

Abstract

Few revolutions have mobilized women as a separate revolutionary class. Vietnamese revolutionary leaders did appeal to women because of their structural importance to the struggle throughout the country and because the oppression of women was interpreted as one of a set of similar oppressions all of which the revolution would end. Female autonomy increased during the revolution itself, though not without resistance, and women were recognized both as heroes and as fighters. Afterwards, legal and institutional changes raised the status of women considerably. However, political compromises resurrected traditional social structures whose power and influence attenuated, though far from destroyed, the commitment of the post-revolutionary regime to women's liberation. The willingness of revolutionaries to tolerate traditional social structures which do not present themselves as imminent threats to their personal political positions – that is, structures which oppress women – leaves in place significant remnants of the old order which gradually undermine revolutionary transformation as it affects the whole population.

About the Author

Mary Ann Tetreault is Professor of Political Science at Old Dominion University. Her publications include works on energy, development, and women's issues. She is currently editing a collection of case studies of women and revolution in Africa, Asia, and the New World.

Women and Revolution in Viet Nam

by

**Mary Ann
Tetreault
Old Dominion
University**

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Women and International Development
Michigan State University
206 International Center, East Lansing, MI 48824-1035
Ph: 517/353-5040 Fx: 517/432-4845
Email: wid@msu.edu Web: <http://www.wid.msu.edu>

WOMEN AND REVOLUTION IN VIET NAM

INTRODUCTION

The Western tradition envisions revolution as a process that results from changes in relationships among elites and social aggregates. Since the advent of Christianity, it also includes notions of the transformation of the nature of human beings and their culture: a revolution ushers in a "new age" populated by "new men." Thus, to the Western mind, revolutionary transformation is not confined to leaders or institutions but extends to the consciousness of individuals and the ordering of their lives.

Early Christian new age thinkers¹ wrote and spoke extensively on reordering gender relations as part of the revolutionary transformation of the world initiated by Christ (Brown 1988; Pagels 1988). The mobilization of women as agents of social change contributed to the structural breakdown of pagan society (Lefkowitz 1986:103-105). It also undermined the contemporary ideological understanding of dominance throughout society by challenging its legitimacy in intimate human relationships (Ruiz 1988:161). Elaine Pagels argues that this revolution laid the ideological groundwork for the democratic revolutions of the modern period (1988:8, 55-56).

The post-World War II Western literature on revolution proceeds from a narrower perspective, by depicting revolution as part of the modernization process and attributing the development of new men to economic or social, not spiritual, transformation (e.g., see Huntington 1968:265). Huntington (1968:271) says that modernizing revolutions occur two ways. One, which he calls the "Eastern pattern," follows the Christian model of mass mobilization as a precondition of political change. The old regime and the emerging new order coexist for a time in "a prolonged period of 'dual power'" as the revolutionary group gains strength. Eventually the old regime collapses and the new order becomes the basis of a new regime.

In contrast, the "Western" pattern involves a collapse at the center that brings "revolutionists into the limelight" (Huntington 1968:268). In a traditional society these revolutionists may be an alternative elite that takes control of state institutions and assumes the position of the old leadership. In Huntington's view, this scenario does not describe revolution which, by definition, requires the incorporation of new social groups into politics. Revolution occurs when multiple social forces contend for power through the "competitive mobilization" of new social groups created by modernization. The most successful mobilizer "wins," although a complete resolution may take some time and pass through several stages with successive winners and losers before a new regime stabilizes (Huntington 1968:269).

The Confucian tradition within which Vietnamese society is embedded pictures revolution as a normal, cyclical process which

restores an idealistically imagined status quo ante. The state, as part of society, participates in the same ethical system of virtuous conduct as society as a whole and the families that comprise it. A ruler demonstrates his righteousness by presiding over domestic tranquility (Marr 1981:58-59). The loss of this tranquility, whether from drought or plague, or from domestic unrest or foreign penetration, is seen as a sign of the personal moral deficiency of the ruler. Domestic turmoil is evidence of the loss of the "mandate of Heaven," the correspondence between the ruler's rectitude and the cosmology of the universe (Fitzgerald 1972:30). During such a time, Vietnamese look for a new leader whose moral stature promises the restoration of that harmony.

According to David Marr (1981:60), the "occupation and 'pacification'" of Viet Nam by the French undermined this Confucian universalism. French dominance of Vietnamese rulers meant one of two things. Either the world was wrong and virtuous Vietnamese should withdraw from public life to set a moral example for their peers, or the Vietnamese conception of the proper ordering of society needed to be reexamined. Both strategies opened Viet Nam to the penetration of Western ideas, because those who withdrew had no program for change and others sought answers from a wide range of possible explanations. As a result, Confucian ideas about social hierarchies were challenged and Vietnamese intellectuals also began to examine the role of women in their society from a different perspective (Marr 1981:228-229). This enabled both Vietnamese women and Vietnamese men to see women as one of many oppressed groups in their society. "This tendency to generalize grievances cannot be overemphasized. Without it, the Vietnamese would never have been able to mount a sophisticated mass attack on French rule" (Marr 1981:235).

Vietnamese revolutionaries, like the early Christians, mobilized the dissatisfaction of women against the structural and ideological supports of the old order. Yet the perception that women are an underclass with revolutionary potential is not universal among cases of revolutionary transformation. For example, among the early modernizing revolutions, neither the British, French, nor American revolutions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries sought to mobilize women as a revolutionary class; rather, women were incorporated into these revolutions as adjuncts of men. The leaders of the Vietnamese revolution appealed directly to women to participate in the struggle and in return, promised them equal political, social, and economic status under the new regime.

This essay examines the role of women in Viet Nam's revolution and evaluates both the contribution of women to the success of this revolution and the impact of the revolution on improving the situation of Vietnamese women. I begin by analyzing the status of women under the old regime, then move to an examination of women's participation in the revolution, and finally, assess its political,

institutional, and rhetorical outcomes with respect to women's status and rights.

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN PRE-REVOLUTIONARY VIET NAM

The leaders of the revolution in Viet Nam could appeal successfully to women as a potential revolutionary class because law and custom in Viet Nam treated all women as inferior to all men. Chinese imperialism had introduced Confucian values to Vietnamese society (Fitzgerald 1972:22-23; Mai 1978:8-12); its hierarchical pattern was replicated from the family to the village to the state. Even though Vietnamese legends glorify female heroes like Trieu Au and the Trung sisters, the status of women in Vietnamese society, from the Han invasions in the third century B.C. to the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam (DRVN) in 1954, was always subordinate to men (Mai and Le 1978:30-31; Marr 1981:191-199).

