In the text, the names of Vietnamese persons and locations have been rendered in common English usage, and the country name “Vietnam” has been standardized for consistency—rather than “Viet Nam” or “Viet-Nam”—except in titles of books and the like. (The same has been done with the name Lewandowski, which was occasionally rendered as “Lewandowsky.”) Street and other locations in Saigon and Warsaw are given as they were at the time of the Vietnam War and the Cold War, in the 1960s, although they have in many cases changed since then along with shifts in the prevailing politics (in opposite directions, as it happens, toward Communism in one case, away from it in the other). Finally, in a few cases, to avoid distracting the reader, a variant spelling of a name in a quotation or the like has been made consistent with the predominant spelling.

One noteworthy exception is “135 Dương Pasteur”—the address of the secret three-way “Marigold” gatherings at the Italian Embassy in downtown Saigon. This address was already rare in 1966 for having retained its colonial name (“Rue Pasteur”) a dozen years after the end of French rule. After North Vietnamese tanks crashed through the gates of the presidential palace a few blocks away in 1975, the triumphant Communist authorities marked the new era by avidly renaming landmarks (“Independence Palace” now became “Reunification Palace”), streets (the nearby U.S. Embassy building now found itself on an avenue named after Le Duan, the Vietnamese Communist Party leader), and of course the city itself (renamed to honor Ho Chi Minh). But they evidently respected the renowned French scientist and his apolitical struggle against disease, and “Dương Pasteur” remains to this day.