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The United States and Indochina
in the
First Indochinese Crisis

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This Thesis written by

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A. B. (University of San Francisco, June 11, 1955)

under the guidance of his Faculty Advisory
Committee and approved by all its members,
has been presented to and accepted by the
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fulfillment of the requirement for the degree

Master of Arts

in

History

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University of San Francisco

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The United States and Indochina in
The First Indochinese Crisis

June-September 1940

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Introduction: Indochina
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In 1887 France had conquered two countries of southeastern Asia, Cambodia and Viet-nam. That year, she placed them under the authority of a Governor General, and named the whole territory French Indochina. To this possession, the French added, in 1893, a third country, Laos, after a long struggle with Thailand. ¹

Moreover, after the occupation of Viet-nam, the French had intentionally divided this country in three administrative units and gave to each one of them a name, referring to north Viet-nam as Tonkin, to central Viet-nam as Annam, and to south Viet-nam as Cochinchina. ²

Consequently, in history and geography text-books, it was said that French Indochina consisted of five distinct regions: Tonkin, Annam, Cochinchina, Cambodia and Laos, as though Viet-nam did not exist, and that Tonkin, Annam and Cochinchina were separated countries. ³

According to this artificial make-up, French Indochina

1. Andre Masson, Histoire de l'Indochina Francaise, p.96
2. Tran-duc-Thao, "Les Relations Franco-Vietnamiennes", Les Temps Modernes, XVIII, March 1947, p.1059, note 1.
3. See, for example, Canada Department of Mines and Technical Surveys, Indochina, A Geographical Appreciation, p.4; or Albert de Pourville, L'Annamite, p.35.

was an area of 288,600 square miles, south of China, east of Burma and Thailand, north of the Gulf of Thailand and west of the China Sea.

The Indochinese peninsula is mostly mountainous. Its physiography is dominated by the uplands which cover more than one half of the total area. The mountains stand on the border of China. They spread over Tonkin and Laos. They go south by the Annam Cordillera which forms a natural border between Annam and Laos and a backbone of Indochina. In Cambodia there is a range of plateaux along the coast.⁴

Almost all the uplands of Indochina are forests which occupy about 120,000 square miles, or more than 40 per cent of the territory. About 33 per cent of these forests are still inaccessible to the population. In the accessible parts, the mountain tribes practice a shifting cultivation, locally called ray. Forests are burned to make fields for crops. In a few years, when the soil is exhausted, people set forth for another clearing. About 16 per cent of the forested area has been affected by this practice.⁵

More important for Indochina than its topography are its river systems. Two great rivers actually form two great deltas which feed the population of Indochina and especially of Vietnam. They are the Hong-ha (Red River) in the North

4. Canadian Government, *Indochina, A Geographical*
 Appendix 4. Canadian Government, *op.cit.*, pp. 11-12.

5. *Ibid.*, pp.19-20

and the Cuulong (Mekong) in the South.

The Hong-ha is an abrupt current, with a total length of about 720 miles. It flows in a deep structural trough in its upper course. But when it leaves the mountains, its waters usually outrun its banks in the rainy season, i.e., from June to October each year. To keep back floods, embankments are built. These embankments decrease in height downstream, where the diverging river mouths provide a more equal distribution of flood waters. With the contribution of a smaller river called Thai-binh, the Hong-ha formed the Tonkinese delta which spreads on an area of 10,000 square miles. ⁶

The Cuu-long is a great river of Indochina and of Asia, having nearly 2,500 miles in length. Tumultuous in Chinese territories, its course becomes more placid when it enters Laos. It runs along the northern borders of Laos, goes through Cambodia and divides itself in nine branches (whence its name Cuu-long, which means Nine Dragons) in Cochinchina before coming to the China Sea. In Cambodia, the Cuu-long receives the waters of Lake Tonle-sap, which acts as a regulator of its floods. In Cochinchina, it forms the most fertile delta of Indochina, the Cochinchinese delta. It is opportune to note here that the two deltas of Indochina are in Viet-nam, which

6. Le-thanh-Khoi, Le Viet-nam, Histoire et Civilisation,
pp. 19-20; Masson, op.cit., p.10-11

has also a narrow strip of arable land along its coasts.⁷

Over these mountains, rivers and deltas, blow the monsoons because Indochina is situated in that area of the world called the "Monsoon Asia". A monsoon is caused by unequal air pressure over the continent. In winter the dense and cold air in continental Asia sinks, forming a center of high pressure, while the surrounding oceans have a warmer and less dense atmosphere. The result, therefore, is that a flowing of cold and dry air comes from the lands to the oceans. In summer, conditions are reversed: winds blow from the oceans to the lands. According to their prevailing directions, the winter monsoon is called Northeast Monsoon, and the summer's Southwest Monsoon. In Indochina, the Northeast Monsoon period lasts from mid-September to March, while the Southwest Monsoon prevails during the remainder of the year.⁸

