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ANTI-AMERICAN POLITICS IN GRAHAM GREENE'S *THE QUIET AMERICAN*

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ABSTRACT

Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* is a politico-religious novel with an anti-American theme. The story is developed through the memories of the narrator, Fowler who is a British journalist placed in Saigon at a crucial time when France was struggling to establish its colonies in India and China. Pyle is the 'quiet American'. Both Fowler and Pyle come close together but get involved in a rivalry over the same girl Phuong. Pyle helps the general in acts of terrorism during the Vietnamese war. Many women and children of Saigon are killed. This act of killing is the main theme of the novel and it exposes Americans as terrorists. Thus, the dominant impression we get from this novel is Greene's intense insultation and irritation with the Americans.

Keywords: Anti-American, politics, quiet, explosion, communism, Catholic, violence, love and General Thé

Graham Greene is not, basically, a political writer but a writer who happens to be about politics in his later period of his novelistic career. In *The Quiet American,* he formed a political imagination that is based on both America and American policies involving colonial prestige. This paper conveys an overall representation that he dislikes America because it is a symbol of all that has gone wrong due to materialism, Godlessness and neutrality.

Like so many of Greene's novels, *The Quiet American* was inspired by his personal experience of a particular part of the world. He translated into the novel his experiences as the Indo-China correspondent of *Life* and the *London Sunday Times* in the fifties. Greene said in a B.B.C. talk:

"And, of course, there is no coincidence about Indo-China. I went there because there was a war on and I stayed there every winter for four years to watch a war. And out of that a novel emerged. I suppose it's a relic of one's old journalistic past, but I see no reason why the novel to-day shouldn't be written with a background of world events, just as a novel in the nineteenth century could be based entirely on a long experience of Warwickshire or Dorsetshire."[1] When Greene's novel was eventually noticed in the New Yorker, Greene says in *Ways of Escape*, "The reviewer condemned me for accusing my 'best friends' (The Americans) of murder, since I had attributed to them the responsibility for the great explosion—far worse than the trivial bicycle bombs—in the main square of Saigon when many people lost their lives."[2]

Critics innocently struggled to explain Greene's emergence as a left-wing political novelist. The Soviets were easily misled into thinking that his anti-Americanism meant that he was sympathetic to Communism. He was invited to visit Moscow, and a play version of the novel was performed on Moscow stage.

Michael Shelden says, "It is true enough that Greene wanted to provoke Americans for his own personal reasons.... He liked to work up his hatred for Americans—no doubt partly as a way of venting the frustration of his affair with Catherine—but he was not overly concerned about the fate of Vietnam. He was anti-American not pro-Vietnamese."[3]

Greene's portrayal of Pyle is the best aspect of *The Quiet American.* Shelden continues, "The novelist has no substantial political philosophy to offer, but his specific analysis of personality is more useful than any philosophy."[4]

Moreover, William M. Chase comments:

"When Greene turned to the writing of *The Quiet American*, he retained his interest in human innocence, while at the same time refining his understanding of the spy, the one who observes from afar. Although, the novel is rightly taken as prescient of the United States' involvement in Vietnam, it is not interesting on those grounds. Its interest rests in the way it manipulates Greene's familiar structure of youthful innocence and detached omniscience."[5]

Indeed, Greene has got an opportunity to congratulate himself on his foreknowledge sketched in *The Quiet American* as an authoritative and historical analysis proves that America came very close to a nuclear intervention in Indochina in 1954. The detailed background of the novel seems to verify the political promptness of Pyle's role, though it is a story and not a piece of history. In *The Other Man* Greene says that he would always be ready to thrust his weak and feeble shoot into the bars of American foreign policy that may be compared to a wheel turning with a great velocity at the happening of political events and incidents. In short, Greene adopts a novelistic method in criticizing American policies and it is extensively observable in the novel—*The Quiet American*.

Greene interviewed Ho Chi Minh. The impressive thing about Greene's political reporting is his refusal to be misled by his personal preferences. There is no doubt where his sympathies lay but he admitted that every Vietnamese welcomed the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu. The movement was a nationalist one and only Western clumsiness was compelling it to become Communist. Ho Chi Minh was a man 'pure a Lucifer', and Greene could not resist his charm. The Communist leader appealed to the buried relic of hero-worship in Greene.[6]

After all, *The Quiet American* is based on Greene's four-year stay in Indo-China (1952-55) during the Indo-China War in which the French and their allies—Britain and the US—fought various factions for supremacy in the region.