Women's status declined most rapidly during what the Vietnamese call the "feudal period." It began in 939 a.d. after Ngo Quyen expelled the Chinese and organized an independent state modeled more closely on the Chinese cultural pattern than the Vietnamese were willing to tolerate when they still lived under direct Chinese rule (Mai and Le 1978:31-32). Vietnamese legal systems, beginning with the Ly Code in the eleventh century, embedded male domination and female subordination in laws which permitted such things as forced marriage, the immolation of the king's wives upon his death, and polygamy. In their review of the literature, Mia Thi Tu and Le Thi Nham Tuyet conclude that although women's status did improve briefly during the Hung Dynasty, it declined again under subsequent kings (1978:46-48).

French colonial penetration of Viet Nam occurred during the era of the Gia Long Code, the most repressive of the Vietnamese legal codes with respect to the status of women. Under the Gia Long Code, bride prices were legitimated and fixed, conditions under which a husband could repudiate his wife were set out, punishments to be meted out to a runaway wife were codified, polygamy spread to the lower classes, and wives' property rights were further curtailed (Mai and Le 1978:48-59). French colonial policy prescribed the "preservation of old traditions, respect for Viet Nam's ancestral customs and usages" (1978:93). Although the French imported their own penal code and imposed new land tenure and tax laws (Karnow 1983:114, Wiegiersma 1988:68-64), they retained most Gia Long social regulations.

The retention of the Gia Long system served French economic interests. It supported the exploitation of female labor: French investors took advantage of legal wage discrimination to pay female employees of colonial enterprises less than male employees (Mai and Le 1978:101). The French also benefited from the prostitution of

Vietnamese women, which was institutionalized under Gia Long laws regulating the status of concubines (Fall 1972:131-132; Mai and Le 1978:104).

In the early twentieth century, proposals for women's formal education began to be made by Vietnamese intellectuals, and women were invited to attend public lectures at a short-lived but very influential school in Hanoi (Marr 1981:200). The French came eventually to support female education among the upper classes, but their support weakened once women joined the anti-colonial movement. "Women's" books--even cookbooks--often featured advertisements for overtly anti-colonial publications, and women's educational and social groups evolved into fora for the discussion of national issues (Marr 1981:217-218). Vietnamese intellectuals also vacillated in their recognition of women's oppression and their support for women's rights. There was no attempt to raise women's status by changing the law. Even some Marxists "failed to get the point entirely" by acquiescing in the conservative assumption that women belonged in the home and by finding in their own analyses women's inborn "feminine strengths such as virtue, patience, and loyalty" (Marr 1981:242-243). Polygamy remained legal throughout Viet Nam during French rule and was not even nominally abolished in the south until 1958 (Fall 1972:131).

WOMEN, THE FAMILY, AND REVOLUTION IN VIET NAM

The traditional Vietnamese family was patriarchal and authoritarian, and the family was the economic unit of Vietnamese society. Its relationship to the structure of society increased the value of women as a target group for political mobilization. Polygamy in Viet Nam, as in other societies, underpinned a subsistence economy dependent on the labor of women--wives, daughters, concubines, and female servants (Peterson 1988:173-175). As forced labor, these workers worked because the men who made them do so were present, either through private coercion or through resort to community sanctions against uncooperative behavior (e.g., see Hayslip 1989:20-22). Even in families where affection and consent motivated labor, everyone's labor was necessary for the family unit to survive (Mai 1978:15). For the revolution to succeed, women had to be motivated to work, not simply for themselves and their children, but to produce enough surplus to support an army. Many observers have remarked upon the mobilization of women by the revolution, and the reciprocal effect of this mobilization on the status of women in Viet Nam, especially in the north (e.g., see Chaliand 1969).

The political mobilization of women was mediated by the Women's Union, established in 1930 under the auspices of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) and originally called The Association of Women for Emancipation. The focus of the Women's Union has, like its name, changed since its founding. What did not

change was its role as the party organization responsible for the political mobilization, education, and representation of Vietnamese women. It is organized at every level of society beginning with the village. Virtually every woman who has held a position of authority in the Vietnamese government has been a member of the Women's Union (Eisen 1984:119-134; Mai and Le 1978:119).

The Women's Union was one of the "functional organizations" established to build a social base for the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP). From its inception, the communist party took a much stronger line favoring women's liberation than any other group seeking leadership of the revolution or than Vietnamese society as a whole (Marr 1981:235-236; Pike 1966:174). In the statement of party principles made shortly after the founding of the ICP, Ho Chi Minh listed the liberation of women as the party's tenth--and last--goal (Mai and Le 1978:112-113; Wiegiersma 1988:94). As noted earlier, women's liberation was part of what David Marr calls the "generalize[ation of] grievances"; it permitted a broad-based assault on the colonial regime. It was also an end in itself. In Ho Chi Minh's words, "Women are half of the people. If women are not free then the people are not free."²

The ICP recognized the importance of women to the party by sending a woman, Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, as its representative to the Seventh International Congress in Moscow in 1935 (Eisen 1984:87). Female workers and peasants took part from the beginning in the upsurge of revolutionary activity following the foundation of the ICP and women carried the bulk of the supplies destined for the secret bases of the revolutionaries (Mai and Le 1978:118, 124; Pike 1966:178). Some women became celebrated as revolutionary heroes: Nguyen Thi Minh Khai was captured and guillotined by the French in 1941.

The ICP was an important component of the Viet Minh, the united front coalition of Vietnamese formed by Ho Chi Minh in 1941 to combat the Japanese. The Japanese overthrew the French colonial administration in 1945. That August, during the confusion at the end of World War II, Ho moved into Hanoi and proclaimed the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. Women had been policymaking members of the Viet Minh throughout the period, and a female Viet Minh leader, Nguyen Khoa Dieu Hong, who took a public role during the August Revolution, made an "appeal for national salvation" to an enthusiastic crowd at a large public rally.

The Viet Minh, however, offered more than words to Vietnamese women. Women with no previous rights to land were given a share of land in the "liberated areas" taken over as the revolution proceeded through the countryside (Eisen 1984:97; Houtart and Lemercinier 1984:165). In 1946, when the new constitution was promulgated, the legitimacy of women's equality was enshrined in provisions which called for the economic and political equality of

women and men, protection of women's rights within the family, and provision for female suffrage. On January 6, 1946, Vietnamese women voted for the first time in their history, in an election that sent ten women to the Chamber Of Deputies (2.5 percent of the total) (Eisen 1984:244).

