during late adolescence and early adulthood, and is a searching and frequently tumultuous experience. There are societies however where the transition to adulthood is a smooth and essentially uneventful experience in which one's definition of oneself and a developing sense of sameness and continuity gradually unfolds without stress. This is particularly true for the traditional, postfigurative cultures where the lives of the fathers are essentially replicated in the lives of the sons. I assume that in the past this was the case in Vietnam. Except perhaps in the most isolated villages, it is not so now, and it will not be for the foreseeable future. Moreover, the chronological age at which it occurs is also determined by the culture. Inasmuch as the physical break with the family in Vietnam (meaning the establishment of one's own household) now occurs in the early 20's for the men and the late teens and early twenties for the woman, I am rather arbitrarily placing the identity crisis at this age, and should further research require a revision of this hypothesis I should be quite willing to review my thinking. Concomitantly, it should be noted that the adolescent turmoil that is characteristic of western societies is far less pronounced in Vietnam. When it occurs the hostility is directed against the society, particularly those in political power, rather than against the parent. On the whole, however, it appears evident that the identity crisis in Vietnam is less a factor than in our society, which leads one to believe that passing into adulthood still has traditional roots which are respected and followed

husband. However, this practice has become less and less common and at present most young Vietnamese establish their own home immediately upon marriage.

The absolute authority granted by the society to the Sinic male has been well documented elsewhere, and does not need elaboration here. What is important for our purposes is the realization that it is far from an unmixed blessing. Moreover it is fascinating to see how rapidly it is discarded when the young Vietnamese find themselves in a society that does not accept a dichotomy of authority, such as for the Vietnamese students in the United States who marry here. Their relationships seem quite as equal as that of any young American couple. Certainly the wives have no difficulty disagreeing with their husbands in public, and family decisions are worked out jointly. This would strongly indicate that the traditional roles are an unwanted burden to both men and women alike -- not the women alone. It is not enough to say that their more egalitarian relationship is simply an accommodation to a new set of values, or that were they to continue in the traditional mold they would incur the disapproval of their fellow American students. The open give and take between them is far too natural to be merely an act for a specific audience. It was their mode of relating and clearly it was a relief to be out from under the restrictive male-female role assignments. It is probably one of the important reasons why many oriental young people who study and marry abroad are reluctant to return to their homeland. It is not simply the affluence offered elsewhere, it is the equality and the freedom of action and expression that is not yet available in their home community. Moreover, were they to return they would be subject to the direct authority of their parents. The conflict between duty and responsibility to country and family, and personal freedom and independence is dramatically insistent.

Nevertheless, the father in the Vietnamese family is in a peculiarly complex position. It is one which leads to a great deal of inner conflict in reference to the way he perceives himself and his actual abilities, in comparison with the authority he is assigned by the culture and the capabilities this authority implies that he should have.

The father is the head of the household. Within his own domain he is expected by the society to be thoroughly knowledgeable not only about customs and rites, which can be and are learned, but also about how to live an effective life, how to deal with others, how to conduct his own business, how to achieve respect and position, to make correct decisions, etc. In other words, by virtue of the position the culture assigns to him he is expected to have an expertise in life that few can possibly have. Moreover, he is not just responsible for himself, he bears a primary responsibility for his immediate family -- and by immediate family I mean not only his own wife and children, but his parental family as well.

At the same time, he is far from his own master. As long as his father is living, he remains a child. By that I refer to the fact that he is never out from under the threat, if not the actual fact of discipline. His decisions are constantly subject to review not only by his father, but by his mother as well. And his mother, although her designated authority is relatively minimal, is a person to be conjured with. She is a most potent

force indeed, and her views are of imperative consequence. She may not express them directly, but she worked through her husband and many are the Vietnamese children who have awakened at night to hear their mother haranguing her husband, for hours on end, as to what he should do and the position he should take toward the children, including the adult children. This was particularly emphasized by the Vietnamese students in the United States, who were less restrained in reporting the parental interplay. They vividly remember awakening at night and hearing their mothers lecturing their fathers, or their grandmothers their grandfathers until the men, desperate for sleep and unable any longer to endure the juggernaut of their wives insurances agreed to whatever they was demanding. It was the impression of the students that as they remembered it, eventually the men always gave in.

It is expected, in fact it is demanded, that the father consult his elders on all important decisions that affect the family, and this can be construed very broadly indeed. Although this was much more stringently observed in the past, it remains a decisive factor in the lives of the young adult males today. For example, all the Vietnamese students at American universities whom I met had married here. Each went through elaborate stratagems to obtain their parents' approval. The parents took this responsibility extremely seriously. Not only did the parents of the bride and groom meet, but whenever possible they had some friend or acquaintance in the United States act as their surrogate in evaluating the qualifications of the husband or wife to be. Moreover, in several instances, mock marriage ceremonies were conducted by the parents in Vietnam. When I asked the students what they would have done if their parents had withheld their approval, they threw up their hands in dismay. Clearly they had worried about the outcome very much and had not wanted to think about what they would have done had the marriage been forbidden.

One student leader, whom I interviewed intensively on my first visit to Vietnam, had married and had a child when I returned a year later. An older informant, who knew him well had told me earlier of the marriage and said with the unquestioning justification of an elder, that his father had directed him to marry in order to reduce his political activity following his being imprisoned. When I questioned the younger informant about it, the following dialogue ensued:

"During the time I was imprisoned I thought deeply, and after I was released obeying my parents, I got married. Our marriage took place the following week, about 10 days after my release. Well, our wedding ceremony was quite happy although we did not have the means available to organize a big or solemn marriage ceremony. But, as you can guess, we were very very happy."

Following session:

(When we were last talking about your marriage you said that your father told you to get married after you got out of prison. Tell me about how that happened.)

