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Selling "Operation Passage to Freedom": Dr. Thomas Dooley and the Religious Overtones of Early American Involvement in Vietnam

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Selling “Operation Passage to Freedom”:
Dr. Thomas Dooley and the Religious Overtones of
Early American Involvement in Vietnam

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
The Department of History

by

David Patrick Johnson

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Dedicated to
my grandfather

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Background.....	3
Dooley’s Place in History	8
Methodology.....	11
The Commonality of Religiosity	12
Sacrifice and Suffering, Persecution and Perseverance.....	23
American Humanitarianism.....	35
Conclusion	44
Notes	47
Bibliography	51
Vita.....	54

ABSTRACT

Vietnam was partitioned at the 17th parallel on 21 July 1954 with the signing of the Geneva Accords. During the following three hundred days, between 600,000 and one million Vietnamese civilians traveled from North Vietnam to South Vietnam. Three hundred thousand of these individuals were transported in the United States Navy's evacuation efforts, dubbed Operation Passage to Freedom. The Navy recognized the propaganda value of the evacuation from areas under communist control, but American audiences did not respond to the coverage afforded to the American operation. In 1956, a year after the completion of the evacuation, Dr. Thomas Dooley released *Deliver Us from Evil*, a first-hand account of his own experiences in Vietnam during the evacuation. This book enjoyed literary success and became a bestseller. This study explores the reasons Dooley enjoyed propagandistic success while other pieces of propaganda failed to sustain American interest.

Keywords

Thomas Dooley, Vietnam, Operation Passage to Freedom, refugees, propaganda

Introduction

The mass exodus of Vietnamese refugees from communist-controlled North Vietnam to South Vietnam in 1954 and 1955 “was laden with propaganda potential on both sides of the Bamboo Curtain,” reports Dr. Thomas A. Dooley.¹ Yet the American Navy doctor, who provided medical care to these refugees as officer-in-charge of the Preventive Medicine and Sanitation Unit in Haiphong, North Vietnam, also realized that the evacuation to the South may not sustain the interest of American audiences. As Dooley wrote to his mother on 28 September 1954, “I wonder what America is saying about this whole thing Living so close, really right in the thing, it reaches gigantic proportions and is all-consuming, but in America it may well just be another item in the newspaper.”²

Dooley’s concerns were indeed legitimate. The United States Navy, which assisted in the evacuation efforts between August 1954 and May 1955, immediately recognized “the uniqueness, international significance, potential dramatic impact, and eminent suitability of the operation as a vehicle for favorable publicity.”³ Unfortunately, according to the Navy document “Comments and Recommendations – Public Information,” the propaganda campaign accompanying the American evacuation efforts in Vietnam, dubbed “Operation Passage to Freedom” by the United States Navy and “Operation Exodus” by the United States Operations Mission, was “disappointing.”⁴

Dooley’s first-hand account of his experiences in Vietnam, entitled *Deliver Us from Evil: The Story of Viet Nam’s Flight to Freedom*, was published in April 1956, almost exactly one year after the completion of the evacuation from North Vietnam. Simultaneously, a condensed version of this work was printed in the April 1956 edition of the *Reader’s Digest*, which has been identified, in Seth Jacobs’ *America’s Miracle Man in Vietnam*, as “the most widely read

magazine in the world” during the 1950s.⁵ Hugh Wilford, author of *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America*, reports that Dooley’s book “enjoyed unanimous critical praise ... and unprecedented sales, eventually going through twenty printings and translation into more languages than any previous book except for the Bible.”⁶

While other propagandistic works about the Vietnamese evacuation failed to hold the interest of American audiences, *Deliver Us from Evil* was a propaganda success in the United States. This success can be attributed to many factors, from the wit Dooley displays in this work to his own attractive appearance, a factor almost always noted in advertisements for the doctor’s speaking engagements that came in the wake of his literary success.

Dooley’s greatest strength, however, is his ability to personalize what historian Ronald B. Frankum, author of *Operation Passage to Freedom: The United States Navy in Vietnam, 1954-1955*, the most detailed scholarly work to date on the American evacuation effort, has labeled the “moral obligation” of the United States government to assist the South Vietnamese government during and after the evacuation of the refugees from North Vietnam. This obligation was forged by “American experiences and actions during the operation [which] entrenched the notion of moral obligation by the United States toward the new Republic of Vietnam,” explains Frankum, “and reinforced early American commitment to building a nation below the seventeenth parallel that would be able to withstand the threat of its communist neighbor and emerge as a responsible, active member of the international community.”⁷

Yet even as Frankum presents an emotional dimension of the objectives of American policy makers, he attributes this “moral obligation” only to the “American personnel involved in the naval operations, as well as those involved in the resettlement and rehabilitation of the refugees.”⁸ Hence, Frankum’s “moral obligation” did not apply to those Americans who were

not directly involved in the evacuation from North Vietnam. With the publication of Dooley's *Deliver Us from Evil*, however, American audiences would come to appreciate and understand this "moral obligation."

Between two-thirds and three-quarters of the refugee population practiced the Catholic religion. Yet Dooley portrays this majority as a totality, presenting the refugee population as monolithically Catholic. In doing so, the American doctor presents those fleeing from communist-controlled North Vietnam as individuals with whom American audiences could identify and relate. Dooley also describes his fellow Navy servicemen who assisted the Vietnamese refugees to travel southward. The American doctor emphasizes the humanitarianism with which these naval ambassadors to Vietnam treated the northern refugees. Through such descriptions, Dooley draws emotional responses from his audience, most importantly sympathy for the plight of the Catholic refugees and respect and compassion for his Navy companions who participated in Operation Passage to Freedom. By describing his own experiences with the refugees and his fellow servicemen, Dooley projects his own relationships with these individuals onto his audience, creating an emotional connection between his readers and both the refugees fleeing from communist-controlled North Vietnam and the Americans who assisted them in this endeavor. Creating these connections is ultimately how Dooley succeeded in winning support for the United States Navy's involvement in the evacuation and the continuing role of the American government in Vietnam.

Background

On 21 July 1954, the Geneva Conference in Switzerland concluded with the signing of a negotiated settlement, commonly referred to as the Geneva Accords, which partitioned Vietnam

at the 17th parallel. Signed by a plethora of international powers, the Accords ended the First Indochina War, between the communist-led, nationalist Viet Minh, fighting for their independence, and the French colonial regime, trying to maintain its authority in the country that had been a French possession since 1883. The Accords did provide Vietnam with independence, but in many regards, the agreement was a failure. In *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, George C. Herring explains, "The major issues over which the war was fought were not settled" by the agreement reached at Geneva.⁹ Moreover, the Viet Minh had won significant victories during this eight year war, which were not reflected in the terms of the Geneva Accords. P. J. Honey, in *Communism in North Vietnam: Its Role in the Sino-Soviet Dispute*, refers to the First Indochina War as "a struggle in which [the Vietnamese communists] had unquestionably defeated their opponents," yet states that the leaders of this side of the conflict were "forced to bow to strong Soviet pressure" and to accept territorial gains that were less than their victories warranted. Hence, due to pressure from their Chinese and Soviet allies, the Vietnamese communists accepted the agreement partitioning Vietnam at the 17th parallel rather than negotiating for further territorial gains.¹⁰

North of the 17th parallel, the Vietnamese communists, led by Ho Chi Minh, established the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, or North Vietnam as it is commonly referred to in the American lexicon. The Republic of Vietnam, also known as South Vietnam, was founded with the American-supported Vietnamese nationalist, Ngo Dinh Diem, establishing his leadership south of this latitudinal line. Reunification elections were scheduled to be held no later than 21 July 1956, and according to David L. Anderson, author of *Trapped by Success: The Eisenhower Administration and Vietnam, 1953-1961*, "the delegates [at Geneva] asserted that 'the military line [at the 17th parallel] is provisional and should not be interpreted as constituting a political or

territorial boundary.”¹¹ This deadline would come and go without the scheduled elections being held, however, and Vietnam would remain divided until the victory of the Vietnamese communists in 1975.

Another deadline established by the Geneva Accords stipulated that all military personnel must be evacuated from the zone in which the opposing force was asserting its control. A period of 300 days was set by which time all forces were to be evacuated. Hence, over 133,000 French troops, accompanied by their dependents, were evacuated to the South.¹² Likewise, approximately 90,000 Viet Minh soldiers, along with approximately 40,000 dependents, were transported to the North.¹³ Along with these military personnel and their dependents, Vietnamese civilians were granted freedom of movement, during the 300-day period, between the two zones of influence. Article 14d of the Geneva Accords states,

From the date of entry into force of the present agreement until the movement of troops is completed, any civilians residing in a district controlled by one party who wish to go and live in the zone assigned to the other party shall be permitted and helped to do so by the authorities in that district.¹⁴

As no truly reliable statistics are available, estimates of the number of Vietnamese civilians who travelled from North Vietnam to South Vietnam vary considerably. These estimates range from Frankum’s estimation, based on official naval statistics, that 600,000 Vietnamese civilians fled to the South to the assertion in the propagandistic article, “One Million Refugees, Victims of Communism from North Vietnam: The Story of the Most Extraordinary Mass Movement of Modern Times,” that “a total of more than one million refugees” travelled to the South from North Vietnam.¹⁵

The retreating French military initially accepted responsibility for the evacuation from North Vietnam. The Directorate General of Information in Saigon explains in *Operation*