On one level *The Quiet American* is a love story about the triangle that develops between a British journalist in his fifties, a young American idealist and a beautiful Vietnamese girl, but on another level it is also about the political turmoil and growing American involvement that led to the Vietnam War. There is a conflict between Communism and the Catholic Church in the novel. The story unfolds through the memories of the narrator, Fowler, a British journalist in Saigon in those desperate months when the French were trying to maintain colonial prestige in Indo-China.

The Indo-China of the novel is yet another uncomfortable corner of 'Greeneland'. The images which evoke the atmosphere of seediness and decay in other novels have been for the most part shed, and it is only occasionally that one finds them. The Vietnamese Surete in Saigon, like the police station in Scobie's Africa, smells of 'urine and injustice'. However, the predominant impression left by the novel is not of sordidness but of violence and suffering. Greene's obsessive view of the world is unchanged. In a world of colonial twilight the French are fighting a hopeless war. Captain Trouin says to Fowler:

"You know better than I do that we can't win. You know the road to Hanoi is cut and mined every night. You know we lose one class of Saint-Cyr every year. We were nearly beaten in fifty. De Lattre has given us two years of grace—that's all. But we are professionals: We have to go on fighting till the politicians tell us to stop."[7]

It is a war of jungle and mountain and

marsh. At night, the paddies swarm with the enemy who disappear, bury their arms and put on peasant dress. One never knows whose frightened soldiers are crouching in a watch-tower. The country is full of private armies who sell their services for money or revenge. The atrocities and suffering caused by the war are made vivid through Fowler's reactions. Captain Trouin tells him about a girl in Hanoi:

"There was one girl in the mortuary—they had not only cut off her breasts, they had mutilated her lover and stuffed his..." (*The Quiet American*, 198.) And Fowler replies: "That's why I won't be involved." (*The Quiet American*, 198.) Fowler goes out with a French patrol and they cross a canal full of bodies which reminds him of 'an Irish stew containing too much meat'. They find a mother and child who were caught in the line of fire in a narrow ditch.

They were very clearly dead: a small neat clot of blood on the woman's forehead, and the child might have been sleeping. He was about six years old and he lay like an embryo in the womb with his little bony knees drawn up.... There was a gnawed piece of loaf under his body. I thought, 'I hate war'. (*The Quiet American*, 62-63.)

Greene's hell is here, once again, and the images of violence and death define it. The slums of Brighton, the heat and squalor of Mexico and West Africa and the violence of Indo-China are different facets of the inescapable human condition. They are all tokens of an obsessed sensibility which Greene shares with so many modern writers. Hoffman rightly comments:

"Of the three parts of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, only the *Inferno* is truly understood by a great majority of moderns. It often seems as though there were no way out of hell; or, as we might say in relation to Pound's *Cantos,* heaven seems to have happened long ago, and only earth and hell are left to the uses of the imagination."[8]

Fowler is an exile who has lived in Saigon almost friendless, though he loves his Vietnamese mistress Phoung and, through her, he has developed an attachment to the life of the East which ministers to his sensual impulses:

"I wanted to keep the sight of those silk-trousered figures moving with grace through the humid noon, I wanted Phuong, and my home had shifted its ground eight thousand miles." (*The Quiet American*, 24.)

Fowler smokes opium. He scamps work; he has no ambition and takes a cynical delight in teasing others. He cannot resist the temptation to tease Pyle. He admits that it is, after all, the weapon of weakness. He is haunted by a sense of failure tinged with guilt. In his case, as in Scobie's, this originates from the failure of marital life. He is estranged from his wife who lives in England. Being of High Church persuasion, she would not give him a divorce. His experiences with her and other women have given him an insight into the pain and pity of human relationships.

When Pyle falls in love with Phuong, Fowler's fear and anxiety became almost obsessive. He is a poor middle-aged man who has so little to offer against Pyle's youth and 'infinite riches of respectability'. Fowler, like Bendrix, suffers from a sense of inadequacy as a lover and, in anticipation of future loss, turns love into a rage of jealousy and anxiety. He admits:

"I made love to her in those days savagely as though I hated her, but what I hated was the future. Loneliness lay in my bed and I took loneliness into my arms at night.... I didn't want to question her. I didn't want to make her lie... but suddenly my anxiety would speak for me, and I said, 'When did you last see Pyle?"' (*The Quiet American,* 181-82.)

