

**AN OUTLINE OF CATHOLICS' POLITICAL ACTIVITIES
IN THE SOUTH VIETNAM DURING THE PERIOD
FROM 1963 TO 1967**

***Abstract:** This article examines the political activities of Catholics in Southern Vietnam during the period from late 1963 to early 1967. The article is divided into two parts. The first part presents the origins of Catholic political actions in the period 1963-1967. The collapse of Ngo Dinh Diem's governance in late 1963 led to a crisis among many Catholics of Northern origin. That crisis led them to act and participate in politics in self-defense and also to hold on to what was lost during the First Republic in the South. The second part presents some trends and ways in which Catholics were involved in politics. Through archival data, secondary documents, and by approaching the history of religion, the article shows interesting details about particular events. Thereby the reader will better understand the limitations, motives, and consequences of Catholics' political participation during a special historical period with many upheavals.*

***Keywords:** Catholicism; politics; South; Vietnam; 1963-1967.*

Introduction

From the summer of 1954 to September 1955, within about 360 days, 860,206 Northern Vietnamese people crossed the 17th parallel (the front line) in Quang Tri to enter the southern lands. There were 676,348 Catholics among them [National Archives Center II, Records: 4410]. They left for political reasons and especially for religious reasons. The United States and France actively supported this migration event. Most Catholics left their homeland, houses, and

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villages because of their faith. They feared the Communist regime in the North because they were warned by opposing forces of Ho Chi Minh's Government that they would lose their religion, not be able to save their souls, not be able to go to church, no family, and no property if they stayed in the North under the regime led by the revolutionary Communists.

In addition, the establishment of Catholic "autonomous regions" in the Bui Chu and Phat Diem dioceses since the end of 1949 pushed many Catholics into opposition to the Viet Minh resistance forces. This action led many dignitaries and parishioners not confident enough to stay. Bishops and priests were the leaders of migrant Catholic communities who pioneered the migration and accompanied many believers with them. Documents showed a common mentality that "wherever the vicar went, his parishioners would follow him". Therefore, some people migrated because of "crowd psychology". Leaving seemed to be the only decision for many Catholics at that time. Many children were evacuated without any awareness of the political reasons for this event.

Coming to the South, the Catholic migrants were gathered and assisted by Ngo Dinh Diem, who just took over the "national government" (État du Viet Nam). According to data, Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem disliked Bao Dai (Chef d'état) because Bao Dai relied on the French. In particular, Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem was a Catholic and had a strong anti-Communist and anti-French colonial will. The connection between Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem and the Catholic migrants was that the Catholic migration did not only increase the population to the South, but they also brought with them the ideology of fear of Communism and anti-Communism. Therefore, the common ideals between Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem and these Catholic migrants seemed to be a historical destiny. However, some later studies also showed that this combination was intentionally arranged by the United States. Before becoming Prime Minister, Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem was virtually unknown in the Southern political forum. The number of people who supported him was small, so the arrangement of a religious force with strict

organization and discipline and the same anti-Communist spirit gave him the support force that a politician like him needed.

While the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the North was discussing the terms of the Genève Agreement signed in Switzerland, on July 7, 1954, Ngo Dinh Diem established a new government in the South with the support of America. Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem's goal was to gain independence from the French colony and gather his supporters to create a new anti-Communist cabinet. His government was inaugurated at a time when the French colonial power was still strong in the South. Therefore, he had to try very hard to gain political power for himself. On the one hand, he had to confront the sects armed by France, and on the other hand, he had to find a way to eliminate the influence of Bao Dai as well as the pro-French elements of the previous government. However, with the support of the United States and the Catholic migrants, Ngo Dinh Diem finally created a unified government pursuing an anti-Communist stance, while gradually eliminating the influence of French colonialism in the South. Ngo Dinh Diem sought to depose Bao Dai through a referendum in 1955. Then, Ngo Dinh Diem became the Head of State, elected the National Assembly, and promulgated the Constitution, changing the name of the State of Vietnam to the Republic of Vietnam. The Republic of Vietnam was established on October 26, 1955, and he was elected President of the First Republic of Vietnam. In dealing with the Northern government, Ngo Dinh Diem declared that he would not negotiate with the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to proceed to unify the country according to the Geneva Agreement. This political shift of Ngo Dinh Diem led to division and war in Vietnam for twenty years. In response to the support of Catholics, especially migrants, Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem gave many incentives to Catholics. The Catholic migrants became a significant force in Southern society. During his time, many Catholic works were also built, and many Catholics were employed in the administration and the military [National Archives Center II, Records: 21763]. The preferential treatment (to the end of his period) made people realize that there was discrimination, and religious inequality

in the behavior of Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem's government. It can be said that the coup event on November 1, 1963, was a religious cause, the reason was due to the government's discrimination against Buddhism.

