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Political Science

The Spy Who Loved Us: The Vietnam War and Pham Xuan An's Dangerous Game
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Pham Xuan An's story is as intriguing as it is revealing about the Vietnam War. The author's masterful account shows how An, who spent more than half a century providing critical intelligence for North Vietnam, faced certain death if his intelligence work were discovered by the United States, France, or the South Vietnamese government. An has been the subject of three biographies written by Vietnamese authors, one by a French writer, and last year's *Perfect Spy* by Larry Berman. This book's distinguishing feature is the author's accounts of his meetings with An in Viet-nam between 1992 and 2006. An was not always truthful or open about parts of his life, but these interviews provide excellent insight into the war from the communist perspective and show a growing closeness between the writer and the ex-spy.

Not only a spy, An was also an excellent strategic planner, providing critical intelligence about the Diem regime, the Battle of Ap Bac, and the Tet Of-fensive to his countrymen. An learned his craft from America's leading spymaster of the war, Colonel Edward Lansdale, who befriended him. After the war, An was awarded sixteen medals for his service, including the equivalent of the Congressional Medal of Honor.

While An's covert career flourished, his career in journalism also received accolades. Writing for Reuters and *Time*, he was admired by colleagues who were, of course, totally unaware of his night job. Following his death, Frank McCullough, his boss at *Time*, said, "Not once in the years he worked for me did An ever slant his reporting. Paradoxically, he loved the U.S. and its democracy."

Bass has written five previous books, including *Vietnamerica: The War Comes Home*, and is a professor of English and journalism at the Uni-versity at Albany. This first-rate account, which will appeal to general readers as well as historians, portrays An as a man caught between two cultures who never lost sight of his ultimate goal, peace and prosperity for Vietnam.