Exodus: The Refugee Movement to Free Vietnam, however, “existing French facilities were obviously not adequate to cope with the gigantic movement to the South which was developing.”¹⁶ As Donald Heath, the United States Ambassador to Saigon, reported in August 1954 to the Department of State, the “[m]ass migration of ... North Vietnamese ... will be [a] failure unless US Government can bring planes and ships to Tonkin.”¹⁷ Concurring with the American ambassador’s sentiments about French limitations, the South Vietnamese government formally requested assistance from the United States on 6 August 1954; and the United States Navy became a third partner, along with the French and the South Vietnamese, in transporting individuals from north of the 17th parallel and resettling them south of this latitudinal line.¹⁸

In 1950, the United States began providing funds and material for the French military efforts in the First Indochina War. According to Anderson, for the fiscal year of 1954, financial aid from the United States constituted nearly 80 percent of the funds devoted to France’s military efforts in Vietnam.¹⁹ Hence, the American government was an active and concerned participant in the negotiations at Geneva. At the conference’s conclusion, however, the United States refused to sign the Accords. As Marilyn B. Young explains in *The Vietnam Wars, 1945-1990*, the United States administration stated that “it could not join the other powers in a blanket endorsement because of the provision that the International Control Commission would supervise elections. Only UN supervision ... would meet America’s exacting electoral standards.”²⁰ President Dwight D. Eisenhower stated of his administration’s refusal to sign the Geneva Accords, “The United States is issuing at Geneva a statement to the effect that it is not prepared to join in the Conference declaration, but ... in compliance with the United Nations Charter, the United States will not use force to disturb the settlement.”²¹ Herring explains the rationale behind this decision, stating that the refusal “protected [the United States government]

against domestic criticism and retained its freedom of action.”²² While the United States’ refusal to add its representatives’ signatures to the settlement reached at Geneva would later be used to justify actions defying the agreement, however, the American government agreed to assist in the evacuation from North Vietnam.

On 17 August 1954, the first load of Vietnamese refugees to be evacuated by the United States Navy, numbering approximately 2,000, was transported from Haiphong in North Vietnam to Saigon in South Vietnam aboard the USS *Menard*.²³ By the conclusion of the evacuation in May 1955, American efforts would account for the transportation of over 300,000 Vietnamese civilians to the South.²⁴

Although the United States Navy and government would officially classify Operation Passage to Freedom as a humanitarian endeavor, the assistance provided to North Vietnamese refugees by the Navy is also consistent with the United States government’s larger objectives in Vietnam, which Anderson succinctly explains:

From the termination of France’s Indochina War in 1954 to the end of America’s Indochina War in 1975, the U.S. goal was the survival of an independent, noncommunist, pro- Western government in Vietnam south of the seventeenth parallel to provide a Vietnamese nationalist alternative to the communist Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the North.²⁵

From 1954 to 1963, the United States would support the government of the Vietnamese Catholic, Ngo Dinh Diem. Indeed, while such recent scholarship as Edward Miller’s article, “Vision, Power and Agency: The Ascent of Ngô Đình Diệm,” has attempted to assert a more independent role for the political rise of Diem, many historians contend that the United States government was responsible for the ascent of Diem to the position of Prime Minister, and later to President, of South Vietnam. Jacobs, for example, states that “[f]rom the beginning, Diem’s government was an American creation.”²⁶

The evacuation from North Vietnam was of great importance to the survival of the Diem administration in South Vietnam. The most compelling evidence Miller offers to substantiate his claim of Diem's own rise to power is his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu's, establishment of the *Dang Can lao Nhan vi*, a political party whose "key objective was the mobilisation of support for a new nationalist political movement headed by Diem." The *Can lao* also forged an alliance with the Vietnamese Confederation of Christian Workers, widening the base of support for Diem within Vietnam.²⁷ Yet despite the support Diem had from such organizations, his Vietnamese power base upon his ascension to authority in South Vietnam was weak. By transporting several hundred thousand co-religionists of the Vietnamese Premier to the region under his control, the evacuation from North Vietnam "provided Diem with a clique: a politically malleable, culturally distinct group, wholly distrustful of Ho Chi Minh and the DRV, dependent for subsistence on Diem's government."²⁸ Hence, the northern evacuees provided a valuable addition to Diem's power base in South Vietnam. By describing the evacuation of refugees from North Vietnam as a "Flight to Freedom," then, Dooley assisted in winning support for the government to which these refugees were fleeing.

Dooley's Place in History

Dooley, aboard the USS *Montague*, arrived at the Baie d'Along in Vietnam on 14 August 1954.²⁹ Serving as the medical officer aboard this ship, he participated in the transportation of two groups of Vietnamese refugees, numbering approximately 2,000 each, from north of the 17th parallel to areas south of this latitudinal line. Ultimately, those who have studied his role in the evacuation, and Dooley himself, credit his promotion to officer-in-charge of the Preventive Medicine and Sanitation Unit at the embarkation camp in Haiphong to the Navy doctor's

capability to speak multiple languages. As James T. Fisher explains in *The Catholic Counterculture in America, 1933-1963*, “[H]is remarkable facility with languages – he not only spoke French fluently, but quickly acquired a basic understanding of Vietnamese – made him extremely valuable ... for executing the evacuation. In September he was reassigned to a special task force centered in Haiphong.”³⁰ While the part Dooley played in Haiphong was certainly of great importance to the evacuation, however, his greatest contribution was propagandizing the operation and personalizing it for American audiences.

Dooley won considerable celebrity for his role in Operation Passage to Freedom through his first-hand account of the Navy operation, as well as his subsequent medical work in Laos. In 1959, while working in Laotian hospitals established by the Medical International Cooperative (MEDICO), an organization he co-founded the previous year, the young doctor was ranked seventh on the Gallup Poll’s annual list of the “most admired” men in the world. Other names on this list included Winston Churchill and Pope John XXIII. Despite such iconic status, however, Dooley’s contributions, including his role in the Vietnamese exodus, have been all but eradicated from American histories of Vietnam. Moreover, for decades, Operation Passage to Freedom and the movement of Vietnamese civilians from North Vietnam to South Vietnam has received little attention from historians. In his biography of Dooley, *Dr. America: The Lives of Thomas A. Dooley, 1912-1961*, Fisher states, “This event [Operation Passage to Freedom], occurring nearly a decade prior to the ‘Americanization’ of the Vietnam War, is never mentioned in histories of the conflict.” He goes on to say, “Dooley’s name is missing from the indexes of virtually all of the scores of well-known studies of the war.”³¹

Many factors contribute to this scholarly oversight. Dooley died young, at the age of 34. He ceased to be a public figure in 1961, after losing his battle with melanoma. MEDICO, the

organization to which Dooley devoted his post-naval efforts and which the doctor intended to be his legacy, was forced to merge with the Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE) shortly after his death, due to financial problems.³² The posthumous revelation of Dooley's homosexuality distanced him from his followers, particularly his Catholic supporters. Most importantly, though, as the situation in Vietnam intensified into the Second Indochina War and as the United States escalated its involvement in this war, particularly by sending American troops to fight and die in this country half-way around the world, the humanitarian efforts of Operation Passage to Freedom and Dooley's role in this evacuation became of less interest to historians and their audiences.

Yet Operation Passage to Freedom and the ways Dooley presented this to his American audiences are important for understanding how American involvement in Vietnam was presented to the American populace. This void has begun to be filled by recent scholarship. In particular, Fisher's collective works, Frankum's *Operation Passage to Freedom*, Seth Jacob's *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, Religion, Race, and U.S. Intervention in Southeast Asia*, and Wilford's *The Mighty Wurlitzer* have brought Operation Passage to Freedom and Dr. Thomas Dooley back into America's consciousness.

By focusing on the propaganda campaign accompanying Operation Passage to Freedom, with particular emphasis on the success of Dooley's *Deliver Us from Evil*, this study seeks to supplement these works and provide a new interpretation of the importance of Dooley's role as a propagandist. While most discussions of Operation Passage to Freedom focus on official governmental policy in Vietnam, a focus on the American coverage of this naval mission provides an understanding of how the evacuation in a country that most Americans knew almost nothing about was viewed by the general American populace. The focus on Dooley's portrayal

of the evacuation from North Vietnam as an American act of humanitarianism to assist Vietnamese civilians who possessed similar religious beliefs to those Americans who read *Deliver Us from Evil* reveals why Dooley enjoyed such success as a propagandist. Moreover, this illustrates Dooley's role in winning support for the actions of the United States government in Vietnam.

Methodology

In his discussion of the news coverage of Operation Passage to Freedom, Jacobs describes three themes that are prevalent throughout American reportage of the evacuation from North Vietnam: "the devoutness of the Catholic refugees, the suffering they endured in making their pilgrimage, and the perfidiousness of the Viet Minh, who employed every obstructionist tactic ... to stem the exodus."³³ While Jacobs focuses largely on the Catholic coverage of this event, this study instead examines reports intended for a wider, less denominational audience. A comparison of how these themes are utilized by Dooley and by other propagandists covering Operation Passage to Freedom illustrates the ways in which Dooley cultivates emotional connections between his audience and the Vietnamese refugees who fled to South Vietnam. A fourth theme to be examined, that of the humanitarianism of the American men who assisted these refugees in their flight, reveals how the American Navy doctor is able to project his own relationships with his fellow servicemen onto readers of *Deliver Us from Evil*.

