

The Case of Peter Dewey: A Revisit

Chau Huy Ngoc, Master Candidate
National University of Singapore



Life and Death

(1916-1945)

- _ Son of Charles S. Dewey, U.S. Representative from Illinois (1941-1945)
- _ Educated in Switzerland, Yale, and University of Virginia
- _ Was a journalist for *Chicago Daily News* in Paris before enlisting in 1940
- _ Exceptional military career:
 - + Polish Military Ambulance Corps
 - + Liaison officer between Free French and Latin America
 - + 42-43: 8 intelligence missions after joining U.S. Army



CORBIS

- _ Joined OSS in 1943: Mission Etoile, Southern France 1944: valuable intelligence and helped to capture 400 Nazis, destroyed 3 tanks
- _ Decorations: various incl Croix de Guerre and Legion of Merit.
- _ July 1945: appointed leader of Operation EMBANKMENT to Saigon.
- _ Arrived at Saigon on September 4, killed 22 days later on September 26



Peter Dewey in Saigon

_ Mission: “investigation of war crimes, prisoners of war, and the condition of (U.S.) properties...the collection of such documents and published materials...”: not a full disclosure of the team real aims.

_ Had close interaction with the Vietnamese, including Viet Minh leaders in South Vietnam: Trần Văn Giàu, and Phạm Ngọc Thạch

_ Planned for Thạch (Foreign Minister) to go to the U.S. appealing directly to President Truman

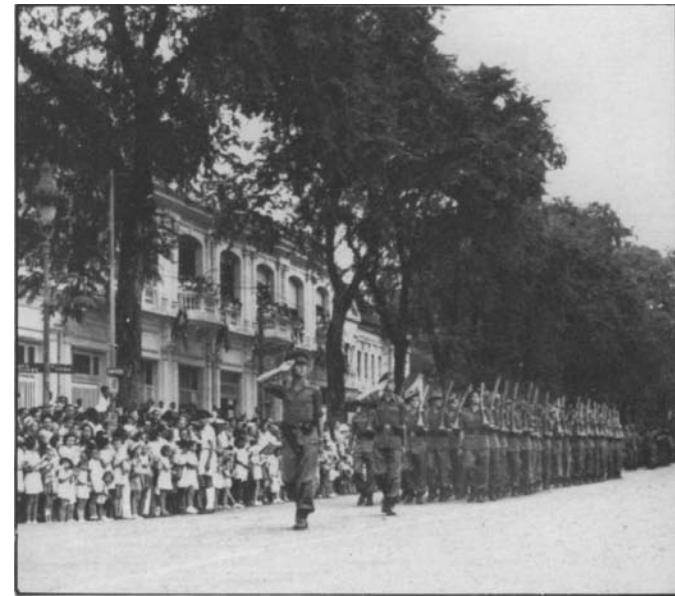


_ Moved the OSS HQ from the center of Saigon to the outskirts: better observation of Vietnamese political “atmosphere”

_ Clashed with the British and French: tension grew high esp after September 23

_ Ordered to leave Saigon on September 26 1945

_ Killed when passed a roadblock 500 yards away from OSS HQ, close to the Airport



The “myth” surrounding the death of Peter Dewey

- _ The body has never been recovered despite much effort
- _ Who killed?: top Viet Minh leaders denied involvement, even blame the French, sent out letters of apology, and called for investigation
- _ 1970: the “revolution” memoir Phạm Văn Chiêu, prominent Viet Minh leader in Gia Định: Viet Minh guerrillas did. Directive: “destroy the evidence, totally”, and concealed the incident from their superiors
- _ At the height of the Vietnam War: Peter Dewey turned into an “American advisor” and his death became a “victory”



Peter Dewey and the understandings of the Vietnam Wars

_ “*Cochinchina is burning, the French and British are finished here, and we ought to clear out of Southeast Asia*”: seen as an unheard warning to U.S. involvement in Vietnam

_ Access to his dispatches would provide greater knowledge on his ideas regarding the future role of the U.S. in Viet Nam: another possible answer to the question *Why Vietnam?* Why did a French sympathizer switch to anti-French and pro-Viet Minh?