"This is very natural in Vietnam, psychologically all parents would like their sons to get married while they are still alive. Another point is that I am a man of many activities, so my parents wanted me to get married to curb my activities and thereby lessen the dangers

to me. And another very common point, psychologically is that my parents are growing old and they wanted to have a grandchild to carry the family name. These are reasons from my parents and they were easy to understand. There is another reason coming from my heart -- while I was in prison I often thought that perhaps in life there is no one who loves you more than your own lover. And nobody can sacrifice for you more than your lover. I hope you can understand my philosophy of life that you asked me about once during our meetings at the Pagoda. I repeat once again, that it is also the deep feelings of a prisoner while he is alone, he thinks of his own lover, and his only hope is to re-unite and live together with her."

Later -- same session:

"Let me return to my own feeling. After a time in prison, I felt more strongly about having a family. For this reason when I told you about my parents' advising me to get married, I could find plenty of reasons to decline their advice if I so wished. During my lifetime I am fortunate that on every occasion, my parents left me free to decide for myself. And I think that is a good thing for a young man. I think parents should try their best to guide their children, but let them be free to decide. I think I will treat my own children that way. As you know in a poor country like our own, always full of threatening challenges, if the educators and teachers, as well as parents, fail to bring up the children so that they can make decisions in challenging situations, then I believe it would be difficult for the country to withstand. For this reason, I can tell you that if I had power, I would always be against intellectual slavery coming from anywhere, anytime -- even if this slavery comes from China or, I must apologize to you, the United States. This slavery of the mind does not produce anything more than bowing your head and obeying orders from others, and therefore is not worthy of man. And I think in such a country like ours, which is in need of development, all young men should have such a spirit. They should try to decide their own lives. Even though they are religious people, maybe Christians or Buddhist they should never rely on the leader of the religion. I think that while we still have such young people, our destiny is in our hands, but if we have a strong belief in our religion then our lives depend on our leader, the creator of our religion -- let us say to Jesus Christ or Sakyamuni Buddha. So I can say roughly that my marriage depends 60% on me."

The ambivalence that this young man felt about his father's directive is evident. As a member of the new generation he is aware that the decision whether to marry or not should rightfully be his. As an educated man he was fully knowledgeable that in most western societies the young people make this decision for themselves, and thus we see in his conversation the attempt to rationalize his father's influence. The conflict within him is too great, however, and he resented the parental authority that was exercised -- and that he was forced to submit to. He then attempts to make it seem that this was his decision as well, that his father was only concerned with his son's best interests, that he was deeply in love with the girl, and he ends with the statement that his parents have never forced him to do anything that he did not want to do.

The authority of the father over the adult child can go much further than this. The traditional father could beat his sons, and instances were reported to me of fathers who beat their sons who themselves were 50 years of age or older. Although the physical act is now rare, the father's role as absolute authority, if he wishes to exercise it, remains.

Although the authority remains in the hands of the elder, in practice it is exercised less and less frequently. For the most part it is confined to ceremonial occasions, such as marriages, rites for the dead, major decisions about education or vocation, ancestral observances, etc. The form is maintained, but the content is minimized. Essentially this is accomplished by the father's looking the other way. After all, he cannot be blamed for that which he does not know. In essence, it is a *modus vivendi* in which both fathers and sons collaborate and for the most part it is effective. For example, the young student leader did not feel that it was necessary that he inform either his father or mother of his revolutionary activities. He reasoned that they would only worry about it and that it would cause them anguish. Therefore, as a good son it was his responsibility to protect them from the knowledge and he saw it as an act of filial respect. In fact, it was not until his son was imprisoned that the father knew anything about his politics. It was my impression that even then he had no idea how radical they had been and how major a role his son had played in the Buddhist anti-government movement. Although my informant's brother, who himself was involved in similar movements, and his sisters knew about it, none of them felt constrained to report it to the parents. Fortunately, his parents lived in another city and apparently did not read the newspapers, because on a number of occasions his activities were extensively reported. The separation of families and communities has also, as in the case of this young man, made for greater independence on the part of the children because being geographically separated, it is much easier to maintain one's own counsel.

The central point here is that independence on the part of the children is a process that may be extremely long delayed. In certain crucial respects, filial piety demands that the child defer to the father as long as he is alive. Moreover, there are specific deferences due specific family members such as the older brother and sister and, to varying degrees, aunts and uncles -- and of course the grandparents if they are still living. Although the duties due these others, particularly the older brother, are observed with less conscientiousness today, the moment of becoming one's own master may be deferred for an inordinate length of time.

This deals only with the reality, the reality of accession to becoming the head of one's own family, in fact rather than assignment. Until the elders die, ultimate authority rests in their hands. Up to that point, although the younger father has the responsibility of authority, he and everyone in the household is thoroughly aware that he is only one link in the chain of command and that if the situations warrants, he can be overruled. Incidentally, this also includes his conduct toward his own children. If he is too strict or overbearing, or conversely too lenient, his parents may intervene.

But there is another reality -- the reality of the father's own image of himself as an authority. Although upon the death of the elders the son becomes their replacement, the fact of his status is not necessarily translated into his own concept of himself as the ultimate authority. Because of the extremely long period of apprenticeship and subordination, there is substantial evidence to indicate that subconsciously the males never see themselves as fully mature adults. In other words, within their subconscious minds they never quite replace the fathers; they never become the equals of their elders regardless of age and position. This is further determined by the Confucian system of hierarchal stature, at the top of which is the emperor, or his equivalent in contemporary terms, and everyone -- father, village elder, magistrate or whomever, is subordinate to him.

To demonstrate the potency that this factor holds as it interweaves within the psychic and ideational structure of the Vietnamese, we might look at a transitory delusion that was reported by an older informant. Born in a village, son of a tenant farmer, through intellectual attainment, fortuitous circumstance and while he managed to get to France when he was sixteen where he obtained a university education. While there he became deeply involved in one of the left-wing international political movements that were fermenting in France during the 1920's and '30's, and upon his return to Vietnam he assumed an important position as the leader of the underground forces of a political party that for a time effectively challenged the Communist organization. His life has continued to be devoted to political activity and he is a respected senior person in the peace faction in Vietnam today. The delusion that followed occurred when he was imprisoned by Diem in Poulo Condore, the notorious prison island, under conditions of extreme hardship and deprivation.