Dooley's 1956 bestseller will serve as the crux of this work. Another source, however, deserves a special introduction. The article "They'll Remember the Bayfield," by William J. Lederer, appeared in the March 1955 edition of the *Reader's Digest*. This article describes Lederer's own passage aboard the USS *Bayfield*, as it transported approximately 2,000

Vietnamese refugees from Haiphong to Saigon. According to Fisher, Lederer's article "provided Dooley with an explicit model for writing of the refugee operation."³⁴ Moreover, Lederer assisted the Navy doctor in both the writing and the publication of *Deliver Us from Evil*. Lederer, identified by Fisher as Dooley's "literary mentor," is widely credited with transforming Dooley's original manuscript about his experiences during the evacuation from North Vietnam, which Wilford claims "[read] more like an official report to his commanding officers," into the emotionally charged, first-hand account that appears in *Deliver Us from Evil*.³⁵ As Fisher states, "The tone and texture of *Deliver Us from Evil* were prefigured in 'They'll Remember the Bayfield.'"³⁶ Hence, the assistance Dooley received from the *Reader's Digest* correspondent was of critical importance to the success of the Navy doctor's book.

Several other works produced with propagandistic intentions will also be analyzed to reveal the different ways the evacuation was presented to American audiences. Official documents produced by the United States Navy and government provide valuable statistical information and interpretations of the success of the operation. Likewise, along with secondary works, these sources provide a foil against which propagandistic works can be judged. Ultimately, these sources will be utilized to illustrate why Dooley's book was successful while other works covering Operation Passage to Freedom and the evacuation from North Vietnam were deemed "disappointing" by naval officials.

The Commonality of Religiosity

The religiosity of the Catholic refugees was of great propagandistic value to the American coverage of the exodus, and Dooley utilizes Jacobs' three themes of devoutness, suffering, and perseverance to convey the strength of the Vietnamese refugees' religious

convictions. While Dooley devotes his attention to the Catholic refugees, thereby conforming to the actuality of the statistical constitution of the refugee population, he does not present Catholicism as a distinctly different religion than Protestantism, or even Judaism. Jacobs claims, “as far as [Dooley] was concerned, the historic expressions of Judaism and Christianity had been integrated into a single entity: religion.”³⁷ Hence, while approximately 2,000 Vietnamese Protestants participated in the exodus from North Vietnam, Dooley does not make any distinction between this group and the Catholic majority. The form of Christianity described by Dooley, labeled “Catholicism,” was not based on sectarian influences. Whether these Christians accepted transubstantiation or consubstantiation was of no importance to the American doctor. Instead, Dooley presents a group of Christians with whom all American Christians could identify, regardless of their own denominational affiliations.

The focus on the refugees’ strong religiosity was conducive to American audiences, as according to Jacobs, “in the 1950s all faiths and classes” experienced “the religious boom.” Jacobs further describes the impact this religious revival had in official governmental policy. In 1954, the words “under God” were added to the Pledge of Allegiance. “In God We Trust” began to be printed on American currency the following year. In fact, President Eisenhower seriously contemplated “an amendment to the Constitution that would state, ‘This nation devoutly recognizes the authority and law of Jesus Christ, Savior and Ruler of Nations.’” Yet the form of Christianity endorsed by Eisenhower, like that propagated by Dooley, was not sectarian. This is best exemplified by the President’s statement that “[o]ur government makes no sense unless it is founded upon a deeply felt religious faith, and I don’t care what it is.” Clearly, though, the President endorsed Christianity as the faith upon which American policy should stand.³⁸

Yet while Dooley's depiction of Catholicism as a religion indistinguishable from other forms of Christianity appealed to all types of Christian Americans, his usage of the term "Catholic," as well as his own Catholic upbringing, enticed the organization most fervently opposed to atheist communism: the Catholic Church. Catholicism was one of the main beneficiaries of "the religious boom" of the 1950s. As Hugh Wilford states, "Between 1940 and 1960, the nation's Catholic population doubled; church leaders ... enjoyed unprecedented popularity; ordinary Catholics were better educated, wealthier, and more upwardly mobile socially than they had ever been before."³⁹ The antipathy the growing number of American Catholics felt toward communism made the anticommunist sentiments in *Deliver Us from Evil* all the more welcome in Catholic circles. "One thing which can be said for certain (that could definitely not be said with respect to other Christian dominations)," according to Fisher, "is that no one in the American church of the 1940s and early 1950s believed it was possible to be at once a Catholic and a Communist, socialist, or self-styled Marxist of any flavor."⁴⁰ Indeed, since the 1920s, when Christians began to be persecuted in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), American Catholics had grown increasingly hostile toward communism, and their opposition to this ideology had continually heightened.⁴¹ According to Kellie C. Reilly, author of "Leading the Anticommunist Crusade: New Orleans's Catholic Action of the South as a Microcosm of Catholic Anticommunism, 1944-49," "In July 1949, the Vatican ... issu[ed] a sweeping statement which excommunicated anyone who deliberately believed in, disseminated, or aided the implementation of communist doctrine."⁴² Hence, both the religious elements, which appealed to followers of all forms of Christianity, and the anticommunist sentiments of *Deliver Us from Evil* appealed to American Catholics.

The American Catholic press latched onto the religious aspects of Dooley's work; and, as Fisher reports, "Catholic writers tellingly yoked his story of the Vietnam refugee operation to the core of their spiritual identity."⁴³ Indeed, Dooley provides bountiful ammunition for Catholic commentators, as his accounts of the Catholic refugees' religiosity and his tales of religious persecution of Vietnamese Catholics are a central component of his chronicle of the exodus from North Vietnam.

Dooley and his mentor, Lederer, identify religion as the primary motivating factor influencing individuals' decisions to travel from north of the 17th parallel to areas below this latitudinal line. According to Lederer, "They sacrificed their homes and all their possessions for one precious thing: the right to worship in the religion of their choice."⁴⁴ Similarly, Dooley states that "the decisive motive in nine cases out of ten" was the refugees' desire "[f]or the right to continue to worship their God."⁴⁵ Hence, these authors portray religion as a nearly monolithic motivation for the exodus. Sheer numbers certainly support such an assertion, but these statistics are not as telling as they appear in regards to motivation.

Even according to the minimal estimates of the total number of refugees and of the percentage of the refugee population that was Catholic, this religious explanation still excludes, at least, 200,000 evacuees from North Vietnam. Practitioners of the Catholic faith, or of other Christian denominations, were not the only North Vietnamese to take advantage of Article 14d of the Geneva Accords. Other segments of the population that contributed significantly to the immensity of the exodus included those categorized as wealthy landowners by the Communist regime; those who collaborated with the French colonial administration; racial minorities; and those Nghia M. Vo, author of *The Vietnamese Boat People, 1954 and 1975-1992*, identifies as "intellectuals."⁴⁶ As the Commander of Amphibious Group One reported in 1954,

“Conversations with late arrived refugees disclose they want to leave RED-dominated TONKIN DELTA less for religious reasons than because of hard work without pay, higher taxes, constant marauding and lawlessness, and intense indoctrination in communist philosophy.”⁴⁷ These individuals were not motivated to flee to the South by religious criteria, but participated in the evacuation because of political reasons and fears of violence against their person and property by the Communist regime in North Vietnam.

In 1951, the newly legalized Communist Party in North Vietnam instituted heavy taxation on landowners through an “‘economic leveling’ program.”⁴⁸ Further, the Vietnamese communists attempted to enact land reform programs in North Vietnam as early as the fall of 1953, a year prior to the partitioning of Vietnam. The property of those landowners deemed wealthy was confiscated and distributed to poor and middle peasants.⁴⁹ Duong Van Mai Elliott, in her family history *The Sacred Willow: Four Generations in the Life of a Vietnamese Family*, describes this as “a bloody land reform during which thousands were killed.”⁵⁰ Those landowners who survived the brutality of the land reform campaign had obvious reason to fear the continuance of such social reforms under the Communist regime that took power north of the 17th parallel. Indeed, Le Ba Kong reports in “A Refugee from North Vietnam Looks Back,” that the “drastic land reform program antagonizing the people” motivated many to travel southward.⁵¹

Those who had collaborated with the French during the colonial period and during the First Indochina War also had reason to fear the ascent of the Communist regime to power. Elliott explains that her father had held a variety of positions working for the French administration. At the time the Geneva Accords were signed, he was “in charge of the finances of Tonkin while the [French-controlled] government was winding down its business and moving

to the south.” Realizing his position would attract reprisals from the communists, Elliott states, “My father was adamant that we would not stay in Hanoi. He was sure the Viet Minh would retaliate. He would be a dead man, and, as his relatives, we all would be persecuted.” Many like Elliott and her family were forced to flee from North Vietnam to escape reprisals for their connection to the French colonial government.⁵²

While many wealthy landowners and French collaborators fled from North Vietnam, however, these demographic groups were not distinctly different from the Vietnamese Catholic population. As Fisher states, “[M]any of the Catholics had fought for the French under the papal flag in the 1946-1954 war, while others were sure to become victims of Ho Chi Minh’s increasingly brutal land reform program.”⁵³ Hence, many Catholics fled for the same reasons that other segments of the population were motivated to leave North Vietnam, rather than for the religious reasons propounded by Dooley and Lederer.