Under the influence of the monsoon and because of the terrain, Indochina has varied temperatures. The uplands of Tonkin, Laos and Annam have below 65° F. In January, the coldest month of the year, while the lowlands and deltas have 75°F. During summer, which occurs in June and July, the temperatures are respectively 75°F and 85°F. In general, Indochina has a tropical climate, warm and wet. The wettest part of Indochina

7. Canadian Government, op.cit., pp.12, 15; Khoi, op.cit. pp.21-23

8. Ibid, pp.24-25; Nyugen-van-Huyen, La Civilisation Annamite, pp. 5-6

is in the southwest, where the moisture-bearing Southwest Monsoon meets the uplands of the Cambodian coast. The Annam Cordillera and the mountainous regions of Tonkin and Laos receive a higher precipitation than other areas. In the North, the rainy season is summer; in the central part and the south, it is the autumn. The maximum rainfall in Tonkin is 14 inches, in Annam 31 inches, in Cochinchina 13 inches, in Cambodia 10 inches, in Laos 12 inches.⁹

These climatic conditions favor the cultivation of rice. Rice, therefore, is the main production of Indochina. It is the basic food for the Cambodians and Laotians. But it is a resource of wealth for Viet-nam. In 1937, for example, the Vietnamese obtained from their harvests more than 6,000,000 tons of rice. This made Viet-nam the sixth largest producer and the second largest exporter of rice in the world before the World War II. But during the Japanese occupation and the War of Independence against the French, i.e., from 1940 to 1954 the agricultural production of Viet-nam greatly decreased. Production of rice in the year 1952 to 1953 amounted only to 2,633,000 tons.¹⁰

9. Canadian Government, op.cit., pp.16-17; Khoi, op.cit., pp. 24-35

10. Canadian Government, op.cit., pp.40-41,45-46; Khoi, op.cit., pp.418-419; Institute of Pacific Relations Internal Secretariat, A Brief Political and Economic Handbook of Eastern and Southern Asia, pp.22,24, hereafter cited as A Brief Handbook.

The second important crop of Indochina is rubber, and it is found especially in Viet-nam. In 1938, rubber production of Vietnam was 43,000 metric tons, of which 40% was exported to the United States.¹¹

Other crops of Indochina are pepper, coffee, tea, cotton, corn, potatoes, soybean, etc... Livestock do not form an important part of the agricultural economy in Indochina, since grasslands are rare. Cattle and buffaloes are used as animals of draught in the fields, seldom for food. Pigs and fowl furnish the usual meat in the Indochinese diet. But fish takes the place of meat as a real supplement to rice in the daily meals. The fisheries resources, are, therefore, of major importance in Indochina. There are not many full-time fishermen but nearly every peasant is fishing at some time of the year. Fish are found abundantly along the coasts of Viet-nam, in the rivers, and particularly in the lake Tonle-sap.¹²

The sub-soil of Indochina is not very rich in minerals. There are, however, considerable coal reserves in North Vietnam. The estimate given in the International Geological Congress held in Toronto, Canada, in 1913, attributed to the reserves of Viet-nam an amount of about 20,000,000,000 tons. Here are some figures of coal production: in 1938 - 2,140,000

11. I.P.R., A Brief Handbook, p.22. The French historians used to say that 95% rubber of Viet-nam was exported to France, but the addition of the figures of exportations to France shows only 30.5%. Jean Chesneaux, Contribution a l'Histoire de la Nation Vietnamienne, p.9

12. Canadian Government, Op.cit., p. 49. Graphical Appreciation

metric tons; in 1948 - 360,000 metric tons; in 1953 - 63,000 metric tons. Beside coal, iron ores, tin, zinc, wolfram, tungsten are mined also in North Viet-nam. Central Viet-nam has a gold mine. ¹³

Indochina had a population of about 25 millions in 1940. Of this population more than 21 million were Vietnamese, 3 millions Cambodians, and about one billion Laotians. These figures are not in proportion with the size of the respective territories. Viet-nam has 127,300 square miles, while Cambodia has 67,900 square miles, and Laos has 94,400 square miles. The population of Viet-nam is particularly dense in the North, where about 1,500 people live in a square mile in the delta. ¹⁴