During the war against the French (1946-1954), as in the previous period, women participated in the revolution by assuming larger roles in their local communities (Eisen 1984:97). Some participated directly in the fighting, mostly as members of small bands of commandos. In the early 1950s, there were about 840,000 female guerrillas operating in the north, and some 140,000 in the south (Mai and Le 1978:101, 161). Women also engaged in local "struggle" movements, community mobilization, intelligence gathering, and the transport of materiel. The latter was especially critical when main force units were engaged in battle. The "dan cong"--two-thirds of whom were women (Mai and Le 1978:163)--were labor battalions which often carried supplies to soldiers at the front. During the battle of Dien Bien Phu, when the monsoon rains made it impossible to use motorized transport vehicles, the Dan Cong transported virtually everything needed by the attackers on their backs or balanced on bicycles, which they led but did not ride.²

The quality of the revolution changed after partition in 1954 and the role of women changed with it. Cochinchina, the section of the country that was the most recently settled, was also the region that had been most deeply penetrated by the French as well as most affected, socially and economically, by colonialism. The greater wealth of the population and the looser structure of rural life in the south made villagers there harder to organize against the regime than villagers in the economically marginal northern and central sections of the country (Popkin 1979:230). Prior to partition, the communist party in the south faced strong competition for the role of chief organizer of the nationalist opposition, chiefly from the Catholic Church and the syncretic sects (Fall 1966:141-159; Fitzgerald 1972:155; Popkin 1979:184-185). After partition, revolutionary activity in the south virtually halted.

The new Democratic Republic of Viet Nam (DRVN) regime in the north was more interested in building its institutions and rebuilding its economy than in assisting the continuation of the struggle in the south. The stability of the DRVN itself was severely threatened in 1957 as scattered local uprisings and a full-scale revolt in Nghe An province were mounted against the DRVN's harsh land reform policy (Wolf 1969:191). These uprisings and an internal struggle for control of the party contributed to the lack of involvement by the DRVN in the southern movement (Smith 1983:93-99; Wiegiersma 1988:202).

In the south, opponents of the United States-backed, Roman Catholic, Ngo Dinh Diem regime were also quiet, waiting for the elections promised in the Geneva Accords which they expected would provide them with a bloodless victory. In 1955 Diem announced that the elections would not take place and increased his efforts to liquidate his regime's opponents. The southern insurgency resumed in 1957 (Fall 1966:169-189; Mai 1975). As the armed sects were decimated by Diem's army and police, and as the Catholic church became identified with the regime, the mostly communist Viet Minh, with its mostly Buddhist values and its emphasis on incorporating women into the struggle against Diem, assumed the dominant position in the continuation of the revolution in the south (Sheehan 1988:122).

Madame Nhu, Diem's sister-in-law, sought to counter the Viet Minh's mobilization of women by forming her own women's groups, the Women's Solidarity Movement (which David Halberstam describes as "an apparatus for family espionage"), and the Paramilitary Girls, whom Madame Nhu herself referred to as her "little darlings" (Halberstam 1988:24-28). But like other organizations formed by the Diem regime to mobilize popular support, they were not very effective. The regime was too brutal in its suppression of domestic opponents (Sheehan 1988:101-105; 112-116) and too Catholic. Yet the size and reach of the Viet Minh diminished during this time, because of the low level of assistance it received from the north, the growing militarization of Diem's regime, and economic and military assistance to Diem from the United States.

The material poverty of Diem's opposition dictated reliance on "People's War," the term used by the Vietnamese to describe what Western analysts like Bernard Fall call "revolutionary warfare." This required mobilizing the whole population against "My-Diem," the government of the south which was assisted throughout the period by varying types and degrees of U.S. military and economic aid. People's War tactics included strikes, community action against local civilian and military officials, sabotage, and, most important of all, "political struggle," that is, intense and repeated attempts to persuade neutrals or partisans on the other side to join the revolution (Denton 1966:ix; Tam n.d.:50-55, 64-66).

The emphasis on political and ideological issues was intended not simply to convert opponents but also to support partisans; the southern revolutionaries were "remarkably committed, tough people, and their personal and political lives were largely inseparable" (Kolko 1985:270; see also, Davison and Zasloff 1966; Kellen 1969; Nguyen Thi Dinh 1976). U.S. troops, for whom ideology meant attachment to "the big PX," could not understand why their enemies were such good fighters, although Moskos (1979:152) reports that many attributed the bravery of the enemy to drugs (1970:152).

Political motivation was critical for the success of the southern revolutionaries who had minimal resources and lived under constant fear of exposure and death. Northern party leaders, however, were much more secure because they controlled the government and society in their half of the country.

...[W]hile the same men led the Party, its members in the north and south were becoming increasingly distinctive in terms of their local Party's internal life and styles of existence. Southern Revolutionaries were highly motivated and devoted, informal, and forced to make correct decisions quickly.... Party leaders in the south assumed ever-greater responsibilities...and were...in much closer contact with the masses.... To be a Party member in the North was a social asset and a...source of authority.... [I]ts huge size...offered ambitious people the possibility of abusing power (Kolko 1985:269).

The differences in the nature and the salience of the conflict in the south and the north shaped the conduct of the post-1954 war in each half of the country. In the south, the success of the revolution was a matter of life and death. In the north, the success of revolution in the rest of Viet Nam took second place to the desire to consolidate the regime, build the economy, and gain political power in the DRV. Once U.S. bombing of the north began, the interests of northern and southern party members converged, but their different situations affected the way they mobilized their resources, including women.

U.S. bombing threatened the infant economy of the north, already crippled by the economic boycott imposed by the southern regime and the United States. Women's activities during this phase of the war were critical to its eventual success; women, in turn, increased their autonomy in villages where patriarchal relationships had begun to be reasserted and reinforced as the new regime consolidated itself after the failure of its land reform program (Wiegersma 1988:166-167). As more men went into the armed forces after the mid-1960s, women dominated the workforce in many rural villages. In 1967, government regulations encouraging and even mandating women's participation in decision-making positions went into effect (Wiegersma 1988:157-158).

In the north after 1954, industrialization proceeded in a similar manner to other socialist developing countries and was concentrated on heavy industry and collectivized agriculture. But when the U.S. bombing campaigns began in 1965, about half of the country's industrial infrastructure was still composed of small forges or a few machine tools located in small houses or caves in the countryside (Kolko 1985:266). U.S. bombing encouraged further decentralization. Though it reduced overall efficiency, decentralization also ensured the continued production of needed materiel by these small shops, despite the heavy bombing which

substantially reduced production from the centralized factories owned by the state.

The feminization of agriculture partly reversed the post-1957 weakened commitment to collectivization, as women were among the most likely villagers to eschew family work for their husbands or fathers-in-law to join cooperatives (Wiegersma 1988:159-160, 179). As a result, the reversion to patriarchy--the "family farm"--was halted for a time in many villages. The state expanded its role in agriculture as farmers became more dependent on chemical fertilizers and mechanical equipment such as pumps to flood and drain rice fields. Even so, local initiative remained strong. Production responsibility was vested in production brigades, essentially hamlet-size working groups, rather than in village leaders (Wiegersma 1988:161). And a free market in agricultural products existed throughout the war, despite vacillations in government policy toward it (Kolko 1985:265-266). Food production remained stable from 1965, the first year of extensive bombing of the north, through 1972, when direct participation in the war by U.S. troops officially ended. In agriculture as in industry, the basic organization of production remained highly decentralized and structurally resistant to disruption from the bombing.