The South Vietnamese government, and its American supporters, had political motivation to manipulate religious fears. According to Wilford, Lieutenant Colonel Edward Geary Lansdale of the United States Air Force arrived in Vietnam in June 1954 with orders “to carry out paramilitary and psychological operations intended to undermine the Vietminh and buttress the South Vietnamese government.”⁵⁴ One way to achieve these aims was to encourage the movement of Catholic refugees. These refugees, strongly opposed to communism and dependent upon the Diem regime for survival in the South, explains Fisher, became “the bulwark of a new state in the South,” widening Diem’s power base.⁵⁵ Lansdale orchestrated the spread of rumors amongst the Catholic population in North Vietnam, which were intended to increase the size of the evacuation. Some of these rumors, such as claims that “God has gone to the south” and that “Catholics will be excommunicated if they stay in the north,” were of a religious nature.⁵⁶ Other

rumors did not entail these religious aspects, but were still directed toward the Catholic communities. For example, pamphlets threatening American intervention, including the dropping of atomic bombs, were disseminated amongst North Vietnamese Catholics. While Lansdale and his agents in North Vietnam were responsible for these pamphlets, used to stimulate flight from the North, Dooley was undoubtedly oblivious to Lansdale's efforts. This is evinced by Dooley's description of "Viet Minh propaganda showing an aerial view of their ancient, and beloved capital of Hanoi. Over it were three concentric circles of Atomic destruction. Printed on this was just one word that all could read – 'My' which means 'American.'" Dooley calls the pamphlet, seemingly produced by the Viet Minh but really by Lansdale and his agents, "downright absurd."⁵⁷

Lansdale, then, artificially inflated the number of Catholic refugees fleeing from North Vietnam. While ostensibly working for the United States Air Force, Wilford reports that "he never learned how to fly a plane."⁵⁸ In reality, Lansdale was working undercover. He actually had covert ties to the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which he refused to discuss as late as 1972, in his memoirs entitled *In the Midst of Wars: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia*.⁵⁹ Still, Young states, "With boyish enthusiasm, Lansdale reported these triumphs, all of them in direct violation of the Geneva Accords, to the CIA."⁶⁰ Hence, it is clear that the assertion that religion was the primary factor motivating participation in the evacuation from North Vietnam is unsubstantiated. In truth, all segments of the refugee population, including Catholics, were motivated to travel south by a variety of factors.

Dooley briefly discusses some of the other factors that motivated North Vietnamese Catholics to become refugees, but he grants primacy to religious criteria: "Perhaps they could have borne up under the oppressive taxes, the crop quotas, the forced labor and the loss of

freedom. But when the right to worship God was taken from them ... they knew it was time to go.”⁶¹ Why, though, would Dooley essentially eschew these other influences, rife with anticommunist propaganda value, to focus on the religious aspects of the exodus?

While the population of the United States of America harbored deep-seated anticommunist sentiments, appealing to these alone was not sufficient to attract great interest from American audiences. Kenneth Osgood, author of *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad*, states, “The very premise ... that ‘freedom’ constituted an ideology antithetical to communism, seemed illogical to many public affairs officers.”⁶² American government officials, then, clearly questioned the propaganda value of the “ideology of freedom” as the antithesis of communism. One can infer from this statement that these officials did not believe American audiences would accept this notion. Hence, such portrayals as that made by the Directorate General of Information in Saigon, which identifies the exodus as a flight from “Communist slavery [in] the North [to] independence and freedom [in] the South,” was not an effective means of presenting the evacuation of North Vietnam to American audiences.⁶³

Realizing the lack of appeal of this dichotomy of freedom and communism, Lansdale, according to Fisher, “concluded that the refugee exodus needed to be accelerated and dramatized with a bolder focus on the religious dimensions of the campaign.” Hence, unbeknownst to Dooley, the Navy doctor became a part of Lansdale’s mission to discredit the communists in the North and to promote Operation Passage to Freedom to win support for the South Vietnamese government under Ngo Dinh Diem. Indeed, as Fisher states, “It seems Tom never fully grasped the true nature of his mission in Vietnam ... when his medical intelligence work was subordinated to an emerging role as a uniquely gifted spokesman for a massive political

operation”: providing Diem with loyal citizens and, hence, strengthening the Premier’s government in the South.⁶⁴ Lansdale may have played a role in Dooley’s debut as an author, as well. As previously discussed, William J. Lederer provided assistance to Dooley in both authorship and publication. Lansdale and Lederer were close friends. Lederer even based a character in his 1958 bestseller, *The Ugly American*, coauthored by Eugene Burdick, on the Air Force’s Lieutenant Colonel. Hugh Wilford suggests that Lansdale may have orchestrated Lederer’s assistance to Dooley, which transformed his rather dull manuscript, “Passage to Freedom,” into the bestselling *Deliver Us from Evil*.⁶⁵

Regardless of Lansdale’s role, however, *Deliver Us from Evil* presents the evacuation of North Vietnam as a Catholic exodus. By characterizing the evacuation as such, Dooley presents a story to which his American audience can relate, evoking sympathy from his readers for the Christian refugees. With the religious fervor in the United States during the 1950s, *Deliver Us from Evil* portrays a segment of the Vietnamese population demonstrating a seemingly equal level of Christian religiosity to that of its audience. Dooley thereby wins affection for the refugees by presenting the similarities of the refugees and his audience, creating a common bond between the two entities.

Dooley and his predecessor, Lederer, provide few indications that non-Catholics made the journey to the South. Due in large part to the works of these authors, Jacobs claims that “by the close of Passage to Freedom, ‘many Americans came to believe that Vietnam was a predominantly Catholic country.’”⁶⁶ The only evidence that the refugee population was not monolithically Catholic in Lederer’s *Reader’s Digest* article is provided in an introductory note from the editor: “When the Reds took over North Vietnam last year, a half million refugees fled southward from their homeland. Most of them were Catholics.”⁶⁷ Without the single word

“most” appearing in this note, the article provides no indication that the refugee population was not entirely Catholic.

Likewise, Dooley presents little information about those refugees who did not practice the Catholic faith. While the American doctor describes the Buddhist children of Madame Vu Thi Ngai’s orphanage who fled to the South in April 1955 and admits that “[t]here were many Buddhists among the refugees,” this group is almost completely ignored throughout *Deliver Us from Evil*. In contrast, the refugees’ Catholicism is continually emphasized. For example, Dooley describes the possessions they brought aboard the USS *Montague*: “Usually they had some clothes, always a rice bowl and chopsticks, invariably a religious object – a crucifix, statue or sacred picture.” Moreover, the individual tales of Christian faith interspersed throughout Dooley’s book remind readers of the Catholic refugees’ religiosity. Examples include an old man boarding the American ship clutching a bamboo pipe in one hand and, “[i]n the other hand, even more tightly, he held a chipped frame – a picture of the Blessed Virgin,” and the group of refugees from Cua Lo who hoisted “a yellow and gold flag displaying the Pope’s tiara and the keys of Saint Peter” upon their arrival in Haiphong aboard small watercrafts. As these are not supplemented by any comparable tales about the Buddhist refugees, *Deliver Us from Evil* portrays the refugee population as essentially monolithically Catholic.⁶⁸

By presenting the refugees as uniformly Catholic, Dooley and Lederer make the entirety of the refugee population more accessible to their American audiences, creating a common bond between the two groups: Christianity. The refugees are not merely presented as coreligionists of their American counterparts in these works, however. Dooley and Lederer place great emphasis on the piety and strong religious convictions of the refugees. The *Reader’s Digest* correspondent presents a group of individuals who views its entire experience aboard the USS *Bayfield* through

a religious lens. The refugees whom Lederer accompanied aboard this American ship, during a three-day voyage in August 1954, refer to the American sailors as “Patri,” and fail to understand when it is explained to them that “the sailors [are] not really priests, but only laymen treating their friends by the Golden Rule.” Similarly, upon receiving assistance bathing, a young girl explains to her mother, “[T]he big American is a priest. First he blessed me and then baptized me American.” Hence, according to Lederer, these refugees interpret both the kindness of the American sailors and the process of bathing as religiously significant. Lederer also emphasizes the refugees’ religiosity by describing them singing hymns aboard the ship and the last words attributed to the refugees in the *Reader’s Digest* article are “God bless you.”⁶⁹

Dooley, following the template established in “They’ll Remember the Bayfield,” also details the piety of the Catholic evacuees from North Vietnam. The doctor, who accompanied two groups of Vietnamese refugees aboard the USS *Montague*, describes Mass being conducted on the deck of the ship, stating of the refugees, “[T]heir faith was strong and comforting and made us humble in their presence.” When Dooley was later transferred from this ship to serve at the embarkation camp in Haiphong, he describes the process of establishing this camp with tents provided by the United States government. In keeping with the theme of the refugees’ religiosity, Dooley refers to “the most important center in the camp, our church.” He describes the religious services conducted here, as well: “Every morning ... Mass was said for the camp’s fifteen thousand refugees. They sought no favors. They did not ask God where their children would roam beyond tomorrow’s arch, but they thanked Him with strong voices in prayer and in song.”⁷⁰

Sacrifice and Suffering, Persecution and Perseverance

While these liturgical demonstrations of faith illustrate the strength of the refugees' piousness, descriptions of the sacrifices they made to participate in the exodus from North Vietnam provide even more powerful evidence of their religious convictions, as they are willing to leave their livelihoods, their homes, their possessions, and even their family members in the North to pursue religious freedom in the South. Dooley and Lederer, by portraying these sacrifices as religiously motivated, stress the depth of the refugees' religious convictions. To religious American audiences, attributing these sacrifices to the refugees' religiosity presented a more powerful message than did statements such as that made in the *New York Times* on 24 August 1954 by Henry R. Lieberman that "[m]any refugees in the Haiphong area ... have left their homes in the Red River delta."⁷¹ Such factual though emotionally flat statements about the refugees' sacrifices are interspersed throughout the *New York Times* coverage of the evacuation. Even when articles refer to the Catholic majority, many do not convey the importance of religion to the refugees. Hence, the *New York Times* coverage of the exodus does not evoke the same level of sympathy from its audience toward its coreligionist Vietnamese fleeing from the North that Dooley and Lederer are able to inspire by portraying the exodus as religiously motivated.