In Greene's novels, the inevitable consequence of love is suffering and Fowler suffers when he loses Phuong. It is one of the involved ironies of the novel that the seemingly detached narrator should be so emotionally attached. His love is a part of the motivation for his involvement which brings about the death of his rival.

However, Fowler has a lot of sympathy for those who suffer—the dead men in the canal, the woman and her child lying dead in the ditch, the young soldiers in the tower, the child and the trishaw driver killed in the bomb blast—and even for Granger and Pyle as he thinks: "Unfortunately the innocent are always involved in any conflict. Always, everywhere, there is some voice crying from a tower." (*The Quiet American,* 153.) The voice from a tower on one occasion (the cries of the young soldier in a watch-tower mortally wounded by the Viet-Minh) brings home to Fowler his own

responsibility for suffering:

"I was responsible for that voice crying in the dark: I had prided myself on detachment, on not belonging to this war, but those wounds had been inflicted by me just as though I had used the sten, as Pyle had wanted to do." (*The Quiet American,* 145.)

For Fowler, as for Scobie, peace remains a dream which neither the conditions of life nor his own actions help him realise. It is Fowler's pity and longing for peace which ultimately bring him into conflict with Alden Pyle. The action of the novel is based, as in some of Greene's earlier novels, on the contrasted dispositions and beliefs of the two main characters. The contrast is highlighted through the 'debate' between them in the watch-tower just before it is attacked by the Viet-Minh guerillas. It is reminiscent of the debate between the whisky-priest and the lieutenant in *The Power and the Glory*. Pyle believes in decisive action to save the East from communism. While, Fowler considers Pyle's idealism irrelevant to the Vietnamese who are not interested in 'isms' and 'ocracies'. He says to Pyle:

"They want enough rice. They don't want to be shot at. They want one day to be much the same as another. They don't want our white skins around telling them what they want." (*The Quiet American,*119.) In spite of his sympathy for the misguided young American, Fowler realises that their personal incompatibilities are too great for them to agree on the Vietnamese situation. They recognise each other's worth, but one of them must destroy the other eventually. Their conflict is as tragic as it is inevitable.

Pyle's new world innocence is so mordantly satirised in *The Quiet American* that Greene has been accused of caricaturing Pyle in order to give vent to his spleen against America. Many American readers and critics have denounced the novel as 'a horrid neutralist attack' on their cause in the Cold War. Greene's anti-Americanism is no secret. In the thirties he expressed himself freely against American life and culture, especially in the film reviews which he wrote for *The Spectator*. There are enough broadsides against America in *The Quiet American* to justify John Atkin's contention that 'the overriding impression one gets from this novel is Greene's intense irritation with the Americans.'[9]

Most of the critics assume that the anti-American Fowler often speaks for Greene. Greene's politics, anti-American as it is called, is much relevant to the reading of this novel. Moreover, Greene believes, like Fowler, that American foreign policy is dominated by a political innocence that is dangerous.

When Fowler meets Pyle first, he seems incapable of harm. Questioned by Vigot, the French Police officer, Fowler sums up Pyle's character:

"He is a good chap in his way. Serious. Not one of those noisy bastards at the Continental. A quiet American." (*The Quiet American,* 11.) Pyle is a 'starry-eyed' young man from Boston. He comes to Vietnam on a secret mission, full of faith and hope but without much experience of life. Much of his knowledge of men and affairs is derived from books, especially those by a journalist called York Harding whom Fowler holds responsible for Pyle's fatal naivete. Fowler, further, says:

"He is a superior sort of journalist—they call them diplomatic correspondents. He gets hold of an idea and then alters every situation to fit the idea. Pyle came out here full of York Harding's idea. Harding had been here once for a week on his way from Bangkok to Tokyo. Pyle made the mistake of putting his idea into practice. Harding wrote about a Third Force. Pyle formed one—a shoddy little bandit with two thousand men and a couple of tame tigers." (*The Quiet American,* 218.)