In order to preserve productive capacity through decentralization, the DRVN's reliance on premodern organization of its economy was mirrored by the southern revolutionaries' reliance on premodern structures of family and village, which also served to disperse and conceal personnel engaged in revolutionary activities. Vo Nguyen Giap, the leading general of the northern forces, once said "...until the war in the south [I] knew nothing about 'people's war'" (quoted in Fitzgerald 1972:140), even though the earlier anti-French phases of the revolution had also depended heavily upon underground political action and popular mobilization. In the south after 1954, the distinction between friend and enemy was existentially and tactically unclear, and the war itself was not conventional in any sense.

The villages formed the main arena in which People's War was fought, each side trying to win over the peasants. Many peasants, presumed by the Viet Minh to be the natural constituency of the revolution, were confused and frightened by the conflict. Unclear as to which side was "right," given the pain inflicted by each (Hayslip 1989:94-97) and the inability of either to take permanent control in most of the country, many preferred to sit the conflict out on the sidelines, to see which side would capture the Mandate of Heaven and govern the country (Fitzgerald 1972:150-157; Rand 1972).³ Yet without the assistance of the peasants, Viet Minh cadres would continue to suffer massive casualties and the revolution would melt away, not only because of lack of support from the north but, more crucially, because of the physical disappearance of southerners committed to continuing the struggle against Diem (Denton 1968; Nguyen Thi Dinh 1976:61-62).

The extent of domestic repression by Diem weakened the Viet Minh and threatened it with extinction.

As early as January, 1956, police-state measures directed against anyone who disagreed with the prevailing edicts of the Diem regime forced all opposition into the agonizing choice of self-imposed exile (if rich), total silence (if less fortunate and thus forced to remain in Viet-Nam), or armed resistance (Fall 1966:138, emphasis in original).

At the same time, the repression sparked massive resistance throughout the population (Nguyen 1976:59-62; Wiegiersma 1988:202). In January 1960, after Communist party leaders finally decided to resume armed struggle in the south, a series of demonstrations by thousands of peasant women began in Ben Tre province under the leadership of Nguyen Thi Dinh (1976:62-74). Reacting to large-scale indiscriminant killing and looting by government troops, the unarmed women, in large numbers, had the moral authority of passive resistance; government forces were stymied in their desire to drive the women away and the district chief was eventually forced to bend to their demands (Nguyen Thi Dinh 1976:74). Following these demonstrations, the various local and regional groups, along with individuals who had opposed Diem, formed the National Liberation Front (NLF) (Wiegiersma 1988:203).

The NLF membership was eclectic. At first even the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao, the two largest sects, were a part of the organization, which embraced virtually all of the Old Viet Minh coalition, three southern political parties, members of ethnic minority groups, students, farmers, and intellectuals (Elliott 1976:11-13; Pike 1966:82-84). The NLF was a formidable force in the southern countryside for two reasons: (1) its land reform policy, which was far more appealing to Vietnamese peasants than the indifferently applied program of the United States-backed Diem regime (Race 1972), and (2) its policy of building on real and symbolic family relationships to sustain its cadres (Davison and Zasloff 1966; Rand 1972).

Frances Fitzgerald (1972:157-164) describes this as the "Children of the People" strategy. It meant that the NLF cadres would depend upon village residents to protect them and in turn would obey their wishes. Unlike the relationship demanded by representatives of the Diem government, the NLF reversed the normal hierarchy of family and nation. The villagers became the "parents" and the cadres their "children." The NLF could not exploit the population from the relative safety of national or provincial capitals, nor from behind a wall of native soldiers, foreign military, and civilian advisors (1972:157-164).

Even where the cadre had no blood relationship to the local inhabitants, appealing to them as "father" or "mother" often evoked

a protective response. Nguyen Thi Dinh recalls an instance when she had been arrested, and was not only beaten, but was in danger of being raped by an officer. She saw an old woman outside the hut where she was being held, and shouted to her: "Mother I've been arrested, please come in and ask them to release me so I can go back to my child" (1976:46). The old woman came in and pretended that Madame Dinh was her daughter. The soldiers were about to confine both women when they were suddenly called to reinforce another unit that was under attack. Madame Dinh and the old woman who had risked her life in response to her "child-like" appeal were able to escape.

NLF strategy relied on the fact that many of the original cadres sent to the villages were local residents (Rand 1972), and most of the families they appealed to for help were their own or had children or other relatives in the revolution (Hayslip 1989; Nguyen 1976). Where cadres were strangers, the NLF utilized other techniques to foster a feeling of family between its members and local villagers. For example, the NLF retained the old Viet Minh practice of organizing older women in the villages into "Foster Mothers' Associations" whose members were charged with serving as surrogate mothers to young guerrillas "who were away from home for perhaps the first time in their lives" (Andrews 1973:77; Rand 1972).

Yet there were limits to the strategy. Not all villages could be supplied with local cadres and strangers were looked at suspiciously, at least at first. This problem was aggravated by high levels of attrition in 1963 and 1964 and by the replacement of local cadres with strangers who were often reported as having frightened the villagers (Rand 1972). Despite their reputation, not all cadres behaved like children of the village. Some were disrespectful of the elderly, showed favoritism, or committed crimes against the population (Hayslip 1989; Rand 1972). Such offenders were "rejected" by villagers but, unlike villager rejection of government troops, this rejection was the result of specific offenses rather than general hostility (Kellen 1969:9-10,n). Offenders were removed when their superiors became aware of their conduct; as attrition levels rose some of these cadres were returned to villages where they had already alienated members of the population (Davison and Zasloff 1966; Rand 1972). Finally, the "liberation" of villages by the NLF drew bombing from US-Government of Viet Nam (South Vietnamese Government) forces. This weakened the faith of the local population so that the NLF would prevail--it showed that the mandate of Heaven had not been transferred to them (Rand 1972). Even so, the ability of the NLF to hold or reclaim villages in the south, and the tendency of villagers to protect individuals they knew against outsiders, demonstrated the utility of the Children of the People strategy to protect large numbers of the regime's opponents from destruction.

When it was successful, the NLF strategy enabled cadres to find refuge from attack and to build bases throughout the countryside from which they could ambush and harass their enemies and recruit new adherents to their side. Throughout the war in the south, large areas of the countryside were unsafe for government troops, especially at night. The NLF was able to form alternative village political systems throughout rural South Viet Nam where local populations paid increasingly onerous taxes to the NLF (Rand 1972). This "dual power" period even produced alternative societies coexisting with U.S. military bases (Mangold and Penycate 1986).