Yet these authors also eschew the refugees' sacrifices when this better serves their propagandistic motives. Both Dooley and Lederer discuss frightened, sullen refugees boarding the American ships and arriving at the embarkation camp in Haiphong. But the fears of the fleeing Vietnamese were quickly alleviated by the hospitality and kindness of the American servicemen: "[I]t seemed a heart-warming miracle," states Dooley, "to notice the blossoming of shy smiles here and there, first among the children, and then among their elders too. The mood of our guests was becoming more tranquil."⁷² Lederer, too, describes the refugees forgetting

their plight as a result of the kindness of, and oftentimes the candy given to them by, the American sailors. Indeed, the *Reader's Digest* correspondent goes so far as to liken the experience of the refugees aboard the USS *Bayfield* to “a pleasure cruise,” dismissing the aforementioned sacrifices which the author had previously lamented.⁷³

These authors, then, present the sacrifices and losses of the refugees to gain sympathy for those migrating from North Vietnam to South Vietnam, but then portray the treatment allotted to the refugees by the American Navy men as a powerful antidote to such woes, allowing the refugees to forget the misfortunes they had experienced. Hence, this method of selectively devoting attention to the sacrifices made by the Vietnamese refugees serves two purposes: winning sympathy for the refugees by presenting their losses, as well as the strength of their religious convictions, and illustrating the humanitarianism demonstrated by the American sailors, winning support for these men.

Such restraint from dwelling on the sacrifices of the refugees is also exercised by Le Ba Kong, who participated in the mass evacuation from North Vietnam in 1954. As Kong recalls, “Nearly one million in North Vietnam, including my parents, my brothers, sister and myself, preferred to sacrifice everything and move to the South rather than remain in the North ... where we saw communism being imposed more and more.” Kong goes on to describe abandoning his family’s two houses in the North, as well as the English-language school which he had established in Hanoi. As he states, “Every refugee family sacrificed things they had spent a lifetime acquiring.”⁷⁴ Yet, after citing these losses, Kong neglects to discuss them further. Instead, he focuses on his family’s and his own successful adjustment to life in the South.

Kong’s account, however, is a clear piece of propaganda, designed to illustrate the success of Operation Passage to Freedom and of the refugees’ adaptation to the customs and

culture in South Vietnam. The cover letter attached to this document labels “A Refugee from North Vietnam Looks Back” as a “USIS Feature,” indicating the role played by the United States Information Service in the production of this article. Moreover, the cover letter states that this document is “[f]or use by newspapers, magazines, or radio stations with or without credit to USIS.”⁷⁵ Hence, this document also demonstrates the practice of hiding American organizations’ role in the publication of such propaganda. As Osgood explains, “A government stamp on any form of propaganda, no matter how benign the message, immediately raised suspicions in the minds of target audiences.” Hence, as the historian of Eisenhower-era propaganda states, the President “believed that for propaganda to be effective, ‘the hand of government must be carefully concealed.’”⁷⁶

As Kong’s account in “A Refugee from North Vietnam Looks Back” was clearly recorded with propagandistic intentions, as were Dooley’s and Lederer’s contributions to the coverage of the Vietnamese evacuation, the dismissal of sacrifices made in these documents and manuscripts must be treated with skepticism. Duong Van Mai Elliott, however, in explaining her own departure from North Vietnam in 1954, describes the difficulties of leaving possessions and acquaintances, as well as a way of life, behind in the North.

Elliott describes “frantically tr[ying] to sell what we could in the open-air market that had spontaneously sprung up” in Hanoi, “where people like us were trying to unload the belongings they could not take along and also to raise some much-needed cash for the move to the south.” Instead of eschewing these and less materialistic losses, however, Elliott describes lamenting her situation during the initial weeks and months in Saigon. “I want[ed] my past life back,” she says and compares her departure from the North to “suddenly hav[ing] the ground cut out from under you.” Moreover, Elliott describes her family’s emotionally charged, though tearless, departure

from North Vietnam: “Sad as the parting was, none of us broke down and cried; we were too numbed by the sudden upheaval and too worried about how we were going to survive as refugees in Saigon.” Instead of describing a joyous arrival in the South, Elliott explains the uncertainties she and her family faced in their new home in Saigon. Undoubtedly, many other refugees shared Elliott’s concerns and did not soon forget all they had left behind.⁷⁷

The sacrifices of the refugees as described by Elliot, and by Dooley and Lederer when they chose to focus on them, possess the potential to evoke strong emotional responses from American audiences. Yet even greater losses than homes and possessions would be suffered by refugees attempting to flee to the South. Many lost their lives during the journey. According to the naval document, “Comments and Recommendations: Medical,” sixty-six refugees died aboard American naval vessels during the course of Operation Passage to Freedom.⁷⁸ Likewise, Henry R. Lieberman reports in a *New York Times* article, dated 16 August 1954, that “Forty-six persons were killed yesterday when a French plane transporting Vietnamese refugees from Hanoi crashed in Laos.”⁷⁹ The Directorate General of Information in Saigon also reports the crashing of this French aircraft, but in a similar journalistic, detached fashion.⁸⁰ (It should be noted that these 112 deaths represent only a fraction of the total that occurred during the evacuation from North Vietnam, as this estimate does not take into account those who passed away in embarkation camps or during journeys to reach these points. No reliable statistics exist for this totality.)

Dooley, too, cites several cases in which refugees lost their lives during the evacuation, but he presents these with considerably more emotional attachment. For example, Dooley describes a young child who died before the Navy doctor had an opportunity to administer medical care. Dooley surmises that the child’s death was likely caused by “the disease we still

mention only in a whisper – cholera.” As a safety precaution, the child was given an “immediate burial at sea.” Touchingly, Dooley explains, “The boy’s relatives all tried to jump overboard after the body.”⁸¹ Hence, Dooley presents a much more emotionally charged account of the loss of life during the evacuation from North Vietnam than do Lieberman and the Directorate General of Information. The American doctor, then, demonstrates his ability to evoke emotional responses from his audience, while other works do not possess the same capability.

Obviously, those who died during the evacuation were unable to reach the South. The Communist administration in the North did everything in its power to prevent others from successfully arriving in South Vietnam, as well. The bureaucratic and violent impediments placed in the path of refugees wishing to travel south received significant attention in the coverage of Operation Passage to Freedom.

As the *New York Times* reports on 18 September 1954, “the movement of the North Vietnamese refugees [is] being impeded by the Communists.”⁸² Similar statements are interspersed in the *New York Times* coverage of the exodus from North Vietnam, though these articles generally retain a rather detached stance, providing few specifics. Pieces with more obvious propagandistic intentions, however, devote far more attention to the impediments to southward movement established by the Viet Minh.

The Communist regime set up many obstacles to block the flow of refugees attempting to flee from North Vietnam. As the Commander of Amphibious Group One reports, “the VIET MINH were taking a firm stand in opposition to the movement of civilian personnel to SOUTH VIETNAM. Methods used to restrict overland movement were not violent, especially in the days immediately following 10 October,” when French troops were required to be completely evacuated from Hanoi.⁸³ While violent means would later be used to impede movement, even

nonviolent bureaucratic measures established by the Communist regime to slow this movement violated the settlement negotiated at Geneva. As reported in “One Million Refugees,” the government of South Vietnam assisted Communist sympathizers to move to the North “without obligation,” as no representative of the South Vietnamese government signed the Geneva Accords. “One Million Refugees” goes on to report, “The Communist Vietcong, however, dishonored their own signatures and tried by every possible means to stop the refugees.”⁸⁴ (In truth, most individuals who traveled to North Vietnam were transported by Soviet and Polish ships.⁸⁵)

The Communist regime in North Vietnam enacted numerous bureaucratic measures to prevent, or at least to slow, departure to the South. One common ploy was the requirement of an official document, a *laissez-passer*, to travel from city to city, and from canton to canton. This measure was established before the signing of the Geneva Accords; but during the evacuation, many of those desiring to reach an embarkation camp from which they could depart to the South were delayed by the communist-established red tape required in order to obtain such a pass. The process of acquiring these passes was often long and cumbersome. As the Directorate General of Information in Saigon reports, “People were sent from one authority to the next only to be denied a pass on some flimsy excuse.”⁸⁶ The Communist regime also charged exorbitant prices for these passes, making them impossible to acquire for many potential refugees.⁸⁷ Yet these passes did not guarantee successful arrival in an embarkation camp to those who were able to obtain them. Dooley portrays the *laissez-passer* system as a farce, describing “that old dodge of the expired passport”: “The Communist guard would examine their hard-worn document and laugh. ‘Comrades, this passport is good for only fourteen days. Didn’t you know that? Oh, you can’t read? Well, anyhow, go back and get a new one.’”⁸⁸ Hence, many refugees were forced to

attempt travel to embarkation camps numerous times. Certainly, many were unable to reach these areas. Although the estimations are unverifiable, they range from the assessment that “thousands failed to escape,” in “One Million Refugees,” to Dooley’s assertion that “[t]here are still a couple of million behind the Bamboo Curtain who never had a chance” to travel to the South.⁸⁹