Greene treats Pyle as the product of a community and a climate of ideas which more or less predetermine his reactions. His narrowness and obduracy in personal and political affairs is as much a product of psychological conditioning as Pinkie's cruelty is in *Brighton Rock*. In Greene's religious novels, the characters are victims of their religious background. Alden Pyle, like Anthony Farrant in *England Made Me,* is a victim of his political background. Pyle is one of Greene's typical innocents: he is good at heart. Moreover, he does not see evil feelings and motives in others. But his innocence and goodness are a dangerous liability in the world of 'black and merciless things.' It makes him suffer and unwittingly inflict suffering on others. Youth and charm are its potent weapons and there is something undeniably romantic about it. Alden Pyle feels pained and disappointed 'when reality

didn't match the romantic ideas he cherished, or when someone he loved or admired dropped below the impossible standard he had set' (*The Quiet American,* 92.) He is brave and enterprising and has a sense of fairness. He indulges in boyish adventures which Fowler despises. In a kind of school boy dream, he punts down the river to Phat Diem in order to tell Fowler that he has fallen in love with Phuong. On another occasion (when Fowler is injured in a Viet-Minh ambush), Pyle goes out to find a patrol at the risk of his life. Courage and dedication, however, if uninformed by experience and wisdom, can turn into a fanaticism that makes a man blind to the consequences of his actions. Pyle is appallingly ignorant, callow and unimaginative. Fowler remarks that 'he was as incapable of imagining pain or danger to himself as he was incapable of conceiving the pain he might cause others.' (*The Quiet American,* 74.) He is, as Fowler says, 'impregnably armoured by his good intentions and his ignorance.' He views the blood splashed on his shoes with equanimity and says: 'I must get them cleaned before I see the Minister.' (*The Quiet American,* 75.) There is not a word of sympathy for the victims. What is worse, he uses a lot of catchwords leant from books to justify the barbarity of killing. For example, he says to Fowler: 'In a way you could say they died for Democracy.' Such remarks show that behind innocence there lurks unconscious arrogance and a self-righteous streak of moral blindness. Nonetheless, Maurice Cranston maintains that Pyle is not innocent:

He is 'dumb', yes, he is a 'sucker'; but 'innocence' means purity of heart or soul or conscience, and this Pyle does not have. His fanaticism is wholly brutish... and he has a highly developed gift of humbugging self-deception.[10] Cranston seems to ignore the complexities of Pyle's character. Pyle is not without 'purity of heart or soul' and Greene makes it clear that he is morally a better human being than Fowler. As a matter of fact, purity of character as well as fanaticism and self-deception are all aspects of Pyle's innocence. Without being unduly censorious, we begin to feel with Fowler that such innocence is a form of evil, or that it makes for evil by causing pain and misery. Fowler's aphoristic statement, 'God save us always... from the innocent and the good', might be taken as the moral of the book.

Alden Pyle's is the tragedy of good intentions and the irony of it is suggested by the image of the dumb leper 'who has lost his bell, wandering the world, meaning no harm', or by Fowler's statement, 'I never knew a man who had better motives for all the trouble he caused.' Pyle's actions which, like Scobie's, are prompted by the best of motives, reveal Greene's obsessional awareness of the insidious working of evil in human life. Pyle is determined 'to do good, not to any individual person but to a country, a continent, a world.' But as he tries to arrange the lives of others, he succeeds only in becoming 'a damned Yankee'. Good intentions are apt to be debased and misdirected by lack of experience; they do not avail where the understanding is dim. An exasperated Fowler tells Pyle: 'I wish sometimes you had a few bad motives; you might understand a little more about human beings.' (*The Quiet American,* 172.) It is Pyle's immature and idealistic dabbling in love and politics which makes a mess.

There is a confrontation between love and politics in *The Quiet American.* Greene uses the Jamesian theme but with a vital difference. Conor Cruise O' Brien remarks:

"Pyle is that venerable character, the transatlantic innocent, but with the twist that it is his own well-meant activity and his 'innocence' itself, not the wickedness of Europeans, that brings about his own destruction and that of many others."[11]

What is apparently at issue between Fowler and Pyle is the lovely body of Phuong. The cynical realism of the Englishman and the romantic idealism of the American are brilliantly brought out in the funny proposal scene where Fowler acts as the interpreter. Pyle treats Phuong as a flower to be tended carefully, a child to be protected. Fowler looks upon her as a woman, capable of looking after herself. Pyle offers her the security of his youth and riches; Fowler can offer her only the tenderness of age and experience. Pyle would play fair in love, which for him should be above selfishness and deception. When he discovers the lie which Fowler has told him (about his wife's reply to his letter), he is shocked and disenchanted by this example of 'European duplicity.' He tells Fowler that Phuong

cannot love a man who is so dishonest as Fowler has been. Fowler warns him:

"Love's a Western word... we use it for sentimental reasons or to cover up an obsession with one woman. These people don't suffer from obsessions. You're going to be hurt, Pyle, if you aren't careful." (*The Quiet American,* 172.)