1. The collapse of Ngo Dinh Diem's regime and its effects on Catholics

Ngo Dinh Diem himself was also a devout Catholic. It further cemented the migrant Catholics' belief in the anti-Communist regime. If we look for religious elements in the administrative apparatus during his time, we will find that many military officers and key employees in the civil service were Catholics [National Archives Center II, Records: 21763]. Therefore, during the period of the First Republic in the South (1955-1963), people seemed to realize the presence of Catholicism more prominently in the picture of religious diversity there, even though Catholicism was not the largest church in the South. During this period, there were many large ceremonies at Notre Dame Cathedral Basilica of Saigon with the presence of many government cabinet members as well as the President [National Archives Center II, Records: 17906]. People felt that Catholicism was safely protected by the administration of President Ngo Dinh Diem.

However, any freedom has limits. The Ngo Dinh Diem government's preferential treatment of Catholics also had its price. Although Catholics, especially northern migrants from the Bui Chu and Phat Diem areas, were politically advantageous, they seemed not to be able to create a Catholic society. It means that they were at a distance from other religions and were even discriminated against by their Southern fellow believers. It seemed that the political ostentation and support of Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem led many Catholic migrants to feel isolated and difficult to be accepted by other inhabitants of society. Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem himself only allowed Catholics freedom in supporting him. He personally and his government controlled the political actions of Catholics. For example, in 1956, priest Nguyen Van Thu founded a newspaper called Duong Song (*Đường Sáng*). Even the first issues of Duong Song newspaper had comments on Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem's policy. The newspaper was discontinued a few

months later. In 1957, Ho Van Vui, vicar of Notre Dame Cathedral who influenced the Southern Catholic group, was transferred to Tha La parish in the remote border area with Cambodia after his sermon was reported by the secret police to Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem's government that "the words preached by this priest disrupting peace." Previously, in February 1957, priest Vui was investigated by the police because of a sermon related to criticizing the election of parliamentary representatives [Nguyen Nghi, 1997: 50]. Later, the opinion of a group of Catholic intellectuals in the South commenting on the Catholics' attitude under Ngo Dinh Diem's regime was that "During Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem's period, although most Catholics supported him, there was still opposition, they used to react in the form of criticism of his theory and management style". [National Archives Center II, Records: 4410].

Therefore, despite being liberal and supporting Ngo Dinh Diem's anti-Communist stance, many Catholics were framed within the limits of political freedom or expressing their viewpoints. Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem's political power satisfied many Catholics' dream of a Catholic "king", anti-French, anti-Communist, and bringing favor and freedom to Catholics. It must also be emphasized that neither silence nor support for Mr. Diem were the choices of all Southern Catholics at that time. At the end of his reign, among Southern Catholics, there were critical voices about the current government and how that government treated Catholicism. It can be said that these rekindles in the *Sống Đạo* group or the volumes in the *Nhận Định* series by Catholic philosopher Nguyen Van Trung.

During Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem's rule, people posed what was the role of the dignitaries in guiding religious life and the political attitude of Catholics consistent with the spirit of the Gospel in that context. It is obvious that the Vietnamese Catholic hierarchy was not established until the end of 1960 and the Second Vatican Council was not organized at that time. Furthermore, the role of Bishop Ngo Dinh Thuc, Ngo Dinh Diem's brother, also had a great influence in politics supporting his younger brother. At the end of the Ngo Dinh Diem's

era, Bishop Ngo Dinh Thuc became Archbishop of the Hue Archdiocese. Therefore, it can be said that when Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem was in power, the role of the Southern Catholic hierarchy was not as strong in orienting the Catholics' religious life and political stances as in the later period.