While Dooley does discuss such bureaucratic measures employed by the communists in the North, however, the Navy doctor sets himself apart from other American propagandists with his graphic depictions of the violence employed by the Vietnamese communists to stem the flow of refugees to the South. For example, Dooley describes an elderly female refugee who was accosted by a Viet Minh guard and punished “for the crime of attempting to ‘leave her land.’” The guard, using the butt of his rifle, struck the woman’s back. According to the American doctor, “This fractured the bones, making her shoulders slump forward and causing excruciating pain.” Dooley also explains the “last grisly atrocity” he witnessed in early May 1955. The doctor describes a young boy, “who still wanted to escape from Viet Minh territory and dared to try.” He was apprehended by Viet Minh guards, who repeatedly struck him with their rifle butts, aiming each blow at the boy’s lower legs. In gruesome detail, Dooley describes the result of this attack: “The feet and ankles felt like moist bags of marbles.” Dooley does not specifically identify the victims of these assaults as Catholics; although, as previously mentioned, readers may assume that these individuals did practice Catholicism based on the doctor’s general presentation of the refugee population. Regardless of the religious beliefs of these individuals, however, these tales illustrate the North Vietnamese Communist regime’s usage of force to impede the movement of refugees to the South. Likewise, as these individuals reached Dooley’s

embarkation camp in spite of their injuries, the descriptions of Communist impediments demonstrate the determination of the refugees to depart from the Communist-controlled North.⁹⁰

While Dooley may not identify the religion of the victims of these violent incidents, however, he does identify Catholicism as a catalyst for brutal treatment by the northern communists. He states, “From December until the last day [of the evacuation], there were two or three atrocities a week that came within my orbit I was puzzled not only by the growing number but by the character of Communist atrocities. So many seemed to have religious significance.” The Navy doctor describes students who were punished for attending Catechism lessons: “one of [the Viet Minh soldiers] firmly grasped the head The other then rammed a wooden chopped chopstick into each ear The stick split the ear canal wide and tore the ear drum.” He also tells of a priest who was hung upside-down from rafters and beaten with bamboo rods and a Catholic man who was left hanging by only his thumbs for several days.⁹¹ Perhaps the most lurid details of Catholic persecution by the Viet Minh that appear in the pages of *Deliver Us from Evil* describe what Dooley refers to as a “Communist version of the Crown of Thorns.” Dooley describes the priest who received this treatment:

His head was matted with pus and there were eight large pus-filled swellings around his temples and forehead Eight nails had been driven into his head, three across the forehead, two in the back of the skull and three across the dome. The nails were large enough to embed themselves in the skull bone.⁹²

While Dooley declares that “[t]he purpose of this book is not to sicken anyone or to dwell upon the horror of Oriental tortures,” he does demonstrate his awareness of the power these horrific stories hold and the emotional responses they are capable of drawing from American audiences. Dooley describes a speech he gave to students from San Diego schools: “They were tough, so I decided to shoot the works. I gave them the whole sordid story,” including “the

Communist atrocities.” As Dooley states, “[Y]ou could have heard a pin drop.” He also describes a chance meeting, at the Hickham Air Force base in Hawaii, with some of the refugees whom he had treated. According to Dooley, these young Vietnamese boys had only one ear each. The Navy doctor had amputated what remained of their left ears after Viet Minh soldiers had torn a majority of the organs away from their skulls. As Dooley reports, “That was one penalty for the crime of listening to evil words. The evil words were the words of the Lord’s prayer.” As a crowd gathered around the “tearful reunion,” Dooley claims he gave an impromptu speech about the torturous techniques employed by the Vietnamese Communists. As he states, “Not in many a year had that number of tears hit the deck at Hickham.”⁹³

Strangely, while Dooley was fully aware of the emotional impact of these atrocity stories, which Seth Jacobs states “later became a staple of Dooley’s writing,” they were absent from his initial attempts to record his experiences in Vietnam.⁹⁴ Hence, it seems likely that Lederer, an experienced author of human interest material, may have played an important role in the decision to include these examples of communist violence, used to suppress the religion of Vietnamese Catholics, in *Deliver Us from Evil*. At the very least, Lederer used his connections with the *Reader’s Digest* to secure publication of a condensed version of Dooley’s work in this magazine. As Fisher reports, a *Digest* editor requested that Dooley “spell out ... what the Communists did to block the tide of flights to freedom.”⁹⁵ Hence, it appears the inclusion of these atrocity stories, including the violent means of impediment to southward movement, is largely attributable to advice given to the rookie author rather than to his own volition.

Yet the veracity of these atrocity stories is questionable and has been a subject of scholarly debate. Jacobs states that “[e]very atrocity described in *Deliver Us from Evil* was prefigured in Dooley’s papers from *Passage to Freedom*,” but warns that “this ought not to be

taken as proof that the atrocities Dooley described actually occurred.”⁹⁶ Indeed, Fisher cites a document prepared for the United States Information Agency by six Americans who had participated in the evacuation efforts in Haiphong: “They ... characterized Dooley’s tales of atrocities as ‘non-factual and exaggerated ... not the truth.’”⁹⁷ Fisher points to a letter Dooley wrote to his mother in which he explains that his work was now being composed as a first person narrative. In this letter, Dooley states, “When I speak of the rescue work off the beach, instead of describing them as I was told they exist, I use poetic justice, or license or something, and describe them as though I was sitting on the ship.” Fisher later assesses that “if what he had seen was not sufficiently dramatic he could always exercise ‘poetic justice, or license’ to make up the rest.”⁹⁸

The validity of the atrocities described in *Deliver Us from Evil*, then, is debatable. Many of these horror stories do appear to be based on factual occurrences, however. Approaching the issue of veracity from a different angle, Fisher states, “[T]he question is not whether atrocities were committed but whether Dooley was correct in placing all the blame on an ugly situation with the Communists.” For example, Fisher cites the journalist Robert Scheer, who describes the practice of bandits who would tear ears partially away from the skulls of their enemies.⁹⁹ Yet Dooley attributes the cases he encountered to the Vietnamese communists. Likewise, Jacobs refers to Lederer’s claim, several years after the publication of *Deliver Us from Evil*, that the “atrocities [Dooley] described in his books either never took place or were committed by the French.”¹⁰⁰ And while Dooley describes young Catechism students being stabbed in the ears with chopsticks and a priest being beaten with bamboo rods by Viet Minh soldiers, the Commander of Amphibious Group One states, “A refugee CATHOLIC priest told of his torture and degradation in which CHINESE Army officers jammed chop sticks in his ears and beat him

with bamboo poles after accusing him of telling lies to the people.”¹⁰¹ Dooley, by crediting all these atrocities to the Viet Minh creates a simple dichotomy between the Vietnamese Catholics and the Vietnamese communists. This dichotomy served to evoke the sympathy of American audiences for the Catholic refugees while also creating hostility and antipathy on the part of Dooley’s American readers toward the Vietnamese communists.

By presenting each of these atrocities as a communist action, Dooley established a simple dichotomy of the courageous Catholics and the villainous communists. Moreover, he presents Christianity as the antithesis of communism, referring to the latter as “organized godlessness.”¹⁰² Fisher explains that “[i]t did not take much of Lansdale’s genius” to realize the complexities of the Vietnamese situation would be difficult to frame for American audiences. Two sects in Vietnam were of particular disruption to the Diem regime: the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao. As Fisher states, however, “Dooley certainly showed no awareness of the sects’ complexities in his writings and was more than willing to focus exclusively on the Viet Minh as the lone source of Diem’s woes. Lansdale was ... determined to sell this misleading scenario to the American public.”¹⁰³ Hence, Dooley’s simple dichotomy was instrumental in creating a scenario that his audience could easily understand, which was vital to the success of Lansdale’s mission in Vietnam.

Yet these atrocities continue to be cited in modern scholarship without discussion of their validity. In particular, Nghia M. Vo, in *The Vietnamese Boat People*, reports several of the atrocities described in *Deliver Us from Evil*, including chop sticks being rammed into young students’ ears and having ears partially removed from the skull with pincers.¹⁰⁴ Vo also cites Dooley’s description of the torturous treatment allotted to Cham, who served as “the head of a Christian youth movement” in the village of Cua Lo.¹⁰⁵ Dooley claims that this young man “was

tied to a tree and brutally beaten with short bamboo sticks. Then his blood-soaked body was splashed with gasoline, ignited, and he was burned to death.”¹⁰⁶ Vo reports this incident, and the other atrocities described by Dooley, with no indication that they may not be entirely factual. All the atrocities are attributed to the Viet Minh. Clearly, Dooley’s work continues to be cited by those historians still intent on upholding the dichotomy of communism as evil and the American efforts as good. Dooley’s work, though, as an obvious piece of propaganda, must be treated with caution by historians analyzing the 1954-1955 evacuation from North Vietnam.

The lurid details of the unthinkable treatments Dooley described possess great shock value, which the American doctor undoubtedly exploited with great success. The notion that these Vietnamese were facing such torturous treatment by the Vietnamese communists lent credence to the humanitarian nature of American involvement in the evacuation from the areas under communist control. Moreover, such horrific stories as the young boy whose feet were brutally beaten by Viet Minh guards illustrate the extremes to which the Vietnamese Communists would go to prevent individuals from leaving the North. That these North Vietnamese would face such obstacles in order to obtain religious freedom, according to Dooley, again illustrates the strength of the refugees’ religiosity.

