

**Perfect Spy:
The Incredible Double Life
of Pham Xuan An, Time
Magazine Reporter and Viet-
namese Communist Agent**

LARRY BERMAN. Collins/Smithsonian,
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Historian Berman (*Lyndon Johnson's War*) draws on several years of interviews with Pham Xuan An before his death in 2006 for this engaging biography of the *Time* reporter who spied for North Vietnam throughout the Vietnam War. Pham Xuan An's deep cover began in 1957, when the Vietnamese Communist Party sent him to study journalism in California. After an internship at the *Sacramento Bee* and traveling around the U.S., he returned to South Vietnam in 1959. As a reporter for Reuters and *Time*, he was privy to classified information that made him a

hero in Hanoi after the war. Amiable, fluent in English and adept at explaining Vietnam to Americans and vice versa, he was popular with reporters and officials of both nations. Readers may suspect some of An's recollections are self-serving, but the evidence in his favor is that almost everyone he befriended continued to admire him after learning his role. It's also clear An liked Americans, so much so that superiors suspected his loyalty and confined him to Vietnam after relations thawed. Without glossing over An's responsibility for American deaths, Berman portrays an attractive, sometimes tragic character. (*May*)