The principal cities of Indochina are:

Vientiane (1936: 15,000 inhabitants), capital of Laos; Phnom-Penh (pop.1948: 110,000), capital of Cambodia; Saigon-Cholon (pop.1948: 1,669,600), capital of Viet-nam, two cities united into one administrative unit since 1931, industrial and commercial center of Viet-nam and of Indochina, major harbor and air base; Hanoi (pop. 1951: 216,000), capital of Indochina in the colonial period, former capital of Viet-nam, center of land and river communications of Tonkin; Hai-phong (pop.1951: 146,000), chief harbor of North Viet-nam and major industrial center; Hue, (pop. 1936: 43,000), capital of Annam. ¹⁵

13. Canadian Government, op.cit., p. 122. Physical Geography, p. 32

14. I.P.R. A Brief Handbook, pp. 52-4; Khôi, op.cit., pp. 31-62

15. Canadian Government, op.cit., pp. 30-32. Physical Geography, pp. 30-32

When we come to the historical scenes of Indochina, it behooves us to proceed carefully. The world knows about Indochina through the writings of the French historians; and the French historians who wrote on Indochina during the colonial period, i.e., from 1860 to 1954, could be rightly suspected. In 1955, a student of history expressed this idea as follows:

During the colonial period and still since 1945, the French students who specialized on the peoples of Indochina, on their language, their history, their civilisation, were financially and politically bound to the colonial power. How, then, to expect that they would have attentively studied the Vietnamese national reality, the permanent negation of which, in theory as well as in practice, was the very condition for the maintenance of the same colonial power? ¹⁶

The author mentioned in particular the Vietnamese, because given the importance of Viet-nam in the Indochinese Union, the fate of Viet-nam would have decided the fate of the other two countries, Cambodia and Laos.

The same author did not hesitate to describe the undesirable influence of that colonial bias on the French education itself. He said:

From the elementary school, each one was informed of the artificial colonial "Indochina" and of its five constitutive elements: "Tonkin", "Annam", "Cochinchina", Laos and Cambodia. They hardly indicated to the future citizens that the first three of these "countries" spoke the same language, belonged to the same nation. They scarcely insisted on the steady resistance which, during eighty years, this people had opposed to the colonial regime which, in other quarters, one presented as pure and stainless. They prudently avoided stressing that

16. Chesneaux, op.cit., p.8

these three "annamese" countries had formed, long before the French conquest, a solid national organism, the history of which was not less ancient than that of France. And, of this country, of this nation, the traditional name Viet-nam itself was strictly banished from all our text-books of the primary, secondary and superior education until 1945. ¹⁷

So, to get the reality behind this "artificial colonial Indochina", it is necessary to go back to the "reality of Viet-nam". ¹⁸

The historical reality of Viet-nam.

The historical and racial origin of the Vietnamese is still obscure. Patient researches have shown, however, that they started with a mixture of many elements, in which the brachycephalic type dominated. ¹⁹

What was known is that by the third century B.C. the ancestors of the Vietnamese people had settled on the banks of the Red River (Hong-ha). At that time, a Chinese general named Trieu-da handily carved an independent kingdom out of these delta lands and certain provinces of Southern China. But not long after its organization, the kingdom of Trieu-da was swallowed up by the Chinese Empire in 111 B.C. The Vietnamese people thus existed under the Chinese rule until the year 939 A.D. ²⁰

17. Chesneaux, op.cit., p.7

18. Ibid., p. 12

19. Hoang-thuc-Tram, Lich-su Xa-hoi Viet-nam, pp.39-48
Luong-duc-Thiep, Xa-hoi Viet-nam Tien-hoa-su, pp.21-29

20. Tran-Trong-Kim, Viet-nam su-luoc pp.28-29

Under the period of nearly a thousand years of foreign domination, the Vietnamese were submitted to the Chinese civilisation. They learned the Chinese language, adopted the Chinese morality. But, paradox of history, they grew at the same time more and more steady in their national consciousness. Many revolts broke out; some were successful for a time; in many cases their leaders have become folk heroes, surrounded by popular legends. A national holiday is still dedicated to two of the earliest of these heroes. They were two women, the Sisters Trung. In fact, in 40 A.D., these two young ladies indignant with the atrocities of the alien rulers, raised an army and drove the Chinese out of the country. When, two years later, the Chinese troops came back to find the Vietnamese volunteer army dispersed, the Sisters Trung committed suicide rather than see their territory once again under foreign domination.²¹