There were forces ready to carry out a coup when a favorable opportunity arose within the Ngo Dinh Diem Government for a long time. Under the support of the United States Government, in early April 1963, forces opposing Ngo Dinh Diem's family, headed by Duong Van Minh, Nguyen Van Kim, and Tran Van Don, discussed a coup to overthrow the Ngo brothers. However, to carry out this plot, they also had to find a suitable reason. They knew clearly that Ngo Dinh Diem's government was supported by Catholics, especially Catholic migrants, and conversely, Ngo Dinh Diem's brothers also had close relationships and interests with those Catholics. Meanwhile, in the South, of about fifteen million people, Buddhists accounted for nearly eleven million with about four million practicing this religion, the others worshiped their ancestors and tended to support and follow Buddhism. There was discrimination between Buddhism and Catholicism within the Ngo Dinh Diem government itself. In many places, Buddhism was suppressed by the government because it was considered a pro-Communist force. Taking advantage of this contradiction, the coup instigators set a trap and pushed the Ngo Dinh Diem Government to decide to suppress Buddhist forces in early May 1963. It was Ngo Dinh Diem's impatient and erroneous decision that led to the uprising of many Southern Buddhists against the repression of the Ngo government and was also the bell that heralded the complete collapse of the government. [National Archives Center II, 2017: 374-375].

The coup, on November 1, 1963, overthrew the Ngo Dinh Diem's regime and was the result of discrimination against Buddhism. It may be the reason leading to the death of Ngo Dinh Diem's brothers. Perhaps, it was the end of a policy of dictatorship and control that led to discontent among political and religious groups in the South. There

were also opinions that the event at the end of 1963 was the involvement of the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). On the American side, they felt that the Ngo Dinh Diem's government did not meet expectations for its political intentions. Therefore, they must find another government to meet the requirements of preventing the influence of Communism in South Vietnam and expanding the influence of the capitalist world, headed by the United States. The fall of the Ngo government in 1963 satisfied political factions and religions opposed to Catholicism. As for many Catholics, especially the Catholic migrant group, it seemed they were in a state of crisis after this political upheaval because they lost their political foundation. Many Catholics felt they lost the regime's favor and were subjected to a post-coup purge. Archival documents at that time showed that there were arrests of the Can Lao Party's members by the new government, it was a mainstay political party of Mr. Diem's government before 1963. There was a burning of Catholic villages on the other side of the Saigon River, towards Thu Duc. After the coup, many confiscations of the assets of Ngo Dinh Diem and his family took place. [National Archives Center II, Records: 28551].

Supporting and pursuing an anti-Communist stance was a common political attitude of many Southern Catholics before 1963. However, after this coup, loyalists and core elements of Catholic supporters of Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem felt that their political stance was neglected and faded. The superficiality of anti-Communist ideals in the Southern government after the coup made them feel disappointed. They believed that the government after Ngo Dinh Diem was weaker and wavered. As a result, Catholic political movements flourished after the 1963 event and lasted until early 1967, when Nguyen Van Thieu's government promulgated the Constitution, establishing the Second Republic in South Vietnam from 1967 to 1975.

After the 1963 incident, many Southern Catholics felt feelings of religious inequality. Previously, Catholics had played a key political role in the South. Buddhism became an emerging political force and was known by Southern and international public opinion after self-

immolation and reactions to Mr. Diem's policies. Buddhism was also considered the cause of Ngo Dinh Diem's downfall. After all, Catholicism only accounted for about 10% of the Southern population. Most of the population was still Buddhist and Buddhist sympathizers. Therefore, when Buddhism activated the spirit of Buddhists protesting the policy through many hunger strikes and street protests, it created strong waves of pressure on the government after the Ngo Dinh Diem era. The rise of Buddhism in the political forum in the South after 1963 has made Catholics feel inferior and sometimes discriminated. After the events of 1963, Buddhism was considered by Catholicism as a political opponent in influencing and building power with the regimes of South Vietnam. [National Archives Center II, Records: 4140].