_ The 1st and 2nd Vietnam Wars: failure due to misunderstanding? May help to prevent further cases?

_ What was the real mission of Dewey’s team?

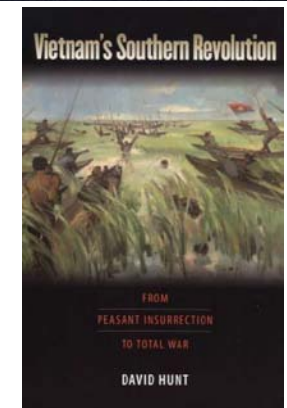
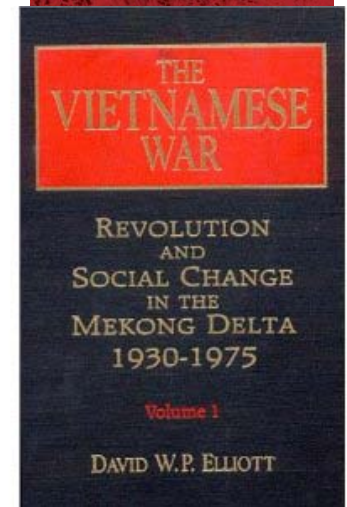
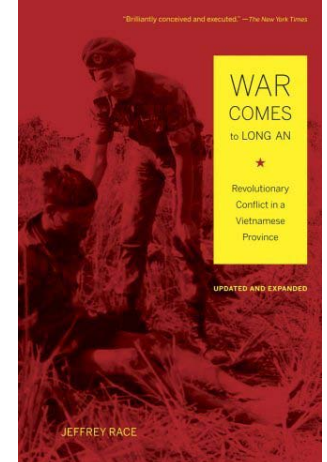
_ Urgent need for writing a history of Peter Dewey's team in Saigon; Vietnamese version and effort to "clear" his name in Viet Nam historiography

_ History from below and micro history?

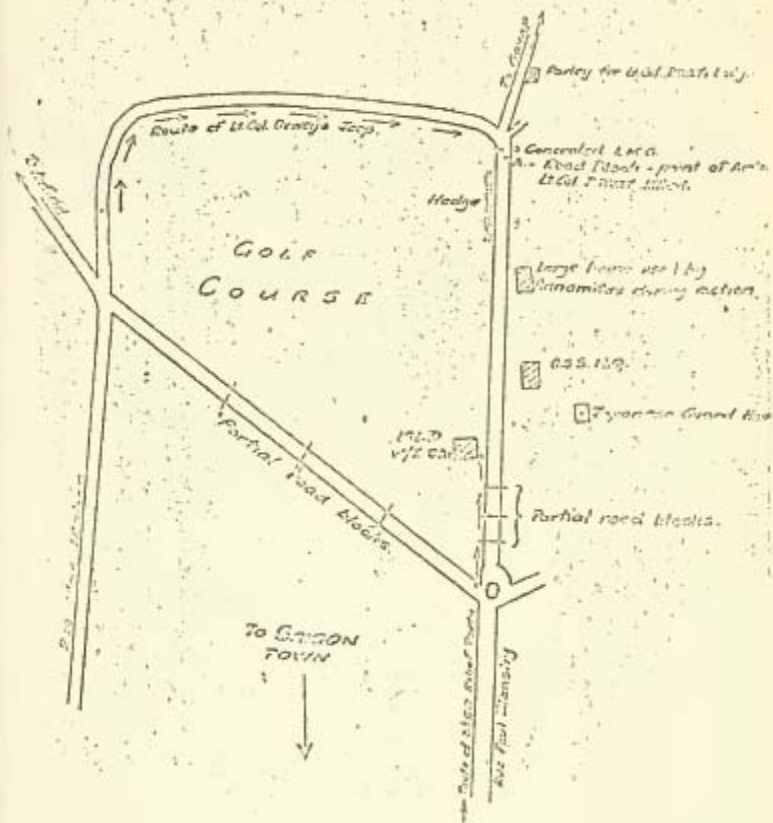
+ Voice of the unheard: postwar-early Col War transitional generation: OSS men and women