In trying to arrange Phuong's life according to his own simple ideas of love and marriage, all that Pyle achieves are Fowler's jealousy which becomes a part of his motive in having Pyle killed and Phuong's frustration and suffering.

Furthermore, Pyle puts his foot in an international situation. Before he came to Vietnam, he had been reading in advance on the Far East and the problems of China. He was 'absorbed already in the dilemmas of democracy and the responsibilities of the West.' He is convinced that what is required in Vietnam is a Third Force: he calls it national democracy. All this comes from York Harding's *The Role of the West.* Pyle learns nothing in Vietnam. Like his mentor, he tries to fit situations to his ideas. He chooses General Thé, a bandit, as the leader of the Third Force, and thus his idealism from which his ignorance is inseparable, becomes, as A.A. DeVitis remarks, 'a dangerous weapon in a world coerced by the cult of power, symbolized by General Thé and his mysterious Third Force.'[12] Fowler sees what Pyle does not—the wide gulf dividing a concept from reality. The Old world speaks to the New:

"We are the old colonial peoples, Pyle, but we've learned a bit of reality, we've learned not to play with matches. The Third Force—it comes out of a book, that's all. General Thé only a bandit with a few thousand men: he is not a national democracy." (*The Quiet American,* 205.)

Pyle's uncomprehending reaction is that of a child, purposefully obstinate, whose mind moves irresistibly along a single track. He supplies General Thé with Diolacton bombs. When one of these explodes in a Saigon Square and results in a carnage, Pyle becomes a morally innocent killer, and thus Pyle's good intentions turn lethal and sinister. He gets his Third Force in the form of human blood on his shoes. Fowler taunts him angrily:

"This will hit the world's Press. You've put General Thé on the map all right, Pyle. You've got the Third Force and National Democracy all over your right shoe. Go home to Phuong and tell her about your heroic deed—there are a few dozen less of her country people to worry about." (*The Quiet American,* 213.) Pyle is dazed, but he still does not see the evil in which he is implicated and naively blames the communists. Fowler realizes that Pyle's innocence is vitiated by its own intensity and by the evil inherent in reality. Fowler draws the conclusion, summing up the theme of the novel: "What's the good? he'll always be innocent, you can't blame the innocent, they are always guiltless. All you can do is control them or eliminate them. Innocence is a kind of insanity." (*The Quiet American,* 213.)

In spite of his lack of conviction, Fowler is forced to act after General Thé's 'demonstration'. He is a desperate resistance to the inhumanity of Pyle's associates. In terms of the first passage of the epigraph to the novel, action is a 'dangerous thing', but Fowler must now act—faced as he is by the malpractice of heart and illegitimate process produced by Pyle's terrible 'notions of duty'. Pyle tells Fowler about his meeting General Thé after the bomb explosion. 'I dealt with him very severely', he says to Fowler, speaking 'like the captain of a school-team who has found one of his boys breaking his training.'(*The Quiet American,* 229.) He refuses to give up General Thé because he is the only hope for 'national democracy'. For Pyle, the Vietnamese are uncomplicated children who suffer and soon forget their suffering. It is then that Fowler, realising how irredeemable Pyle is, commits himself to destroy this menace to human life.

Afterwards, Fowler moves to the window of his flat and gives the prearranged signal for Pyle's death to the Communist Heng's man, a trishaw-driver, waiting outside. Soon he wavers; eventually he leaves Pyle's fate to God—in whom he does not believe. Heng says, 'Sooner or later one has to take sides, if one is to remain human.' (*The Quiet American,* 227.) It is in the name of humanity that Fowler ranges himself beside the communists in order to contrive the death of a man whom he had befriended. When Pyle is murdered, Fowler has too many views on his death:

"Well, he might have been murdered by the Vietminh. They have murdered plenty of people in Saigon. His body was found in the river by the bridge of Dakow—Vietminh territory when your police

withdraw at night. Or he might have been killed by the Vietnamese. Sureté—it's been known. Perhaps they didn't like his friends. Perhaps he was killed by the Caodistas because he knew General Thé.... Perhaps he was killed by General Thé because he knew the Caodistas. Perhaps he was killed by Hoa-Haos for making passes at the General's concubines. Perhaps he was just killed by someone who wanted his money." (*The Quiet American,* 26.)