2. Political activities of Catholics from 1963 to 1967

The period from after the coup on November 1, 1963, to the end of 1966 was a period of political crisis and turbulence in South Vietnam. There were many governments established by the Revolutionary Military Council (Hội đồng quân nhân cách mạng) or the National Military Administration Committee (Ủy ban quân quản quốc gia). During the period from 1964 to 1965, the governments of Generals Tran Van Huong, Nguyen Khanh, and the government of Phan Huy Quat in the South were established one after another but then quickly dissolved due to pressure from political factions. It can be said that there was participation of religions in the overthrow of these governments, typically the two forces of Catholicism and Buddhism. As for Catholics, after the events of 1963, they began to engage in the Southern political arena in many ways such as mobilizing to support or oppose a regime, participating in demonstrations, calling on the allies' forces to increase power and influence, attacking opposing factions and religions... In general, the political activities of Catholics during this period were diverse but the most prominent was the activities of taking to the streets to protest or support the government, and thereby also expressed the stance of some Catholic groups. The political activities of Southern Catholics mainly took place in the Saigon and surrounding areas. Because it is the political and social

center of the Southern Republic government. It was also where many Catholic migrants lived.

During this period, there was a common sentiment among migrant Catholics and those who supported Ngo Dinh Diem's government that they viewed all political activities of the governments after the 1963 coup, and the activities of other religious and political groups at that time were aimed at them. To cope with this situation, Catholics increased pressure on the government and other political organizations through a series of protest events that demonstrated force and expressed political attitudes. For example, the event of welcoming Archbishop Nguyen Van Binh from Rome on November 13, 1963, had up to 10,000 Catholics of parishes in the Saigon area participating in extending the distance from Tan Son Nhat airport to the cathedra. It seemed a show of force than of welcoming a religious leader. Another gathering at Lam Son Square on Buddha's birthday took place on June 7, 1964, with over 35,000 Catholics attending with banners such as "We oppose the plot to neutralize, pro-Communist and Communistize the South", "We are ready to fight for the country and the church" [Nguyen Nghi, 1997: 60]. In 1965, priest Hoang Quynh, a migrant famous figure of the political movements of Southern Catholics, established the Central Committee for Catholic Struggle, and he was president. This committee was responsible for studying the situation and giving suggestions for the political struggles of Catholics in Saigon and other places in the South.

Because of their tight and unified organization and larger material and human resources than some other religious organizations, Southern Catholics were less fragmented in the fluctuating of Southern society as a political bloc. They are still under the general direction of the Vietnamese Catholic hierarchy. Although there were factions, in terms of overall trends, it can be said that in the years from 1964 to 1967, Catholic political activities were quite unified in the following trends:

Firstly, protecting and maintaining a national stance against Communism: It dominated most migrated Catholics. This idea formed

typical local groups, including the group of priest Hoang Quynh. A study stated that “In 1965, there were two powerful groups, both strongly anti-Communist. One group was led by priest Hoang Quynh, who had headed an important parish at Phat Diem diocese in Ninh Binh province before migrating. The other group was led by priests Tran Duc Huynh and Mai Ngoc Khue, who had headed the Bui Chu parish in Nam Dinh province before 1954. There were also groups gathering Catholic intellectuals associated with newspapers like *Sống Đạo* and *Hành Trình*.” [Nguyen-Marshall, 2009]. However, Catholic migrants were not all united and supported this stance such as Nguyen Dinh Dau, Truong Ba Can... They did not support the trend that Priest Hoang Quynh was leading.” [Nguyen-Marshall, 2009].

The tendency to create political pressure on governments led by priest Quynh was the driving force to form a series of large-scale protests that took place continuously in the period between 1964 and 1966. Analyzing the slogans or banners of Catholic protesters in many urban centers in the South, there was a relationship between Catholic protesters and the national anti-communist policy of governments. For example, if the government was considered weak in this direction, that government would immediately receive a strong reaction from the Catholic community. They needed a tough government to maintain this stance that inherited the age of Ngo Dinh Diem's regime. However, it needs to be confirmed that Catholics who had pursued this stance did not keep up with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. While the Second Vatican Council had raised the issue of dialogue with unbelievers, including Communists, this spirit seemed to only spread to a small group of Southern intellectuals. The spirit of reform of the Second Vatican Council did not shake the stance of the Catholic migrants, who still maintained a serious attitude towards Communism. They did not update the church innovations. Some scholars argued that those who held this viewpoint maintained a classical way of thinking and pre-conciliar medieval theology (*Trung cổ thời kỳ tiền Công đồng*). This method of creating pressure on the Southern government to pursue this stance lasted until the end of the Republic of South Vietnam period. For instance, during the years

1973-1974, Redemptorist Priest Tran Huu Thanh launched an anti-corruption movement, protesting President Nguyen Van Thieu. However, Priest Tran Huu Thanh's anti-corruption work did not aim at improving the democratic situation and moving towards the peace that many Vietnamese people were hoping for. He fought against corruption and pressured President Nguyen Van Thieu to build a stronger government to pursue the anti-Communist stance from Ngo Dinh Diem's time. [National Archives Center II, Records: 19536].