"I had twenty-one days of madness. It was by contagion. Eleven of us were locked up in a chamber for those sentenced to death. Ngo Dinh Nhu wanted to kill us by a slow process. We had a very limited diet of several hundred calories a day. Everybody was skeletonized to the point where your skin hung on your bones. A Chinese underwent a sudden seizure because he had killed the lover of his wife. On that day he said that he had paid enough, that he had washed away his crime and Ngo Ding Diem had to free him because he had already paid his debt. He became crazed in that manner. In the whole cell there was an atmosphere of collective frenzy. I was the most sensible (at a later date amended to his being the most affected). Two days afterward I underwent the same madness. During those twenty-one days I saw fantastic things -- above all, in general cosmology and even on literary questions. I thought that I had become extremely lucid. There came to mind all the poetry of the Tang Dynasty. I recited the poems by heart. I made a critique of them, as if I were lecturing to students, indicating what was badly written and why. And then, like a professor, I made a thorough-going critique of all the great theories that operated in the world and even of the great religions. This is something which is very difficult to explain to Westerners, but in the Vietnamese view there are two words: one word signifies the European religion and the other word the Asian way -- 'Tao.'

"I saw myself in a great room with all of the masters of religion, and I delivered a lecture to them in which I explained that

they had made their religions into dogmas, which as a result served as life belts such as those used for children so that they can swim. I told them they were slaves of their own dogmas, which stopped them from really knowing how to swim -- and in particular I considered Marxism to be one of those dogmas. Then I addressed myself to a Marxist audience, telling them that they are greater religious fanatics than all of the others, and the great problem for them was to get rid of all these dogmas so as to swim better. This was the speech that I made when I was mad.

"I also had a vision of people being able to dance in space. A boat arrived one day, and I was told that although I was still a prisoner, I would nevertheless be able to have a vacation. My comrades in jail took their packs on their backs, and jumped into the boat. I refused to go into the boat; it was too vulgar a means of transportation for me. If one takes the boat one has to go back to earth, and that's not so good, and see one's family and that's not good. For myself, I wanted to see the great builders of religions, and taking a boat would not help me to do that. I don't know how it happened, but a fairy appeared. She asked me to get on a dragon. The dragon arose at a very great speed. When we reached the necessary speed, I realized that one could leave the dragon and then if one wished, return onto his back; upon reaching the necessary speed, one could dismount and remount the dragon. That's how I got to this meeting-place of the great saints and founders of religion where I gave this speech which I told you about."

(In the delusion about the dragon, who were the people who were in the room?)

"It's a very long thing, because the dream lasted 20 days, and there is a continuity between my internal life and this dream. In my childhood, I listened to a story, told by somebody who was nearly an apostle. I forgot this story for perhaps 40 years. All of a sudden it came to me in a dream. I got up and I wrote it down and it became the most celebrated story in Vietnam of the past 40 years. I want to tell you this story. On a road there was a small pagoda, guarded by a little monk, a hermit. This monk belonged to the Maytraya sect. One day two travellers came, who were discussing the doctrine of the monk and in some fashion, they criticized the monk's attitude. This criticism was overheard by a lizard (a ghecco). The lizard listened and came to the conclusion that the monk's habit of beating on drums while he recited prayers was a mistaken practice and was simply superstition. It would not take the monk to Nirvana. The monk had vowed that after the 1,000th prayer, he would mount a pyre to be burned. The lizard decided that come what may, he must stop the monk from burning himself to death. As a result the lizard drank the oil on which the wick for the lamp floated. It was in the olden days, and that was the way you got your light. Since there was no oil, the lamp went out, and the monk couldn't recite his prayers. At the end of several days the monk noticed the actions of the lizard and became very angry. He struck the lizard and killed him. In that way he was able to recite his 1,000th prayer, and he mounted the pyre. That same day, the souls of the two presented themselves before the Buddhist court. The Buddha said that the monk has committed a sin in killing the

lizard, and would have to pay by being reincarnated a second time. He then had the saints distribute the ashes of the monk all over the world, and they became millions of human beings. Each grain became a human being and tried to complete the search for Buddhistic perfection. As for the lizard, the Buddha told him 'If you want to save a man you also have to respect his liberty. If you succeed in saving all these men who have emerged as a result of the sowing of the embers, then you will achieve Nirvana.' This of course creates a problem which remains unsolved: how can the lizard succeed in saving these men? Not by means of dictatorship, but by means of liberty. The story stops there -- in 1952.

"It was in 1959 that I saw the end of this story in the other dream. Formerly there were a number of different tableaux. But when I refused to get on the boat as I told you, the dragon came, and told me that he was the lizard in the story. I had posed the problem to him of saving millions of people by means of liberty, and he had come to the point where he could resolve that problem. He asked if I remembered the novel, *The Trip to the West*. This was the novel in which the bonze Huyen Tsang was felled in turn by the monkey and the pig, an ogre and a horse, which was a dragon transformed into a horse. As a result of help from these creatures, the dragon said he was able to come to the West. He told me that from the moment at which he could not solve this problem himself, he decided to do what the horse-dragon had done. He would bring me before a great meeting where I could explain my ideas, and in bringing me there, he would have contributed to the process of saving humanity -- by giving me the opportunity. I then mounted the dragon and saw myself flying at an incredible speed. It was then that I saw this assembly appear, of which I spoke to you. This was a sort of congress which lasted 20 days. It is very difficult for me to tell you everything that took place at this congress.