If the Children of the People strategy can be thought of as resting on the cultural symbol of the nurturing mother, it was another cultural symbol that underpinned the legitimacy of the "Long-Haired Army," the term coined by the Diem regime to describe the women who had participated in the series of uprisings in Ben Tre province (Nguyen Thi Dinh 1976:74) and who gradually came to stand for all women fighting for the NLF. Madame Dinh's heroic role resonated with the old legends of female heroes who had risen in the past to fight off occupying forces. This second traditional female model for the Vietnamese was the antithesis of the nurturing mother who stayed in the background in a supporting role.

Madame Dinh was made a general of the People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF) based on her credentials as co-founder of the NLF and the leader of the Ben Tre uprising. Her position also reflected the significance of women in the PLAF: Arlene Eisen reports that about 40 percent of the PLAF regimental commanders were women (1984:105). As in the north, most of the women served in local and regional guards rather than in the national forces. Thus, the PLAF was only a small segment of the total number of female forces engaged in revolutionary activity:

The regular forces were not very large but services, self-defense, and the guards were very large and mostly women. [In the south]...more women than men participated in the war. In enemy occupied areas, the women were very important because if we wanted to send troops we needed places for them to stay, and to provide for them. After the women got ready we could send troops in. All the supplies were carried by women. The forces that we sent in first to survey an area were women. Our struggle was carried with two principles, first, military, and second, uprising. There women played a very important part (Interview with Nguyen Van Luong 1988).

The extensive participation by women in the revolution in the south was reflected in high rates of female casualties. Le Tan Danh reports that from 1954 to 1965, women engaged in revolutionary activities in the south suffered 250,000 deaths, 40,000 disabilities as the result of torture, and 36,000 imprisonments

(1966:61-62). Nguyen Van Luong, president of the People's Committee of Binh Tri Thien province, tells of casualties from a broader perspective:

The majority of the women now in the workforce now are married. Most are not married who took part in the war. After 30 years of war, many could not marry. In many cases couples just married and went to the war. Afterward, they are too old to have children (1988).

Women also took part in the civilian leadership of the NLF and in the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG), the dual power alternative to the southern regime. Memoirs of the period, such as Truong Nhu Trang's 1985 book, mention instances of women taking part in policymaking and planning, and suffering the consequences of their activities when they were taken prisoner by the southern regime (Truong 1985:110-11, 118-21, 130). But despite their bravery and ubiquity in the movement in the south, women had a difficult time gaining the respect of their male peers. They were not recruited to be cadres until the male pool was vastly depleted by high casualties (Rand 1972). Truong's memoirs also underplay women's contributions. Eisen believes that part of the reason why women in the north earned higher status than women in the south was because the southern branch of the Women's Union was an illegal organization, thus retarding both the mobilization of women and the education of men (1984:123).

Although some male party leaders from below the seventeenth parallel, such as Nguyen Van Luong, are quick today to acknowledge the contributions of women to the success of the revolution in the south, Women's Union leaders from the south remain more cynical than northern women about the extent of women's liberation in Viet Nam.⁴ This may be because women in the south actually exercised more authority during the war than northern women. They are more aware both of the extremity of the situation that was required to give them their opportunity, and of their decline in status today.

SYMBOLS AND STATUS

The cultural symbols of the nurturing mother and the heroine who leads the people to expel the foreign invader are both interpreted as models of female autonomy in writings about the revolution by Vietnamese men and women. Unlike analytical forms of discourse traditional in the West which, building upon a Newtonian view of the universe, emphasize abstract concepts and "data" (Kissinger 1974:48-49), analytical discourse in Viet Nam uses role models and personalization to convey values as well as information. These two symbols, the "old mother" and the "long-haired army," were frequently used to convey multiple messages: the total mobilization of the Vietnamese people, the extent of sacrifice

demanded by the revolution, and the bravery of the Vietnamese people.

Symbols featuring women were also used to mock or impeach the enemy. The most ubiquitous cartoon from the revolution is probably the poster which shows a small Vietnamese peasant woman holding a rifle on a large U.S. pilot, marching him off to a POW camp (See Figure 1.) This is an ambiguous symbol from a feminist perspective because the weakness of women is the core of the message about the impotence of the enemy. Female revolutionaries appear on postage stamps, such as on the commemorative issued in 1969 to honor the women of the Ben Tre uprising and their leader, Nguyen Thi Dinh. Here the symbol is a straightforward representation of a woman in a position of leadership at a crucial moment in the history of the revolution. The most famous of the war-memorials which have been built all over the country features a female figure, and is in downtown Hanoi marking one of the sites of the 1972 Christmas bombing. The figures of woman and child are used to personalize the destruction of the bombing of civilians. Here also, the use of a female symbol carries a mixed message, the sort of "women and children" cliché common in situations where the homefront and the warfront are depicted as gender-specific sites (See Figure 2). Despite the ambiguity of some of the symbols, however, the depiction of women's revolutionary roles in contemporary Vietnamese artwork tends to affirm women's control rather than victimization, or their status as "helpers" of the "real" revolutionaries.

The integration of these symbols into the cultural life of the nation is something else altogether. In the Museum of the Revolution in Hanoi, which boasts the most extensive collection of photographs and artifacts from the revolutionary period, there are only a few elements in the collection that feature or even include women. The women have a separate museum but, as the United States knows from its own historical experience, separate is not equal. The most extensive integration of women's and men's pictures and artifacts is found in the War Crimes Museum in Ho Chi Minh City, but this is an ambiguous situation in which to celebrate gender equality because it is a museum of victims instead of agents. The largest photograph dealing with the war against America is of the heaps of female bodies left after the massacre at My Lai.

Thus, while the symbolic representation of Vietnamese female revolutionaries shows agency and power, these symbols are not accorded equal status with those representing male revolutionary experiences. As a result, memories of women's contributions to the revolution are likely to fade faster than memories of men's contributions, an explanation that may be generalized to any number of situations in human history. A similar mechanism can be seen in the Truong memoirs, where the women in the photographs are seldom identified by name. Only a few women are discussed in the text, many in the context of victimization. The destruction of much of the NLF infrastructure during the Tet offensive, the antagonism

between the two halves of the geographically and ideologically divided party, and the experientially divided consciousness of the interpreters of the past make the NLF a shadowy institution--at least to the present generation. The status and contributions of women in NLF ranks are the faintest of the shadows left behind.

SUBSTANCE AND STATUS

The following 1959 statement by Le Duan reflects the position of the leadership of the revolution with respect to the importance of women to the movement.

La femme a une place importante, un grande role dans le mouvement revolutionnaire, tout comme depuis plusieurs decennies, elle a participe activement au mouvement revolutionnaire dans son ensemble (Le Duan, in Nguyen Thi Dinh 1987a).

The post-revolutionary regime has honored its promises to elevate the status of women in the new order. But despite great gains as compared to the pre-revolutionary situation, the status and power of women in Viet Nam today do not compare favorably to the status and power of men.