When the American Economic Attaché asks him about Pyle's murder, Fowler sneers at the commitment of an ignorant American:

"He was young and ignorant and silly and he got involved. He had no more a notion than any of you what the whole affair's about, and you gave him money and York Harding's books on the East and said, 'Go ahead. Win the East for democracy'. He never saw anything he hadn't heard in a lecture hall, and his writers and his lecturers made a fool of him. When he saw a dead body he couldn't even see the wounds. A Red Menace, a soldier of democracy." (*The Quiet American,* 32.)

Fowler knows the East much better because he knows it from experience, not from books. He sees the wrongs of colonialism, but he also sees that the choice is between colonialism and communism.

But he is aware of betrayal not only of Pyle but also of his own principles, and aware too of his lost peace. He has stooped to evil in order to suppress it. It weighs on his conscience and in his interview with Vigot he feels a strong urge to confess the truth of his responsibility for Pyle's murder.

After Pyle's death, Fowler wins back Phuong and his wife, in a moment of generosity, agrees to give him a divorce. But neither Phuong nor the opium pipe which she prepares for him can expunge his doubts and vague remorse. A remark of Fowler carries impressive irony at the end of the novel. Vigot (who suspects Fowler's role in Pyle's murder) meets him a fortnight after Pyle's death. After he leaves, Fowler imagines that Vigot looked at him 'with compassion, as he might have looked at some prisoner for whose capture he was responsible undergoing his sentence for life.' (*The Quiet American,* 180-181.)It is, therefore, not exactly a happy ending for Fowler. The shadow of Pyle will always remain. His copy of York Harding's *The Role of the West* on Fowler's book-shelf is a constant reminder of a young man with a crew cut and a black dog at his heels. Fowler feels wrung out, with 'all passion spent' but no 'calm of mind'. He is left with a feeling of sympathy for the quiet American and a sense of guilt for his own intervention which led to murder. The novel concludes with Fowler's penitential reflection: "Everything had gone right with me since he had died, but how I wished there existed someone to whom I could say that I was sorry." (*The Quiet American,* 247.)

So far as the matter is concerned with the American politics, Grahame Smith rightly reflects:

"If *The Quiet American* is in some sense a political novel, this prejudice amounts to a failure in politics as well as in artistry. His early travel book on Mexico, *The Lawless Roads,* and parts of *The Other Man* and *Ways of Escape* reveal Greene's capacity to make thought-out criticisms of America.... the later ones show an acute grasp of America's imperialist role in international politics in the middle of the twentieth century, and at least some of these objections get into the novel itself. But the final impression left by *The Quiet American* is of an intelligent and creative mind subsiding into antagonism as a substitute for a reasoned and also an imaginatively worked out response to a political reality."[13]

Sheldon is rather harsh and a little prejudiced when he comments:

"Despite the polished surface of the writing, *The Quiet American* reveals that Greene's genius was beginning to run dry. His genius lay in his ability to create private hells inhabited by such lonely devils as Raven, Pinkie, Scobie and Lime, but the world is too much with us in *The Quiet American...*, we see more than enough of the public life of Saigon, but very little of Fowler's dark soul. In earlier years Greene spent so many hours alone in his own hell that he had no trouble keeping his focus on private agonies, but fame and money drew him (Greene) into the larger world after 1950, and he lost that focus. Success set him on his way to becoming 'A Burnt-Out Case.'"[14]

Moreover, Judith Adamson seems to state that *The Quiet American* emerges as a result of Greene's political experiences in Vietnam as she

quotes:

While staying with Colonel Leroy, Greene shared a room with an American attached to an economic aid mission. Though he was more intelligent and less innocent than Pyle, he was to be the model for Greene's protagonist in *The Quiet American*. The two men drove back to Saigon together, as Pyle and Fowler would in the novel, and the American lectured Greene about the necessity of creating a third force in Vietnam which he thought might be led by self-styled General Thé. On Greene's first visit to the country Thé had been a colonel in the Cao Dai army of 20,000 men fighting in the South, theoretically alongside the French. But between January and October 1951 Thé had left Tay Ninh, the political centre of the Cao Dai, where they made primitive mortars from the exhaust pipes of old cars to supplement the arms they got from the French, and set himself up as a general ready to make war on the Viet Minh and French alike…. Fowler, the journalist narrator, sees and speaks what Greene saw and wrote in Vietnam.[15]

The Quiet American remains in Greene's own words "technically perhaps a more successful book."[16] Indeed, it contains a political theme that is ideologically anti-American. Moreover, it is not only about political ideologies, political campaigns and international politics but also concerned with the spiritual loss that humanity suffered during the Vietnam War.

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