"First, in the presidium there was Krishna, then Sacumoonie, that is, Buddha, Moses, Confucius, Lao Tzu, then Jesus, Mohammed, and Marx. The first to speak was Marx, in order to recite his accusations against me. He said that I had followed him for 10 years, had learned all the secrets of his doctrine, and in the end had betrayed him by leaving him. Because I had learned atheism through him, I no longer believed in Krishna, nor Mohammed, nor any of the others. Now, I was no longer afraid of the gods and, as a result of that, Marx said I merited severe punishment. Then there was a fairy who said that I was really a true monkey, that I lived with her in a veritable tree-top garden of Eden. At this time, it was almost the end of the world. Consequently all the saints who lived in Heaven had to descend to earth in a supreme effort to save humanity. If there should be world war, all of humanity would be destroyed. In that case, with the help of the saints, humanity would have had a better way of living than the Garden of Eden, because they would have had the help of the saints; terrestrial life would be better than life in paradise itself. I, who was really the monkey, would remain in paradise completely isolated. That is why the fairies had invited me to come to earth. Thus the fairies recognized some responsibility

for my presence on earth. If I had committed a crime against the presidium, it is our fault, the fairy said. The fairies therefore asked the presidium to allow me to present my case. After the fairy's speech, the congress met to decide whether or not to allow me to state my case. They voted against it, saying that if they let me speak, I would criticize everybody and that was why I couldn't speak before the congress. But outside of this meeting, I was able to assemble a meeting of those religions which have no dogma; I considered religions that have a specific name as religions that have a dogma; I considered the science, philosophy and poetry in my internal life as religions without dogma. So I was able to unite all of the religions without dogma into a congress. That is why, as I explained to you before, these people were tied up in life belts, and while they thought they were saving themselves, they were really stopped from saving themselves. What I meant is that among ourselves, those of us who are without dogma can understand each other much more easily. There have been religious wars, but here never was a war between poets!

(In this dream, you dreamed about yourself as a monkey. This is a symbol. What comes to your mind about this monkey?)

"It was the fairy who said I was a monkey. But since you ask, I will explain to you the origin of this vision. As you know, among the Chinese there is a science known as physiognomy.. This science is concerned with the way a man's features are shaped, the way he carries himself. They classify people according to the categories of the tiger, the horse, the rabbit, the monkey, all the animals including cats and dogs. When I was four years old, one of these physiognomists said I was the monkey type. When I was thirty-one years old and in prison, another physiognomist said he same thing. The third time, two years later, a third physiognomist made the same diagnosis. The first time I didn't believe it, but the last two physiognomists were Marxists. That struck me and it stayed in my head. I belong to the monkey type. According to Chinese mythology, the monkey belongs to the intelligent type. It is from the monkey that man came, because a monkey exercises the intelligence to dominate all the other animals."

(The Lizard in this story was also the dragon that later came to transport you. Is there a symbolic characteristic to the lizard?)

"The lizard belongs to the same class as the Chinese dragon: a reptile with four feet, and plates and scales on his body. The dragon is a matter of adaptation to external circumstances. He can be small enough to live in a little bottle of water; or when atmospheric conditions permit, he can become so big so as to reach the clouds. The lizard can climb a vertical wall, and he can also walk on the ceiling without falling. In difficult conditions, he still manages to hang on. He eats everything, including insects which are dangerous to man."

(And the dragon, what characteristics does the dragon have?)

"He is the chief of all the animals. He's very happy with very little, because he doesn't eat; he only drinks water. I must tell you that the dragon is in some way the totem of the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese say

that they have descended from two parents: the father is the dragon; the mother is a fairy. The dragon represents force, activity, and energy, and the mother, the fairy, represents intelligence and feeling. Clairvoyance also is represented by the fairy.

"I was crazed for twenty-one days. I saw so many things which were all mixed up, and I haven't managed to unscramble them."

Dreams and delusions are culture-bound: they are limited both by the nature of the culture and its boundaries, and the breadth and particularity of one's individual experiences within that culture. Thus, this delusion and the subsequent myth that is recalled during its telling, reveals much that is typically Vietnamese. Only a Vietnamese could produce a fantasy as richly deployed in Sino-Vietnamese symbols as this. Thus we find contiguous religious, political and philosophical systems meshed into a congress of the gods -- a heavenly presidium; the symbolism of the animistic cosmology; the mystical interweavings of God, spirit and man; the oppressiveness of dogma, the burden that is imposed on creator and follower alike. Further, we have a lucid and exact statement of those qualities that are considered essential by the Vietnamese in their dealings with both God and man: one needs the intelligence of the monkey; the adaptability, perseverance and self-protection of the lizard; the force, activity, energy and capacity for enduring deprivation of the dragon, and a mother, the fairy, who supports through her intelligence, feeling and perception but who can only intercede in one's behalf -- she cannot win over the power of the gods. And it is through reason and logic that one deals with authorities, never through recourse to emotional outburst.

Furthermore, and specifically to the point that is being made, we have here a statement of the traditional hierarchical structure between God-father and man, and one man's attempt to challenge the power of those ultimate authorities which are eternally present for the Vietnamese. Although he strives to assert himself as their equal in entering their council, the challenge is unsuccessful, for they retain the right of final determination and there is no recourse beyond their decision. Although defeated in establishing himself as both equal and teacher he has recourse to other powers which are his own: science, philosophy and poetry. The gods, and by extrapolation the fathers and ancestors who sit among them whom they also represent, refuse any criticism. They deny any challenge and allow nothing to intrude into their image of omniscience and omnipotence, an insight into one motivational element beneath the Confucian doctrine of heavenly mandate that maintains the inviolability of father, emperor, and God. And last, we see that even those who are fathers and grandfathers themselves, as is our informant, never achieve the status that only full equality can establish. Although he has not only the prestige that is automatically conferred upon an elder, but also a record of personal achievement through his own endeavors as well, he can never rise to parity with those whom the culture has designated as superior. Little wonder that one dedicates one's life to the search for Buddhahood, for only thus can one find full manhood and freedom and cast off the shackles of subservience.

II

A further, and most important consideration in evaluating the dynamics within the Vietnamese family, is the position that the culture takes in reference to the emotions that are considered acceptable and those that are rejected. There is, in fact, a rigorous censorship of behavior, feeling and ideation and the code of proper conduct essentially includes all areas of mental life. All of my informants, without exception, described their parents as strict. Although some obviously chafed under the restrictions, there was also a noticeable sense of pride in their statement -- the implication being that the more they had to toe the mark, the more the indication of interest and concern on the part of the parents. Thus although the socialization process is a rigorous one indeed, on a conscious level at least it is considered a sign of good parenting. To round out the picture, it should be noted that on another level there is a great permissiveness on the part of the parent. In matters such as toilet training, eating schedule, sleeping patterns, unsupervised time away from home, access to friends, etc. a great deal of freedom is allowed and restraints are minimal.