Before the revolution, 95 percent of the population of Viet Nam was illiterate, and 98 percent of the female population was illiterate (Hoang 1987:1; Nguyen Thi Binh 1986). Education is one of the success stories of the post-revolutionary regime. During the 1984-85 school year, almost 12.5 million children attended primary and secondary school (Nguyen Thi Binh 1986). Despite the poverty of the educational system, because the regime is committed to equal education for women and minorities, it does not permit a strategy of allocating resources disproportionately to male students or to ethnic Vietnamese students. In 1986, 50 percent of all primary and secondary school children were female, and 9 percent of the total school population was comprised of ethnic minorities (Nguyen Thi Binh 1986).

At the university level, few women attend compared to men and there are fewer female than male faculty members. In 1984, 43 percent of the students in colleges and universities were women, compared to 39 percent in 1982 (Le Thi 1987). However, by 1987 women constituted only 27 percent of college and university faculty. Women made up only 11 percent of those holding doctor of science degrees, and of educated cadres, only 36 percent of those with university or college training and 21 percent of those with post-graduate training were women (Hoang 1987:3). As do women in other societies, female scientists in Viet Nam face greater family responsibilities than their male colleagues; this impedes their progress through the hierarchies of their institutions (Hoang 1987:27). But fewer women than men even have the chance to

compete. During a 1988 visit to universities in Hanoi, Hue, Dalat, and Saigon, I observed that none of the institutions I visited included women on their faculties above the level of lecturer and none had female administrators.

The Women's Union has pushed for policies to mitigate structural impediments to women's professional success in universities and scientific communities in Viet Nam. In 1984, a study was done to identify the problems and to indicate ways that the government might intervene. As a result, in December 1984 the National Assembly adopted a resolution written by the Women's Union proposing affirmative remedies to deal with discrimination in education and employment. Among the reforms instituted was the introduction of a limit on the percentage of male students permitted to train in fields where a shortage of women in the labor force already exists. This change guarantees places for women in college and vocational school programs which train personnel for these fields, increasing the number and quality of women available for jobs in these fields (Le 1987:18).

The Women's Union also uses propaganda to improve opportunities for women. This has included publicizing the difficulties faced by female scientists, featuring successful female scientists in articles in its publications, and sponsoring conferences on women in science, such as the Southeast Asian Women's Seminar on Women and Science, held in Hanoi January 8-10, 1987.

Women make up 52 percent of the population and 60 percent of the workforce in Viet Nam, a fact explained by the high death rate among adult males during 30 years of war (Duong 1988). As in other countries, women workers in Viet Nam tend to be concentrated in light industry and the "helping" professions. In 1987, women made up the majority of workers in agriculture, education, and light industry, while men were the majority in heavy industry, transport and communications, and engineering (women workforce in Vietnam 1987b). Women hold less than five percent of vice-directorships and directorships in state-run firms and, by 1986, only 5.9 percent of directorships in local firms (Women's Participation in State Administration and Economic Management 1987). In all cases, these proportions are much lower than the proportions of women in the fields comprising the personnel pool of the industries concerned. Industrial management profiles, like higher education profiles, reflect severe impediments to female advancement.

In agriculture, the revolution's emphasis on female rights to land and the need to employ female managers on cooperative farms during the war countered to some extent the persistence of male domination. In a study of the Yen So cooperative located outside Hanoi, Jayne Werner reports that men returning from the war in 1975 recognized the competence of the women who had run the coop in their absence and accepted their continuance in managerial roles

(cited in Eisen 1984:143-144). When I visited this coop in 1988, women continued to occupy leadership positions. However, I also found evidence of a gender division of labor in the coop. Women were concentrated in jobs considered "light work," and in those paying piece rates such as work in the embroidery and carpet factories.⁵ Only men were involved in pumping water, which was considered "heavy work," as the coop changed over from fish farming (which it does for half the year) to rice cultivation (which it does for the other half). Heavy work is rewarded with the same salary as light work, but those engaged in heavy work are occupied for fewer hours per week. The net effect of the gender division of labor at Yen So is a shorter work week for most men, giving them more time for study and leisure activities than most of the women have.

The limits to women's liberation in agricultural areas are highlighted by Francois Houtart and Genevieve Lemercinier in their Study of the Hai Van cooperative, located in Ha Nam Ginh province in the Red River Delta. The majority of its population is Catholic. More women than men are engaged in agricultural labor, that is, in jobs with lower status in the community (1984:98-99). However, the shift from family farming to collective farming has resulted in a larger social space for women, most of whom now go to work every day outside the home and do their work, agricultural or other, in the company of persons to whom they are not related. Before, women worked in the fields for their families and some sold produce in the markets, but otherwise they were confined to their homes. They were not permitted an independent social existence and could not participate in local political or social organizations. Although women in Hai Van are now much less involved in the management of the cooperative than men, they have friendships and social lives that extend beyond their families.

These sketches of life in two agricultural coops show the practical difficulties of emancipating rural women despite the progress that is evident in both communities. A major reason is the decision of the community leadership to reinstitute patriarchal control in the villages and to retain it after 1986, when other aspects of the economy were being reformed (Wiegersma 1988:243). The power of family heads over family members underlies the recent widespread breakdown of cooperation in village and work brigades as well as the continuation of exploitation of women in villages. Women continue to bear a larger share of housework and child care than do men. And despite the larger community available to coop members, rural life generally features fewer opportunities for cultural enrichment than urban life. Although studies show that with respect to decision making and the organization of domestic life, rural as well as urban wives today have more autonomy than their counterparts before the revolution (Houtart and Lemercinier 1984:121; Nuoc 1987:22), Vietnamese women are still oppressed by a patriarchal social and economic system (Wiegersma 1988:242-246).

Other changes in family life in Viet Nam are intended products of state policy. The 1980 constitution, which replaced the constitution written by the victors of the August Revolution, reaffirmed (in Article 63) the commitment of the state to equality of women and men in every aspect of Vietnamese society. The first family law was passed in 1959. This law sought explicitly to reverse the discrimination against women embodied in the Gia Long code. In 1986, a new family law was passed to extend women's rights in areas that the earlier legislation had neglected.

Viet Nam's family law reflects a democratic ethic in gender relations. For example, Article 12 guarantees to each spouse the right to choose her or his profession and to engage in social and political activities. Article 10 of the family law makes a symbolic effort to recognize the unequal burdens of household chores and child care: "The spouses have equal duties and rights in all fields of family life." The new law also guarantees joint control of common property and requires joint participation in economic transactions--for example, both spouses must sign the papers required to take out a loan.