Secondly, fighting to protect religion: This trend came when the rise of Buddhism after the events of November 1, 1963. Many Catholics felt inferior and subjected to a purge. In addition, new governments were at risk of condemnation or reaction from Catholics if they favored Buddhism. Many opinions stated that Catholicism succeeded in bringing down Phan Huy Quat's government because this government had a lot of sympathy for Buddhism. After the tumultuous events from 1963 to 1966, in 1968, the Catholic intellectual movement in the South - Pax Romana - issued an "outline" (đề cương) of political activities for this movement. The document was fourteen pages long. In addition to providing political orientation for members, it also contained detailed comments on the context of Catholicism and politics in the South. It stated that the reason Catholics engaged in this activity was also to protect their religion against the political growth of Buddhism: "In the past three years, Catholics have been forced to engage in political activities since the old regime was over, the government forces could not ensure the freedom and rights of individuals and groups. Because Buddhism held the power to control the lives of all people, Catholic groups were forced to jump into politics". [National Archives Center II, Records: 4140].

The "outline" also summarized the political activities of Southern Catholics during these turbulent years. It stated that the political activities of Southern Catholics during this period had some of the following main characteristics:

Clerical politics: Refers to all Catholic political activities from central to local levels that were initiated and led by priests.

Parishioners only obeyed since they feared or lacked experience. Most priests had no political experience, except for a few who had political experience when they were in Phat Diem and Vinh before migrating to the South. However, their experience was self-defense rather than a general political understanding. [National Archives Center II, Records: 4140].

Arbitrary, self-defense, negative politics: Catholics were only active when the rights of the Church or individuals were violated. It means that they defended rights rather than aiming to serve the Fatherland and the people [National Archives Center II, Records: 4140].

Unprofessional politics: The opinion of this group of Catholic intellectuals through the “outline”: A form of an unprofessional political activity since there was no direction, no organization, and no agency to spread the speech. The political activities of Catholicism during this period were: “Whoever did what they did (usually the migrated clergies and believers). They brought with them the division from the North to the South. Therefore, all activities are sporadic, disjointed, and divided... The bishops did not point out any clear direction.” [National Archives Center II, Records: 4140]. The assessment of this intellectual group about the Vietnamese Catholic clergy’s political orientation was not accurate. After a series of protests by Catholics in the years 1963-1966 with the participation of many priests leading the movements, Archbishop Paul Nguyen Van Binh had instructions on the work of clergy “should retreat behind the scenes, should not directly participate in political actions but only participate in an advisory role”. Archbishop Paul Nguyen Van Binh was a very calm and wise person who was able to maintain the overall situation of the Southern Catholic community since 1963. In August 1963, when the conflict between Catholics and Buddhists was tense, the Archbishop of Saigon issued a Letter to call for peace and maintain the spirit of solidarity. He updated the latest spirit of Pope John XXIII on the issue of peace. [National Archives Center II, Records: 1825]. Later, in the spring of 1975, Archbishop Paul Nguyen Van Binh relied on the spirit of reconciliation, integration, innovation,

his sensitivity, and talent to call on parishioners to stay and not evacuate as they did twenty-one years ago.

Self-interest Politics: “Because they operated on a whim and lacked direction, there were a few cunning people who only enthusiastically worked to gain profit. Therefore, they were only enthusiastic when it was beneficial. Since they often had opinions, feelings, and actions that were not very consistent with the will of the Gospel”. [National Archives Center II, Records: 4140].

Political division: This refers to the many Catholics who only cared about defending the rights of the church, causing division with the government, and with other religions, especially Buddhism, and losing the sympathy of many other people. [National Archives Center II, Records: 4140].

In general, the aforementioned comments of the Catholic intellectual group may be subjective but they more or less showed many shortcomings of Southern Catholics’ political activities in the years 1963-1967. Therefore, they also set out their platforms and action plans to spread to many other Catholics a way of doing politics associated with democracy, progress, and based on faith. The stance of this Pax Romana group was neutral. They also did not react strongly to the activities of the radical Catholic intellectual group which had pro-Communist activities. [National Archives Center II, Records: 3533].