Central of our discussion, however, is the fact that hostility on the part of the child toward the parent is absolutely forbidden. This is stringently enforced from an extremely early age and I saw examples of anger deflected away from the parent among two year olds. Not only is the expression of anger denied, but in later life there is a suppression of the memory of anger -- in other words, except under the most intense provocation in which the child was obviously in the right and the parent in the wrong, none of my informants could remember being angry at their parents. Moreover, this further extends to the adult child's perception of the parent. None could remember their mother being angry at them, and only two could recall their father's being angry, and this was immediately excused as the product of an unusually provocative situation. Thus not only is hostility on the part of the child toward the parent disavowed, the awareness of parental hostility is not allowed into conscious awareness. The parents themselves, however, are quite free in admitting that they get angry at their children, and that they chastise and spank them with considerable frequency. Thus although it is quite permissible to punish the children, it is not permissible for the child to be aware that the parent was angry -- at least not in adult child's recall of parental conduct.

Although hostility, both as act and emotion is forbidden it does not, of course, disappear. It is dissociated from conscious awareness and repressed but it not only lingers, it ferments. It is given no opportunity for expression and therefore there is no drainage. Even fantasy, the wonderful internal drama that we all cherish and that serves to extirpate the sins, real or imagined, that are committed upon us is denied. The result is that the hostility that is buried is deflected on to other authorities, surrogates that are considered less dangerous, toward whom the culture permits expression. And foremost among these are political leaders, political parties and political positions with which one disagrees.

The result seems to be an absolutistic stance toward authorities in general. Because hostility within the parental home is so firmly forbidden, the emotion goes underground and tends to be translated into a perspective of absolute good and absolute evil. The modifications, the playing with

degrees of good and bad that are permitted by a more permissive society and that eventuate into an internalized psychological evaluation based upon a realistic appraisal of the true nature of the parent and other authorities are denied. Thus one finds a much exaggerated outpouring of emotion, both positive or negative, toward political leaders, making compromise in the political sphere a tenuous operation indeed.

III

One of the basic factors that I found among the Vietnamese and one which is central to this discussion, is that they tend to equate family with nation. By this I mean that in the subconscious of most, the nation is seen as an extension of the family. This meshes comfortably with both the assigned and self-determined roles within the family, the hierarchal authority structure and the Confucian-Taoist Buddhist amalgam that is a determinant basis for the belief and value system - and for personality formation as well - that is found everywhere. Moreover, it has meaning for Vietnamese identity patterns, both national and personal. Although the peasant in the field may not know the name of the president and have no understanding nor interest in national politics, and although his political horizons may not extend beyond the hamlet or village, there is in all a strong sense of Vietnamese-ness. To make this observation more concrete, I should like to present a Thematic Apperception Test response to a picture of a family working in the fields.

"I don't have to think long about this. I am beginning to depict the scene. First of all, it gives me the feeling of a warm, family atmosphere. They have come from afar. They are settled here in a house they have built with their own hands on vacant land. Their house is situated by the side of a mountain. This is not a large house, but large enough to provide shelter for a family with husband and wife and a couple of children. They have come here to settle their lives. Perhaps because they want to run away from a certain situation, or there is not enough space in their native country. First of all, the husband and wife love one another dearly. After having discussed it together they decided to come and settle here. Perhaps, the first child was born in their native land--that child was the one who is holding a stick while tending the sheep. He is a nice, obedient son who loves his parents. His name is--I would call him Nguyen Hieu Binh.² When they come here they start to clear the land for cultivation; and through perseverance and hard work they are successful in creating for themselves large and productive plots of land. Before long, the acreage they cleared is quite large. Of course, right after their arrival here they must cultivate the plants that would give quick crops; plants that will bear in about a month, or two to three months, for example, potatoes, tomatoes, or beans, etc. After that they decide to plant those plants that can give them fruit after a longer period. Through their efforts they have created beautiful tracts of land. And those plants having three leaves that I see in the picture -- I wonder whether they are rice plants. I'm certain they are not. In this picture I do not know what kind of plants they are.

"Daily they go to work together in the fields. Their first and beloved son, Binh, always accompanies them there. The boy helped them in minding the sheep. He is an industrious boy. He has in-

² The name actually chosen included the informant's own surname.

herited this quality from his father. Before long, after they're settled, they brought forth another child. This time it is a lovely daughter. The wife has to carry along her baby, because there is no one to take care of the baby at home. They live in happiness as the years go by . . .

"Now we would continue our story. I have talked about the new daughter of their family. I haven't named her yet. I would call her Nguyen Ai Chu. Chu means perfection. And Ai means love -- perfect love. Ai Chu. This baby added much to their happiness; truly they had a happy life. I'd like to make the comment that they did not settle in a densely populated area. They enjoyed life through their own family rather than through neighbors and relatives. We must understand that this is a cold country. In the evening wet clouds cover the mountain tops like smoke. The wife takes a liking to such a landscape, and this wide, open landscape also fits well with the independent nature of the husband. It is understood that they have led a peaceful life. A long time has passed. Perhaps it has been 4 or 5 years since they first settled here. Maybe sometimes they have a feeling of nostalgia for their native land, or maybe their native country is too far away. Or could it be that they considered it as a second country so that they don't need to return home, as in the case of a wanderer looking for work? They have labored and built a vast tract of productive land.

"At the foot of the mountain -- where they first came, it is certain that there are many vast and green pastures for the flock of sheep to graze on. And it is certain that this environment has brought to them a kind of contentment, and the soil has created in them a deep love. Perhaps that was the tract of land they had been longing for so long, and it was only now that they had it. Mornings and afternoons they tended the soil carefully. believe that from now on the soil will produce food for them. And happiness, too; especially happiness. I would say that the concept of worshipping is not clearly established in their minds. But I think that they still pray. Because in this environment it's certain that at night time, when they gather together, they would express gratitude by offering their thanks to some supreme Being for his help.