Perhaps the evidence of greatest value to this portrayal of the refugees’ strong religious convictions is presented in Dooley’s description of the recovery of the priest who received the “Communist version of the Crown of Thorns.” Jacobs states that Dooley’s “only follow-up report” about this tortured priest, in the doctor’s personal documents, was that “he recovered very well.”¹⁰⁷ Yet, in *Deliver Us from Evil*, Dooley reports that he was told that this priest “had gone back to that world of silence behind the Bamboo Curtain. This meant that he had gone back to his torturers. I wonder what they have done to him by now.”¹⁰⁸ Whether Dooley applied

“poetic justice, or license” to this case is impossible to verify; but either way, Dooley presents this Catholic priest as a martyr. Even after this priest experienced such extreme pain at the hands of the Viet Minh, Dooley presents him heading back to the North to continue to teach the word of God. The strength of such religiosity on the part of a Vietnamese Catholic is powerful propaganda, which certainly endeared this priest to religious audiences in the United States.

The themes of the American press coverage of the evacuation from North Vietnam described by Seth Jacobs – the refugees’ religiosity, sacrifice, and perseverance despite obstacles – are utilized with great effect by Dooley and his predecessor and mentor, Lederer, who evoke the sympathy of their American audiences for the Vietnamese refugees. A fourth theme of great import to the appeal of these works, however, is the emphasis these authors place on the humanitarianism displayed by the American sailors and servicemen who assisted in the evacuation.

American Humanitarianism

“Final Report of Operation Passage to Freedom,” a Navy document produced by the Commander of Amphibious Group One, lists the factors motivating the United States to devote its navy to the evacuation from North Vietnam. “The humanitarian desire to provide transportation for those civilian residents of NORTH VIETNAM who desired to live under the government of SOUTH VIETNAM rather than the VIET MINH conquerors” occupies the top spot on this list.¹⁰⁹ Likewise, Dooley details the official orders for his mission in Haiphong: “To prevent epidemics in our personnel, and to provide humanitarian care and medical attention for the refugees as they come within the orbit of our operations.”¹¹⁰ Hence, Operation Passage to Freedom was officially classified as a humanitarian effort. The humanitarian nature of the

operation is consistent with the findings of the Jackson Committee. This committee, commissioned to create “a national security [to] wage a coordinated political warfare assault against communism worldwide,” advised in 1953, according to Osgood, that “[t]he United States is judged less by what it says through official information outlets than by the actions and attitudes of its citizens and officials abroad and at home.”¹¹¹ Hence, such humanitarian efforts as Operation Passage to Freedom were strong propagandistic material for the United States.

One of the most effective methods to propagate the humanitarianism of the American evacuation efforts, utilized by Dooley and Lederer, was to describe the individual actions of the sailors involved in the operation. As previously discussed, these authors describe the sacrifices made by the North Vietnamese refugees in order to evoke sympathy from American audiences when this fits the authors’ purpose; but they are quick to eschew the significance of these losses to demonstrate that the refugees felt as though they had made the right decision by fleeing to the South. Another purpose of this selective focus on the sacrifices of the refugees is to demonstrate the kindly nature with which the American sailors treated the Vietnamese refugees.

From the refugees’ boarding of the USS *Bayfield*, when the sailors “swarm[ed] down ... to help the refugees [with] genuine compassion,” until their arrival in Saigon, when they repeatedly declared, “We don’t want to leave the Americans,” Lederer describes the kind treatment the refugees enjoyed during their journey on the Navy ship. The *Reader’s Digest* correspondent describes the sailors playing with the refugee children; offering cigarettes or candy, depending on age, to their charges; and even donating their own blood to help ailing passengers aboard the American ship. “There is no lack of blood donors,” Lederer notes. “The crew members respond generously.” Through these descriptions, Lederer presents young Americans who treat the Vietnamese refugees with tenderness and compassion. The *Reader’s*

Digest audience undoubtedly took pride in the work of these sailors, as was Lederer's intention. Indeed, he concludes his article by informing President Eisenhower of the new community those aboard the USS *Bayfield* planned to establish in South Vietnam. In his words, it was "your sea-going ambassadors, the enlisted men of the U.S. Navy who, with their compassion for their fellow men, supplied the inspiration for the finest town in all Asia": "Bayfield, USA, South Vietnam."¹¹²

James T. Fisher states that "[b]y focusing on the compassion of the enlisted men ... Lederer personalized the refugee mission for American readers and effectively contrasted their kindness with the vicious, coldly abstract communists the refugees were fleeing." Yet this author neglects this element as it appears in *Deliver Us from Evil*. Instead, he focuses on the strong role the American doctor asserts for himself in his first-person account of the American evacuation efforts.¹¹³

Fisher asserts that the reason for the success of *Deliver Us from Evil* was the seemingly individualistic heroism of Dr. Dooley. He states that Dooley took "singlehanded credit for the success of history's largest refugee operation."¹¹⁴ Indeed, there is ample evidence to support this claim throughout *Deliver Us from Evil*. For example, Dooley describes himself as "a junior lieutenant who still didn't realize the 'humanitarian care and medical attention' of half a million or so refugees was soon to be his responsibility alone." Likewise, he describes his "growing fear ... that a newcomer ... might not feel as strongly as I did about the fugitives and the things they were fleeing. What, I asked myself, if he could not see through the rags and sores and stench to the soul of Viet Nam, as I was beginning to glimpse it?" Hence, Dooley describes his trepidations that a replacement may not be able to fulfill his duties with the same level of understanding and compassion, and thereby presents himself as crucial to the success of the

refugee evacuation.¹¹⁵ Fisher proposes that “the ‘irreverent as hell’ duo of Lansdale and Lederer” may have encouraged Dooley’s claim of single-handed credit, recognizing its propagandistic value.¹¹⁶

That Dooley’s assertion of his own central role in Operation Passage to Freedom was of strong appeal to his audience is evinced by several early advertisements for Dooley’s speaking engagements. For example, one such advertisement for a Dooley speech sponsored by a women’s church group in Lubbock, Texas, states, “He managed to feed, clothe and treat these leftovers of an 8-year war.” The only mention of Dooley’s fellow servicemen in this document is to say that they, along with Dooley, “learned the real meanin [*sic*] of ‘Love one another.’”¹¹⁷ Similarly, in an overblown posthumous tribute to Dooley, entitled “The Third Anniversary: Dr. Tom Dooley’s Vietnam and Laos,” Melanie Gordon Barber depicts Operation Passage to Freedom as the achievement of the American doctor alone. She states, “He saw and seized the opportunity to save almost a million lives, thereby making the United States of America, and incidentally himself, loved as never before in that exotic land ... known as Southeast Asia.” Likewise, Barber cites a *Washington Post* editorial that “said of his work, ‘It was the ultimate example of effective person-to-person contact with a foreign people.’” Hence, “The Third Anniversary” presents Dooley as a catalyst for American involvement in Vietnam, crediting Dooley with “seiz[ing] the opportunity” to assist in the evacuation and citing the *Washington Post*’s focus on Dooley’s work with the refugees rather than the totality of the American evacuation efforts. In this way, we can see that Dooley’s own presentation of himself as the hero of Operation Passage to Freedom held great appeal for his audiences, who later expounded on the crucial role played by the Navy doctor in the evacuation.¹¹⁸

While Dooley does present himself as vital to the success of Operation Passage to Freedom, however, he does not neglect to discuss the roles that his fellow servicemen, both aboard the USS *Montague* and in the embarkation camp at Haiphong, played in the evacuation. From assisting the first passenger to board the *Montague* to collecting fecal samples from refugees in the camps for medical analysis, Dooley depicts these Navy men completing duties that were of great importance to the success of the operation.

Yet, while Dooley does give credit to his fellow sailors for their roles in the evacuation, his primary focus when discussing these men is the humanitarian kindness with which they treated the Vietnamese refugees. The American doctor describes “my friends in the Navy – the fifteen thousand sailors and officers who gave such touching and tender care to the wretched of Viet Nam.” According to him, “When they encountered the problem, they asked for an explanation. When it was explained, they understood. When they understood the suffering, they decided to alleviate it. And they *did* alleviate it.” Dooley elaborates, “They conquered the hearts of every one of the refugees who sailed on our ships. They did this with an enthusiasm and wholesomeness that defies description.”¹¹⁹

In particular, Dooley focuses on “the little acts of spontaneous kindness” these men offered to the North Vietnamese refugees. By describing the men’s compassionate treatment of those fleeing from the North, as well as the burly Navy men adopting maternal roles to care for the refugees, Dooley creates an emotional connection between his audience and not only himself, but also the men with whom he served during the operation.¹²⁰

Dooley’s descriptions of the deeds of his fellow Navy men are similar but by no means identical to the way Lederer depicts the American men serving on the USS *Bayfield*. The Navy doctor’s focus on the hospitality displayed by the servicemen is very similar to Lederer’s

accounts of the “smiles and acts of kindness” that the sailors exhibited during his journey from Haiphong to Saigon aboard the naval vessel.¹²¹ Yet, ingeniously, Dooley does not portray the Navy men, as Lederer does, as priestly, or even saintly, figures. Instead, Dooley employs the experiences he had with these men to illustrate that they were not the perfect men portrayed by Lederer, but rather individuals who swore, drank alcohol, and occasionally slacked while performing their duties. Yet, when the sailors were greeted by the “flood of humanity, undernourished, exhausted, bewildered and pitifully frightened,” they immediately sprang into action doing everything possible to put the refugees at ease and to care for them with maternal kindness and concern.¹²²