The law provides additional protection for women over and above that provided for men, recognizing that women are the usual victims of family violence and other "social evils" (Nguyen Thi Dinh 1987a:5). In response to problems arising from the upsurge of divorce in Viet Nam today (Nuoc 1987:23), the law permits a pregnant woman to seek a divorce but denies that right to her husband until one year after the delivery of their child, according to Article 41. Each party to a divorce is entitled to one half of the common property of the marriage whether he or she worked outside the home or not, and either may request alimony which is to be awarded on the basis of need, as outlined in Articles 42 and 43. The law also reflects (in Article 31) the contemporary unequal sex ratio in the population of child-bearing ages by legitimating children born out of wedlock. In general, the new family law looks very much like the old one except that it seeks to make the protection of family members "more concrete" (Duong 1988).

The Women's Union, which drafted the 1986 family law, has special obligations under it. If a union member is aware that a husband is abusing his wife, she must intervene even if the wife will not make a formal complaint. If necessary, she must get "respected people" to intervene as well. Should the husband continue his abusive behavior despite this informal intervention, the Women's Union must find a temporary shelter for the woman and request legal intervention. Husbands convicted of wife abuse may receive jail sentences (Duong 1988). The special role of the Women's Union gives strength to Viet Nam's family law. In the absence of community structures obliged to intervene against abuse, no law can be effective in protecting victims of family violence. The provisions mandating equal treatment counter traditional social

norms which predispose judges to rule in favor of the husband in cases of divorce and custody--"concreteness" limits discretion.

The new family law enshrines family planning as a state goal in Article 2, which states that spouses are duty-bound to practice family planning. The most widely used form of family planning in Viet Nam is the IUD, which is dispensed free of charge and, since 1988, carried with it a bounty of 500 dong for the woman. There are also rewards for sterilization: in 1988 women received 1000 dong for a tubal ligation and men 1500 dong for a vasectomy (Tu Do Staff 1988). Although the state exhorts citizens to limit their families, implementation of Viet Nam's "two-child policy" is limited to bounties, propaganda campaigns, and programs for maternal and child health (Nguyen Thi Dinh 1987c:2-3; Tu Do Staff 1988). Abortion is legal in Viet Nam but it is very seldom used as a means of birth control; it tends to be used only in cases where birth defects are expected, and even then women are reluctant to have abortions (Tu Do Staff 1988). Despite the absence of coercion in family planning policy, urban families generally conform to the two-child ideal. In the countryside, especially in areas facing labor shortages, larger families are common. At Yen So, where the average family has between three and four children, the coop Planning Commission chief, a woman, reports a change in policy that requires women to get an IUD after the birth of their second child (Nguyen Thi Thuc 1988).

Child neglect is a major problem linked to the recreation of patriarchal authority in the midst of modernization. A function of changing life and work patterns (the disappearance of three-generation families at the same time that more and more women choose or are forced to work outside the home) child neglect has been identified by native and foreign scholars as a major problem in Viet Nam in rural as well as urban areas (e.g., Houtart and Lemercinier 1984:107; Nuoc 1987:23; Weigersma 1988:245). The new family law attempts to deal with this issue by declaring that both parents have equal responsibility for rearing their children; in practice, however, fathers are less likely to take time with children than mothers, and working mothers have less time for their children than mothers who stay at home. At the Yen So coop, I saw a number of working mothers who had their small children with them, but this may be just another form of neglect, as the mothers could not pay attention to the children and do their work at the same time.

Politics, the military, and the church tend to be the last bastions of male domination in all societies, and Viet Nam is no exception. Women have never held more than a few positions in the political leadership of the DRVN or the PRG. For example, women made up at most 17 percent of the central committee of the PRG in 1965 (Nguyen Huu Tho n.d.),⁶ despite their crucial role in the resumption of the southern insurgency and their large numbers among guerrillas and main forces fighting in the south. This is

unfortunate as the revolutionary period was the high point of women's representation on central committees. For example, the 110-person central committee elected at the Fifth Party Congress in March 1982 included only four women, a mere 3.6 percent of the total (CIA 1985:3-4). Women headed five ministries in 1982, but only three in 1986. Women did make gains from 1982 to 1986 with respect to their representation on provincial people's councils and committees, where their proportion rose from 23 to 29 percent and from six to eight percent, respectively (Women's Participation in State Administration and Economic Management 1987:28).

Women have been in the minority in the National Assembly throughout the history of the DRVN. The proportion of women in the National Assembly rose steadily from a low 2.5 percent in the first (1946) assembly to 32.3 percent in the assembly elected in 1975 (Eisen 1984:244). In the three subsequent elections, the proportion of women dropped just as steadily, reaching a low of 17.5 percent after the 1987 election (Duong 1988; Eisen 1984:244). From the 1975 to the 1976 election, women's representation fell to 17 percent.

Nguyen Thi Binh explained the decline in the proportion of women elected to the assembly in 1976 and 1981 as the result of a heavier residue of feudal attitudes in the south (cited in Eisen 1984:246). However, the decline continued, showing that feudal attitudes are not eroding and might possibly be growing. The disappointing 1987 election results were mitigated by the greater visibility of women in positions of leadership in the assembly. Women in the seventh (1981) assembly had held no commission presidencies, but in the eighth (1987) assembly women held three of the seven commission presidencies (legislative, social, and external affairs), and a woman was chosen to head Viet Nam's delegation to the United Nations (Duong 1988).

The decline in Vietnamese women's electoral fortunes coincides with the disappearance of the "grand old women of the revolution" from public life. Both trends reduce women's political authority and are likely to make it harder for them to make legitimate claims to positions of importance in the national government. A counter-trend shows an increasing number of women holding leadership positions at the provincial level, but despite growing decentralization and increased local autonomy, the overall position of women in the political power structure of Viet Nam is eroding.

CONCLUSIONS

Vietnamese women responded in large numbers to the appeal of revolutionary leaders to join in the struggle to free Viet Nam from colonial rule and to establish a socialist state committed to women's liberation. In return, from the earliest days of the

August Revolution, the post-revolutionary government enshrined women's rights in its constitutions and laws. Ironically, given the greater level of integration of women and men in fighting forces in the south as compared to the north, reunification seems to have stalled, if not reversed, women's progress in electoral politics. Still, the government has continued to use its authority to reinforce and expand legal protection of women and families and the rights of women to an education that will enable them to compete successfully with men in the job market. State and party officials refer to the Women's Union as a powerful influence in policy, a fact which in itself raises the status of women and the legitimacy of their claims for social and political equality.

The legal intervention which has characterized the strategy used by the state to incorporate gains for women into social and political frameworks--more resistant to erosion than those based on popular opinion--does provide remedies for women whose personal situations may have reverted to "feudal" forms. However, by permitting the reinstatement of patriarchy in return for domestic peace, the regime's decision to take the easy way out in the villages reinstated massive structural impediments to the actual realization of women's rights symbolically enshrined in Viet Nam's constitutions and laws. This decision is reinforced by gender inequality in the symbolic reconstruction of the revolutionary past which undermines the legitimacy of women's claims to equality with men. Both support the continued legitimacy of Confucian social and cultural patterns.