"I would say that this couple does not have an ambitiously enterprising spirit, it does not have a spirit that takes risks. This family does not entertain the thought that someday they would become large farmers, owning as much land as the big farmers in the U.S. But the man is likely to have some thoughts that he will later on become well-to-do. And I also think that they believe that someday they will return to their native village, very proud of what they have achieved.

"As far as education for the child is concerned, it is not thorough at all -- perhaps it is a matter of the father teaching his son what he has learned in his own childhood. This does not mean he is

not concerned with the education of his child.

"I have briefly depicted the setting. A long time after they have settled, many other people come there and settle with them, trade with them, come to their farm to buy; it is quite different from the previous years when the wife had to carry the produce to the market to sell. And it is at this time that they sent their son to a small city for an education. Their son is a good student, and his parents are very satisfied. I imagine that they will build a much larger house equipped with many conveniences. They lived the kind of life they wanted, with enough money to spare to send their son to college. I think the son will become an agricultural engineer, and this son has brought all sorts of mechanical facilities to the farm to greatly expand his parent's enterprise. And the son married one of his classmates.³ I think that the story may end here, although it does not have any absorbing details.

"May I draw my conclusions for you after I have told you the story? I had in mind at least the following points: first, satisfaction for the things I have produced with my own efforts. Second, I'd like to have a happy family. Third, the setting that I have depicted reflects the family atmosphere I wished we had when I was a boy. Fourth, the setting of the Highlands has influenced me, when I depict the story, although I omitted many details. Fifth, the final setting of the son bringing his mechanical know-how to develop his parent's land proved that, in my mind, I wish that my country could have an industrialized agriculture, and industrialization benefitting the education that the more advanced countries abroad have brought to us. Sixth, I pay attention to the children's education that many parents have neglected. I understand that human beings, in olden times, were not more intelligent than they are nowadays, or vice versa. But they progress gradually. Civilization and culture are something that has been accumulated from one generation to another. I told you last Friday that the civilization of mankind has been accumulated through generations and generations. For this reason the people of a later generation, by having rockets going to the moon, do not prove themselves as necessarily more intelligent than people in olden times, such as Socrates. Those are the simple points that I would like to offer to you."

This is a statement of the idealized family, as seen through the eyes of a very intelligent, well educated and vigorous young man. As with all projective responses this is both a personal and a cultural statement. It is autobiographical in that this young man, together with his parents, had to flee his home community because of the war; his father was indifferent to his education and as a result he made his own way, although later partially supported by his family; his family was not devoutly religious, although they conducted the ancestral ceremonies and his mother attended the pagoda as all women of her station did, and he wavered between the need for the protective solace provided by Buddhism and a vague kind of agnostic eclecticism.

3 All said with broad declamatory gestures.

However there are other dimensions to this response which fall within a broader format and are reflective of the culture: the dedication to perseverance and hard work; the family's working together; the elemental devotion to the soil which not only produces food and economic security but love and happiness - the latter emphatically stated; the generational progression of parents caring for the young, and the adult child returning to care for the parents; the nostalgia for the home community and the eventual return to the native village; the ideal of family harmony and affection between parents (neither of which was true for his own parents: his father drank, beat his mother and the children and took a concubine whom he preferred); the obedience of the son, his devotion to his parents and their love for their children; the sense of both isolation and security found within the traditional family; the quiet progression of events and prosperity if the family is in harmony with man and nature and thus observes the mandate of heaven. Furthermore, if all goes well and if they lead an exemplary life, then their industry will prove their virtue and others will be attracted to them. Thus dedication to work and the observance of propriety within the family will lead not only to greater gain, but to friends and social contact as well, thus overcoming the isolation of the nuclear family.

After our informant completes his story, he produces his own evaluation of the data. Although this would be unusual for most, it is not for him; this young man had a searching, analytic mind which demanded closure. In the process he tells us that he knows a great deal that he was not free to reveal in other contexts. He tells of his dreams, fulfilled and unfulfilled; those of a past that was never realized to which he must now resign himself, and those of a future to which he is dedicated and which through hard work and a commitment to his ideals he may attain. He speaks of the satisfaction he experiences in the product of his own effort and, in actual fact, this has been the single most gratifying area of his life thus far; the care-free days of his youth, which is the meaning of his reference to the Highlands; his hope to create for himself in his own future a family of his own in which there is warmth and support.

In defining this longing he then reveals that contrary to his earlier consistent assertions of love within the parental home, as he experienced it, much was lacking. When he says "the setting that I have depicted reflects the family atmosphere I wished we had when I was a boy" he is telling us that we are dealing with the mechanism of suppression rather than repression. He is aware of the hostilities and disaffection within his natal home, but he cannot allow it to come to consciousness except under a situation of unusual stress in which there is an acceptance of such thoughts.

Furthermore, in the process of analyzing his own TAT response, he makes a most important connection: he identifies nation with family. The equating of nation and family is, I believe, relatively

universal among the Vietnamese and is central in understanding the force of their devotion to national movements. For those who actively participate in ideological crusades, and there are a large number who do so, many would seem to be unconsciously fulfilling the doctrine of filial piety. The proper role of the adult son is to care for the parents, to provide for their needs, to revive them when they are ill and to restore or maintain them in a position of respect through which the family will find the deference that is befitting an esteemed present and an illustrious past. Substitute the term "nation" for "family" in the preceding and we find, I believe, one of the dominant motivations behind the politicizing that one finds everywhere.

One of the reasons that there are so many political groups in which collaborative effort is rare and when it does occur is often maintained for so short a time, is probably related to the mixed feelings that the Vietnamese has toward his originating family. One wishes to save them and is enjoined by all of society to do so, but at the same time the personal hostilities that have been so forcibly dissociated produce an equivalent urgency to do them in. This might well explain in part the confusion the foreign observer frequently experiences toward Vietnamese political groups. Although consciously all are completely convinced that theirs is the true answer, it is often extremely difficult to know who is for Vietnam and who is against her. Mother Vietnam (Me Viet Nam) is beset by warring sons representing warring factions, all vying to save her. In the process, Mother Vietnam seems constantly on the verge of being suffocated by the good intentions of her children.