At the end of 1966, when the war escalated in Vietnam, the US military intervention in the South became more and more extensive, and the people of the two regions fell into a situation of fratricide (huynh đệ tương tàn), participating in the war for the US regime to set up... awakened new trends in the Southern Catholic Church, which was the perspective of peace. Of course, most views on peace were still based on a stance of non-negotiation and concessions to the Communists. However, there was a very small group within the church that based on this point of view showed that they had a new and more innovative perspective than the majority of those who pursued an opposing stance to Communism. That was the group of

Southern Catholic intellectuals. This group was also known as the radical Catholic intellectual group.

By 1968, according to the General Department of the Saigon National Police, the Southern Catholics in the period from 1963 to 1967 were divided into four groups with different tendencies on the issue of peace in Vietnam as follows:

Priest Tran Du's group. This group had a strong influence because it had a large force of migrant Catholics supporting it. This group was dissatisfied with the Nguyen Van Thieu government.

The next group was the group of priest Hoang Quynh, who was very influential among Catholic migrants in the years 1963-1966. However, by 1968, this priest's reputation with his supporters had declined due to his close connection with Buddhism, which was a political opponent of Catholicism in the Southern political forum.

The third group was the group of priest Ho Van Vui. It mainly affected Southern Catholics, with a weaker support force than the two aforementioned groups and also not sympathetic to these two groups. This group did not have a great influence among Southern Catholics. This Southern Catholic group tended to be neutral, had little reaction to the government, and did not support the two groups of priests Quynh and Du because they believed that these groups held a negative stance and were slow to improve according to the spirit of the Council and still held strong prejudice against Communism.

The last group was the progressive Catholic intellectual group [National Archives Center II, Records: 4134]. This group had innovative ideas according to the latest spirit of the universal church on politics and peace, and they wanted to apply it to the reality of the South, so it was also called a "progressive" group. In fact, people who were sympathetic to this group called it "progressive". The spirit of Vatican II was updated and deployed by this group in the Southern environment since they had a sense of dialogue with the Communists. Because of this ideology, the radical Catholic intellectual group was criticized by other Catholic groups with names such as "pro-Communist".

Conclusion

1. The political activities of Southern Catholics during the years 1963-1967 were influenced by many external factors. It is easy to realize that the political activities of Catholics were placed in a larger ideological war between Capitalism and Socialism. In this war, there were psychological factors that were provoked and drawn into it, including atheist-communist and theistic-religious consciousness (vô thần cộng sản, hữu thần tôn giáo). Many Southern Catholics did not have enough capacity, qualifications, and authority to escape the common perception of the church, nor could they escape this ideological conflict. They engaged in politics with the ideal of protecting religious freedom and hoping for the growth of religion by looking for political support

2. The political activities of Southern Catholics during this period showed a lot of freedom, spontaneity, and self-defense that did not rely on religious grounds. Therefore, it lacked a Gospel spirit to support these activities. That has made the Catholic political heterogeneous movement, lacking cohesion and forming many factions with different reformist and conservative directions. The reform trend, with a small number, relied on the church's innovations to act. The conservative tendency wanted to hold on to the glories of the past. Therefore, the political activities of Catholics in the period 1963-1967 were not homogeneous and lacked connection. However, Catholics have created considerable pressure on internal politics in the South, especially pressure on the government through protests and elections.

3. It cannot be attributed to all Catholics having one stance or one choice through the political activities of Southern Catholics during this period. The most prominent, prestigious, and influential activities during this period were mainly Catholic migrants of Northern origin. They still retained their psychology, lifestyle, thinking, and political habits from the resistance war against the French colonialists. Therefore, it can be said that the activities of gaining and holding power and creating influence on the government and other social

organizations of Southern Catholics from 1963 to 1967 were largely the political thinking of the Northern Catholics practiced on the land of the South.

4. The events from 1963 to 1967 showed that Catholicism as well as Buddhism became important political forces that could cause pressure and public opinion on the Southern government. The power and influence of religions posed a challenge for politicians in the South at that time. This period also had many political organizations of Catholics rallying parishioners according to different motivational goals. Then, the division appeared in the political movement of Southern Catholics. Besides the maintenance of an anti-Communist stance since Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem's time, new reform groups appeared in the spirit of the Second Vatican./.

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