Dooley describes “the unpleasant detail” of a few sailors aboard the USS *Montague* whose duty was to supervise the overboard dumping of “overflowing honey buckets,” which the refugees had used as makeshift bathrooms. As he states, “These boys ... had an unofficial title, but it would never pass the censor.” One can only guess what this title was, but undoubtedly, it would not be suitable for all audiences. Whether the censor was actually taken into consideration while Dooley was writing *Deliver Us from Evil*, however, is questionable. Nonetheless, the reference to this title and other examples of the Navy men’s usage of four-letter words, although always limited to the tamer variety, such as “damn” and “hell,” demonstrate that those men who were assigned to assist in Operation Passage to Freedom were not perfectly behaved. Rather, these individuals were portrayed as normal young men with whom the audience could relate.¹²³

For the same purpose, Dooley presents servicemen who generally work hard, but on occasion take breaks from their arduous naval duties. For example, the Navy doctor declares that many of the sailors who served aboard the *Montague* “knew the sick-bay only as a place

where a skillfully feigned bellyache might get a man excused from duty.” When the refugees were boarded, however, these men shouldered their responsibilities, and many became better acquainted with this part of the ship as they assisted those who needed medical care. Likewise, according to Dooley’s account, the men with whom he served would occasionally use alcohol to escape the rigmarole of life aboard a Navy ship. With the refugees’ arrival, however, Dooley describes the sailors scrambling for ways to feed milk to “the [young] kids who couldn’t guzzle from paper cups”: nipples from air hoses were attached to beer bottles extracted “[f]rom strange, well-hidden places.” Moreover, the doctor laments that his medical training did not prepare him to “doctor [hangovers] effectively, except in the usual fruitless ways,” and hence, his fellow sailors were forced to suffer through them after a hard night’s drinking.¹²⁴

Such descriptions of the Navy servicemen as “typical guys,” who enjoyed having a good time as much as anyone, further creates a commonality between readers of *Deliver Us from Evil* and the men who served aboard the USS *Montague* and in the embarkation camp at Haiphong. The men Dooley describes are more congruous with the audience’s own experiences with men they knew and loved. Such imperfections as usage of foul language and occasional slacking, slight as they may be, foster familiar images: a mother’s image of her son, a wife’s image of her husband, and the general audience’s images of the individuals they encountered in their everyday lives. Rather than the saintly sailors portrayed by Lederer, Dooley presents relatable stories about the men who served beside him. This ability to relate to the American servicemen fosters an emotional response from the audience toward those who served in Operation Passage to Freedom.

Moreover, Dooley’s tales of carousing and cursing highlight the transformation of the Navy men who adopted the roles of maternal caregivers when the refugees were brought aboard

the USS *Montague* or arrived at the embarkation camp. Indeed, witnessing the way these men rose to the occasion, Dooley adopts a rather Lockean attitude, stating that aboard the *Montague*, “I had learned many profound and practical facts about the true nature of man. I understood the inherent quality that enables tough, loud-mouthed sailors to become tender nurses for sick babies and dying old men.” One such example of the transformative power these refugees offered the Navy men involved a “notoriously loud, cursing boatswain’s mate on the forecastle,” who could be seen “bouncing a bare-bottomed baby on his knee while stuffing a Baby Ruth into its toothless mouth.” This metamorphosis from obscene and vulgar sailor to tender caregiver personifies Dooley’s message about the goodness of man through an American conduit, illustrating the United States’ humanitarian concern. As Dooley states, “It would have pleased their mothers, as it pleased me, to see their sailor sons caring for this shipload.” Certainly, though, the sailors’ mothers were not the only ones who read these descriptions of the tender care administered to the Vietnamese refugees with pride and emotion. Dooley uses the humanitarian efforts of the United States Navy and its servicemen to create an emotional connection between readers of *Deliver Us from Evil* and his fellow Navy men. His audience, recognizing elements of the men they cared about in the descriptions of the Navy sailors, took pride in the way these men treated the refugees. And through such pride in the Navy’s humanitarian spirit, Dooley won support for the American involvement in the evacuation from North Vietnam, which would continue throughout the peaceful interwar period in Vietnam.¹²⁵

The descriptions of the Navy men serving in Vietnam, delivered in a first-person narrative by someone who was there, grant the audience a first-hand view of the situation in Vietnam. The tales of carousing and cursing illustrate that these are ordinary young Americans, reminiscent of the men Dooley’s readers knew in their personal lives, rather than faultless

individuals. Moreover, descriptions of Dooley's interactions and experiences with these men illustrate his own relationships, which vicariously are projected onto his audience, making them feel as though they knew these individuals, or at least someone like them. Hence, Dooley's own emotional connections with these men create emotional connections between his readers and his fellow servicemen. These vicarious relationships were of great importance to Dooley's success as a propagandist.

According to a Public Information Officer assigned to Operation Passage to Freedom, "metropolitan newspapers in the U.S. had given little space to this operation, except in the early days." In large American cities, individuals were detached from the evacuation happening half-way around the world. Conversely, however, according to the Public Information Officer, "home town news coverage of 'Operation Passage to Freedom' has been excellent. Editors are interested in knowing about sailors from their home towns who are taking part in such an important headline-making event." Hence, personal relationships with the men who served in Operation Passage to Freedom greatly influenced how news of the operation was greeted in different areas of the United States. Understandably, the Vietnamese evacuation received more adequate press coverage in places where audiences had these relationships with the Navy men assigned to assist in the exodus. Through Dooley's first-hand account of the operation and his experiences with the men who assisted in it, the propagandist is able to replicate these relationships by describing his own relationships with the Navy men. Hence, American audiences felt as if they knew these men and took greater interest in the evacuation from North Vietnam.¹²⁶

Conclusion

“All in all, it is felt that the national coverage as a Navy feature was disappointing and not in keeping with the importance of the event. After the first few days, very little interest in the evacuation was shown by civilian news media,” reports a Navy Public Information Officer.¹²⁷ Conversely, Dooley’s *Deliver Us from Evil*, according to Jacobs, “became the great best-seller on Vietnam.”¹²⁸ Indeed, Fisher credits this book, published a year after the conclusion of Operation Passage to Freedom, with introducing Vietnam to American audiences, reporting that it was “the first times Americans began to pay attention to a place ... called Vietnam.”¹²⁹

Deliver Us from Evil enjoyed great propagandistic success where other coverage of the evacuation from North Vietnam failed to maintain the interest of American audiences. Several elements were integral to Dooley’s propagandistic success; but his ability to display the commonality between the Vietnamese refugees and his American audience, namely religion, and to present likable Navy servicemen, reminiscent of individuals readers of *Deliver Us from Evil* knew personally, created emotional connections between his readers and these two groups. By creating such vicarious relationships, Dooley succeeded in drawing the interest of American audiences toward the evacuation efforts in Vietnam.

By describing the religiosity of the Catholic refugees to an American audience largely consumed with its own religious convictions, Dooley presents a group of Vietnamese to which American audiences could relate. Moreover, the Navy doctor presents sympathetic figures through his descriptions of the sacrifice and suffering these refugees endured in making their journey to the South. Hence, Dooley evokes emotional responses from his mostly Christian audience for the refugees, who, in Dooley’s frame of a religious exodus, risked everything in

order to achieve religious freedom. The impediments the Vietnamese communists placed in this path to religious freedom also served as powerful propaganda. Dooley exploited such actions against the Vietnamese Catholics, in particular the atrocity stories, all of which the American doctor attributes to the Viet Minh. These also lent credence to descriptions of the humanitarian nature of the American evacuation efforts. As Jacobs explains, Dooley created “a brilliant work of cold war propaganda in which the communist enemy was irredeemably evil and the Americans and their South Vietnamese allies were virtue incarnate.”¹³⁰

The portrayal of the American evacuation of North Vietnam as a humanitarian endeavor is of great import to the creation of this dichotomy. Dooley’s greatest strength in this regard is his descriptions of the individual acts of kindness which the American sailors exhibited toward the Vietnamese refugees. The power of the details of such tender care given by these American sailors was further heightened by Dooley’s realistic portrayal of the Navy men with whom he served. These individuals were not perfectly behaved young men. Instead, the American doctor demonstrates their commonness by describing their imperfections, most pronouncedly their usage of curse words and alcohol and their occasional lackluster efforts aboard the Navy ship. Yet these imperfections also highlight the transformation that these young Americans underwent when they were confronted with the refugees who were “filthy, starving, diseased, and maimed in God knows what manner.”¹³¹ In Dooley’s depiction, these men did not hesitate to exercise every means available to alleviate the refugees’ woes.

By stressing the humanitarianism of Operation Passage to Freedom, Dooley, and his predecessor Lederer, won support for American involvement in Vietnam. As the Second Indochina War began and escalated, however, American audiences’ belief in the humanitarian nature of American involvement, which some would come to recognize as intervention, declined.

As the United States government escalated its involvement in Vietnam, sending more and more American youths to serve in this foreign land, Americans would revolt. Draft riots would converge with the Civil Rights movement in the United States, and many of the civilians of this country would no longer support the role of the American government and military in Vietnam. Hence, Dooley and Operation Passage to Freedom, and the optimism of the humanitarian efforts in Vietnam they embodied, disappeared in histories of American involvement in Vietnam.

Yet the contribution of Dooley's *Deliver Us from Evil* should not be overlooked. Describing the United States' first direct military involvement in Vietnam as a humanitarian mission allowed Dooley to convince the American public of the importance of American involvement in Vietnam. Jonathan Nashel states in *Edward Lansdale's Cold War*, "For Lansdale's purposes Dooley's book amounted to a soft-soap sale for U.S. involvement in South Vietnam and for Diem's regime."¹³² Hence, the Navy doctor was of great importance to the United States government and its continuing involvement in Vietnam, winning support for the initial humanitarian American efforts in Southeast Asia.

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