This brings us to another intra-family dynamic, that of sibling rivalry. In the Vietnamese family not only are there defined roles for the children, but the nature of these assignments and the restraints on the expression of natural competitiveness between the children makes for a considerable amount of repressed hostility between them. One of the positions that I found carried the greatest prestige was that of the favorite child. Inasmuch as this statutory advantage or, depending how one regards it, disadvantage, is apparently found everywhere I was scarcely surprised at its appearance. However, I was impressed at the frequency with which it appeared and the force with which it was expressed. Practically every informant, at one point or another, told me that he was the favorite child. When it did not arise spontaneously and I asked about it I can think of only two exceptions, and they said that their parents regarded all equally. I would suggest this as a further motivational dynamic in the formation of multiple, antagonistic political groups. It would appear to be a transference from home to nation; not only is each vying to save the nation but each is competing for the role of the most important and favored offspring.

The political maneuvers within sinoized cultures are perhaps a bit more complicated than elsewhere simply because of the restraints placed upon the open expression of disaffection and the absolute loyalty demanded by the elders. This is not to imply that the system, repressive as it may be, results in the absence of family strife. One need only read Margery Wolf's perceptive account in "The House of Lim" to realize how complex and difficult relationships within the household may become. The politics within the family can be just as disjunctive as those found within wider spheres, and as has been said before, there is justification for the hypothesis that the particular interpersonal strategems found within the home are not only reflective of the society, but in turn are transferred from home to society.

One has to learn somewhere, and the family is the first educational arena for modes of relating. And certainly, within the broad format of a society's institutions, national politics is essentially a network of modes of relating within the context of conceptualized structures. Regardless of cultural origin, we all suffer from an active urgency to recreate and maintain the patterns that we knew as children. Freud designated this as the repetition compulsion and the term, as was true for so many of Freud's observations, was brilliantly chosen.

To return to the interpretation given us by our informant of his TAT response and continuing to use his own equation of family with nation, we find other data which bears examination. In stating that parents have neglected their children's education he is not only referring to an obvious social truth, he is specifying a particular kind of education -- one which would give them the technical knowledge required in today's world. This reference immediately follows his statement as to the need the country has for industrialization. Both are related in his mind and both are criticisms of the existing order. Neither parent nor country have adequately provided for their children's needs, and in not doing so they neglected their own. It is therefore the duty of a proper son to repair the error and rescue the parent. He then follows these critical comments with an apology. He states that he realizes that those of the past were just as intelligent as those of the present (it is interesting to note, however, that he uses Socrates, a figure from the western world, as his example). He acknowledges that progress is slow, that civilization is an accumulation of past and present and that those of previous generations have set the stage for the accomplishments of the present generation. While everything he says is indeed reasonable and accurate, he uses it in the service of filial humility, the deference the younger must always acknowledge towards his elders. All this is very Vietnamese. Our own younger generation expresses similar criticisms of their elders, but one notes that rarely is there an acknowledgement of the role that previous generations have played in making possible the knowledge and opportunities that they have today. Although psychologically, deference to elders may play an important role in our informant's acknowledgement of generational sequence and contribution, it is also true that Vietnamese youth has a far greater awareness of and respect for history.

IV

Inasmuch as I am neither a political scientist, nor a particularly knowledgeable observer of the Vietnamese political scene, there are undoubtedly many here who can draw the implications of these psychological and cultural determinants far more effectively than I. There are, however, some observations which can be made from my perspective as a psychoanalyst which might carry some relevance.

One would expect, and I think that in practice one finds, a good deal of ambivalence within the Vietnamese in their role as an authority within the political sphere. There would probably be a swing between the extremes of harshness, intransigence and rigidity, to avoidance and withdrawal. Not only would one expect to find these as predominant patterns between different members of the society, but one would expect them to appear within the intrapsychic structure of the same person. In other words, both dimensions being present in the one person concurrently, with a swing during different periods of time between these two extremes. Moreover the swing would be between the two ends of the continuum, rather than a more flexible resolution at some mid-point. Because of the cultural insistences as to the male's role and the inner personal insecurities with which this conflicts, one finds a good deal of overcompensation for the inadequacies that the men subconsciously experience but consciously cannot acknowledge. Moreover, in those Vietnamese who were brought up in the traditional mold, and this would probably include all the political leaders today, one can postulate that there is a robust body of hostility against authorities which represents a deflection from their own parents and elders and which was not allowed expression earlier. The result is that as they internalize their feelings about these other authorities, and translate them into their perception of themselves as authorities, we find a sense of both self-denigration and self-exaltation; which leads, in turn, to both a respect for themselves, serving as a source of ego gratification and at the same moment carrying the freight of self-contempt and unconscious negation, emotions that they felt towards those who were earlier authorities. This is what happens universally when emotions of this kind are bottled up and not permitted expression and it is one of the burdens that a society which insists upon highly stylized conduct inflicts upon its members.

One of the results of this pattern is the arbitrary use of authority and the frequent recourse to rather absolute power tactics. In turn this is supported by the Confucian ideal of the omniscient and omnipotent leader who is stern but benign. This was directly interpreted by Confucius himself as pertaining to emperor, father and those of culturally assigned stature whose authority fell within the span of emperor and father.

Compromise, the art of give and take, is scarcely the dominant mode within the Vietnamese family, although it most certainly does occur as it does in all societies. The structural linearity of the family and the assignment of duties, responsibilities and roles is, for the most part, antithetical

to this notion that we in the west value so highly. As a result we see the same pattern enacted in the political arena where collaboration between differing political factions is rare and cooperation between leaders is usually transitory.