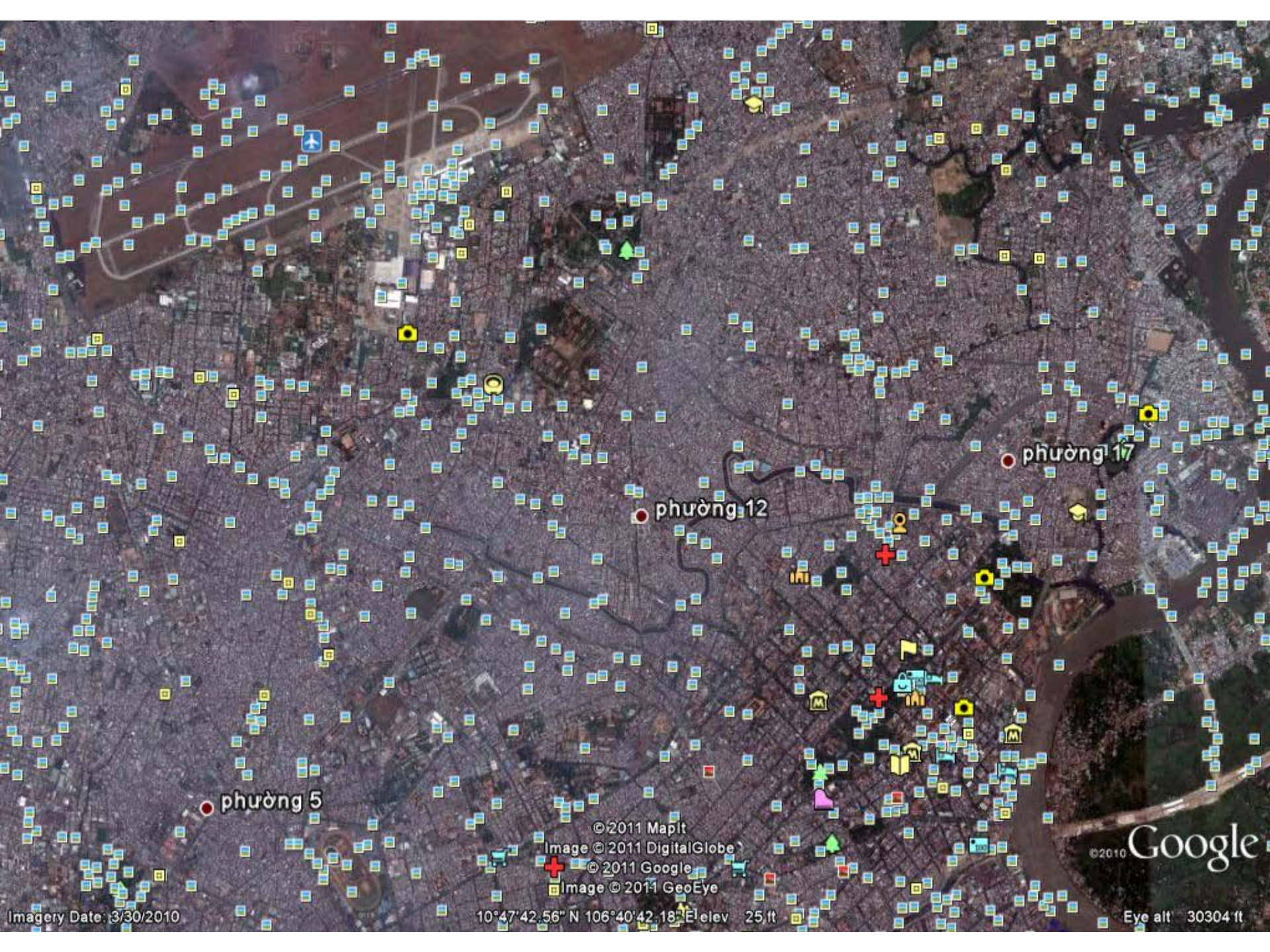
+ American ideologies as reflected in Pete Dewey

+ Multi voices from U.S. military



SKETCH MAP showing position,
and routes leading to position,
where Lt Col DENNEY, US Army,
met his death.





phường 5

phường 12

phường 17

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10°47'42.56" N 106°40'42.18" E Elev 25 ft

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