In his analysis of the French revolution, Alexis de Tocqueville concluded that post-revolutionary France was not greatly dissimilar from the society of the ancien regime (1955). Theda Skocpol's analysis of three great revolutions--the French, the Russian, and the Chinese--came to a similar conclusion (1979). Although revolutions make great changes in class relations and in the relative power of the state as opposed to society, there are vast continuities between pre- and post-revolutionary societies and cultures that, over time, dissolve novel social arrangements and recreate old notions of legitimacy and old patterns of relationships, even when the identities of the groups occupying the various positions in the patterns are not the same as the old one. The Viet Nam experience demonstrates why this is true and how these continuities are constructed.

Revolutionaries pay tremendous attention to who gets to run the state after the shooting is over. Theda Skocpol says that revolutionary leaders compose a "state class" that benefits directly from revolutionary success, the only way for its members to achieve high levels of status and power (1979:164-167). It is clear that, after 1965, the leadership in North Viet Nam was much more concerned to maintain, consolidate, and gain power for itself than for opponents of the southern regime or for women and other marginal groups in the north. (These northern groups had supported

the revolution but offered little in the way of resources to support the men struggling for dominance in the new state.) By ignoring the needs of the southern revolutionaries for so long, the DVRN regime contributed to the divergence in ideology, culture, experience, and identification that has made the reintegration of the country difficult and painful. By ignoring the needs of women, it ensured the continuation and strengthening of social groups and structures that undermine the legitimacy, power, and reach of the state.

Conservatives--counter-revolutionaries--are more likely than revolutionaries to believe that a harmony between personal life and larger social structures ensures stability. Claudia Johnson (1988) shows how English conservatives tried to restrict women's personal freedom as part of a strategy to stave-off "Jacobinism" and class conflict in England (which they feared would break out in imitation of the revolution in France). They believed that preservation of the patriarchal family would protect the broader social and political status quo. Some may doubt the logic or truth of this assumption, yet its opposite is visible to some extent in post-revolutionary Viet Nam. Failure to overthrow the patriarchal family along with the old regime solidified a social pattern that reduces the new state's ability to command resources and pursue its own interests (Migdal 1988:31-32).

Women may hold important positions in government and industry in Viet Nam today, but these positions are few compared to their proportion in the population given an assumption of gender equality in Vietnamese society. This demonstrates the failure of the regime to consolidate the cultural gains, as opposed to the class and political gains, made by the revolution. It is also indicative of a structural contradiction in the consideration of gender as analogous to class. Women's interests as women may and often do conflict with their economic class interests, group interests, and even their personal situations. Catholic and middle class women under Diem's regime joined Madame Nhu's organizations even though Diem had reluctantly abolished polygamy in 1958 and did not enforce the new law once it was passed. Women adjust to the desires of husbands and in-laws in socialist rural communes even when this means that they must work longer hours than men and neglect their infants in the process. The organization of women as a revolutionary class and expectations that they will be consistent in the pursuit of their class interests thus defined is borne out by events only in the minority of cases where women value gender solidarity over class, group, and personal interests and are willing to accept the social and personal consequences of their choice.

These interests help to explain why gains made by women in one period tend to erode over time. Women themselves fail to maintain solidarity with one another and men place obstacles in the paths of the ones who try. Few women but most men favor gender-class

identity over other identities. The recurrence of patriarchy as a mode of social control in rural villages in Viet Nam after 1957, and throughout the country after reintegration in 1975, provides strong evidence of the ease with which men can adjust their world views to block out inconsistencies arising from the pursuit of male gender-class interests.

The roots of this difference probably lie in differences in the socialization of women and men, differences that may be so intimately bound up with the mother-daughter relationship that no amount of revolutionary transformation can undo them (Gilligan 1982). Even if such "undoing" were possible, it would not be desirable: the loss of the relational organization characteristic of women's social life in favor of universalizing the competitive and legalistic organization characteristic of the social life of men would be destructive for human beings as a whole (Brock Utne 1985; Di Stefano 1983).

This basic difference in the expression of gender identity in social organization, coupled with the political compromises that are routinely made in order for a new regime to entrench itself, keep social structures that oppress women alive and well--despite the massive upheavals in political control and class structure that revolutionary transformation brings about. Thus the gains in legal protection made by women through their participation in revolutionary movements will always be more fragile than corresponding gains made by men. They are undermined by the revival or resurgence of social patterns thought to have been eliminated by the revolutionary process. The longevity of the larger changes brought about by revolutions is thus a hostage to the remnants of the past that continue to exercise control over people and other resources independently of the state. When revolutions fail to liberate women to the same extent that they liberate men, they also fail to protect the liberation of men from future erosion and assault.

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1. The exact working of this quote varies from source to source. This is the version told to me by Duong Thi Duyen, Secretary for Western Affairs of the Viet Nam Women's Union, on January 4, 1988 in Hanoi.
2. Douglas Pike uses this as evidence that women were exploited by male communist revolutionaries, for whom they were merely "the water buffalo[es] of the Revolution" (1966:178).
3. This attentisme is very clear in the Rand interviews. Questioners asked many of these defectors and captives what percentage of their village supported the NLF and what percentage did not. NLF supporters were generally reported as a positive number: 3 or 10 or 30 percent of the villages from which the respondents came. The remainder of the village populations was almost never judged to be GVN supportive, however. They were described as "neutral."
4. Compare the views of southerner Nguyen Thi Dinh reported in the Christian Science Monitor November 4, 1987 (at the time she was president of the Women's Union) and those of northern Huong Thi Duyen, another top official of the Women's Union, revealed in an interview on January 1, 1988. In the interview, Madame Duyen attributed the relative lack of women in important economic and political positions in Viet Nam to the absence of education for such a long period--something that should have affected men at least as much as women. She attributed the drop in the number of women elected to the National Assembly in 1987 to a failure by the Women's Union to campaign effectively. In contrast, it was reported that Madame Dinh believed that the inferior position of women in post-revolutionary Viet Nam was the result of men clinging to their outmoded Confucian values and privileges.
5. Wiegersma (1988:162-163, 221-224) reports the same pattern in other northern co-ops prior to the reintegration of the country and throughout the country afterwards.
6. This figure was calculated from the list presented in Nguyen Huu Tho (n.d.) and represents a high estimate even though the list is not complete and a full list may have included additional women and men. However, the list omits the "secret" leaders of the NLF discussed in Pike (1966:216-217),

and alluded to in Truong (1985). Troung identifies himself as one of these secret members of the NLF leadership. It is unlikely that any of the secret members was female as the secrecy itself was a function of the high position in either the government of South Viet Nam or in a major private corporation that these NLF leaders held. None of these positions was occupied by a woman.

Figure 1



Figure 2



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