Given this framework, one might regard the avoidance of confrontation between political parties as we know it in western societies as a paradox. It is not, because it impinges upon another value that is insistently enforced within the Vietnamese family -- that of family harmony. Confrontation involves a clash of wills and the clear cut definition of a position that is oppositional to that held by another. This is simply not how it is done in the Vietnamese family, and a child who did so would be subject to the most severe censure. Sibling rivalry is stringently discouraged and inasmuch as confrontation carries the implication of a hostile interchange, it is unacceptable. At the same time, the position of the most favored child is one that is ardently sought. One acquires it, however, by placating the parent, by achievement and by anticipating the wishes of the elders. In the process a good deal of political infighting takes place, but the confrontations which do occur focus more upon one's own meritorious conduct and placing the other sibling in a poor light. In other words, my hunch would be that although confrontation as we know it is avoided between political groups, it does occur but in a different mode. I would think that it would be worthwhile attempting a more specific definition of this style and the ways that it may be reenacted on the national level.

There are other patterns of political behavior which also seem directly transposed from the home, and a more rigorous examination of this thesis would undoubtedly reveal others. For example martyrdom as a form of control is extensively exercised within the family. This is a common enough modality in all cultures that I have known, but it is pursued with a particular zest and enthusiasm in Vietnam. Essentially it involves the ostensible sacrifice of oneself, of one's well-being, happiness, interests, needs, etc. for the purpose of manipulating the other's behavior through the use of guilt to conform with one's own wishes. Usually this is a device that is employed by the parent but in Vietnam it is also used by the child against the parent. My files are full of examples, some of which the informants themselves told with wry humor. Many times it takes the form of a charade, with everyone getting in on the act. For example, one informant told of his young brother who threatened to commit suicide by throwing himself into the well over a dispute with the mother. The mother accepted the challenge and the young man did indeed throw himself into the well. The well, however, happened to be dry and only eight feet deep -- as everyone in the family knew. Yet as soon as he did so a great hue and cry went up. Aunts, uncles -- and mother -- came running. After mother conceded the point, the young man accepted the rope that by now was dangling in front of him and allowed himself to be pulled out.

This is a political strategem that is exceedingly common in Vietnam. The meeting between Ky and Thieu in 1967 during which Ky agreed to be nominated for the Vice-Presidency when at one point or another each dramatically offered to sacrifice his political career for the sake of the nation, is a case in point. Far more serious was the use of self-immolation by the Buddhists as a political strategem. As is known, the immolations were planned. One of the Buddhist venerables questioned me in detail as to the effect they were having on western opinion, and in the course of our conversation mentioned that they had sixty-odd requests from Buddhist monks to burn themselves, but that they were withholding permission pending their evaluation of its political utility.

Another strategem that comes directly out of the home is the use of withdrawal -- both as a psychological and a political device. There are many forms of discipline that are used in every family and they are of varying degrees of severity. One of the most powerful is that of the parents' showing their disapproval of the child by withdrawing, by pulling away. This is not to be confused with retreating, the act of someone who is under attack and hides within himself. Withdrawal, as an interpersonal maneuver is an aggressive act, punitive in intent. In the United States its most common form is known as the silent treatment, but whatever form it may take it always is exceedingly upsetting to the child -- or to the parent, because children occasionally use it as well. Withdrawal on the part of the parent was one of the most frequently employed devices identified in my study that was used in the discipline of the Vietnamese child. As such, it is an interpersonal operant that is exceedingly familiar to every Vietnamese, respected for its power and utility. Thus, when Minh and Ky withdrew from the recent elections, after having been nominated, it was quite within the cultural context, understood and respected as a power maneuver by all. However, inasmuch as withdrawal as a psychological dimension is found in all societies it is not sufficient to merely say that it is a stylistic form simply transported from home to politics. Although it is used in the Vietnamese household with considerable frequency, I would assume that it also has an historical base.

As we have woven our way through this complex maze of consistencies and contradictions it seems to me that the hypothesis upon which this investigation was based has sufficient validity to warrant further study. I am one of those who when he begins writing, has no notion as to what the end product will turn out to be. There is a Nero Wolf quality to all psychological research and I am just as curious as any other as to the final outcome.

My own sense is that the intra-familial impress upon the national political scene that I have described here is a statement of a moment in history for Vietnam and that the situation will change, though not without disruption and not in the immediate future. It is far easier to revolutionize the politics of a nation than the politics of the family, and although change can originate in either, the family is the more recalcitrant. But as a nation changes its politics and its political philosophy it can have a profound effect upon what goes on in the home. The notion of the fully democratic family is a myth. It exists nowhere. The nature of the reality of the needs of the child and his relationship to the parent

make this patently impossible. However, there are vast differences in the degree of democracy that is permitted in the home. If the parents present themselves candidly for what they are, their abilities and their weaknesses, their areas of expertise and ignorance, and if they allow as full a play of emotions on the part of the children (and themselves as well) as the situations warrant, then I think that the prognosis is about as healthy as can be expected given the knowledge that we have today.

The Vietnamese students that I have known in the United States seem to me to represent the wave of the future. The enthusiasm with which they have embraced egalitarian values is an impressive statement. Whether they can hold to these values when they return to Vietnam is not really the issue. The more important point is that they changed so rapidly and so fully when they found themselves in a society that permitted greater freedom than they had known before. Freedom and equality, whether it be political or personal, is a universal need and these students have demonstrated this. But in Vietnam, too, one finds important stirrings among the youth. No nation can resist the impact of modernization, of the world outside. Vietnam has already undergone profound changes and the past can never be recovered. The task now is to integrate those past values which contribute to respect and well-being with those new values which open the doors to contemporary perspectives.

Lesson five of Book I (equivalent to the fifth grade in the United States) of the current texts used in the elementary schools in Vietnam, states it all:

The Struggle Against Old Fashioned Traditions

We Vietnamese have many good traditions. When foreigners get to know them, they often have words of praise for them. Yet nowadays there are a number of less educated people, especially those in the countryside, who still maintain old fashioned traditions.

You often see your neighbors and people you know well burn incense and paper and pray to the spirit of the banyan tree. According to you, is this tradition good or bad? If so, what should you do? How would you help people get rid of bad traditions?