Another remarkable revolt happened in 544. That year, a nationalist leader named Ly-Bon took over the control of the country and gained a sixty-year respite for the Vietnamese. At the beginning of the seventh century, the Chinese succeeded again in imposing their heavy yoke on the little nation. This time, with what seemed more hopefulness than accuracy, the Chinese called the Vietnamese territory Annam, which means "pacified south". This fact explains the disgust of the Vietnamese for this term, either it is used to designate the whole

21. Philippe Devillers, *Histoire du Viet-nam 1940-1952* p. 13; Thiep, *op.cit.*, pp.52-3 Khol, *op.cit.*, pp.100-102

country or the central portion of it. ²²

After the other attempts, a Vietnamese named Ngo-Quyen raised again the banner of revolt in 939. This General decisively defeated the Chinese at the strategic Battle of Bach-dang (Bach-dang is the name of a river, tributary of the Red River), and thus opened a new era of national independence which lasted for the next ten centuries. ²³

Of course, the Chinese did not let their prey go without resistance. They came back many times, but each time just to find the Vietnamese ready to defeat them. At the end of the thirteenth century, Viet-nam faced a terrible threat. After having overrun China with his Mongol hordes, Kubilai Khan tried three times to conquer Viet-nam. Three times, however, the Mongol troops had to retreat, leaving dead on the battlefield more than a half of their soldiers, including the son of Kubilai himself. ²⁴

Dark days came again in 1413, when a Chinese army, with superior forces, swept through the Vietnamese territory to re-establish their sway. Fortunately, the new occupation lasted only five years. In 1418, the Vietnamese rallied behind an fisherman named Le-Loi, who organized a guerilla army and fought

22. Devillers, op.cit., pp. 118-121. Viet-nam, 1840-1852
pp. 118-121

23. Khoi, op.cit., pp. 137-8

24. Ibid., pp. 183-9

successfully to regain freedom. From that time the Chinese ceased to consider their tiny neighbor in the south as an easy prey. ²⁵

Not only did the Vietnamese check the invasion of their former rulers, they led also victorious campaigns which helped them to expand to the south. This southward march of the Vietnamese people had begun right after their settlement in the Red River delta. When Ngo-Quyén reigned, in the tenth century, his territory already reached Hoanh-son, a transversal chain of mountains which cut the Central Viet-nam from the Annam Cordillera to the coast at the eighteenth parallel. On the other side of the Hoanh-son extended the kingdom of the Chams. For centuries, the latter were fighting with the Vietnamese, but they were finally defeated. The Vietnamese thus advanced, cleared the jungle, pushed back the frontier. By 1698, their territory had expanded as far as to the site of Saigon today. ²⁶

By that time, too, a struggle for power took place in the Court of the dynasty of Le (descents of Le-Loi). Two strong families, the Trinh, who stayed in Hanoi, and the Nguyen, who escaped to the South of Hoanh-son for measure of security, opened up an epoch of civil war, which endured for a hundred years. ²⁷

²⁵Khoi, op.cit., p. 210-216, Kim, Op.cit., pp. 199-233.

²⁶Khoi, op.cit., pp.239,266-7

²⁷Ibid, pp.242 ff.; Kim, Op.cit., pp.295-304

Up to the 16th century, the Vietnamese were Buddhists or Confucianists or even Taoists, or all three together. At the end of that century, the Jesuit missionaries came. They were Portuguese and Spanish. They made many conversions among the Vietnamese people. In 1662, the French missionaries followed the Jesuits. They continued to convert the people, but at a lower rate. Soon, the activities of these foreign priests aroused the suspicion of the Vietnamese kings. The faithful and the missionaries were alike persecuted.²⁸

In 1784, one of the missionaries decided to procure aid to the Nguyen family, with the hope of future peace to the Church of Viet-nam. Bishop Peter Pigneau de Behaine, the name of the missionary, went to France and obtained substantial material support for the Prince Nguyen Anh, then escaping the new insurgents, the Tay-son. The latter, in fact, had succeeded in taking over south Viet-nam and were advancing to the north. In 1786, they became masters of the whole of Viet-nam. But their star faded soon, because Nguyen-Anh, with the help from the French Bishop, began the re-conquest of power. He recaptured the cities, one after another, and

28. Masson, op.cit., pp.43-52. The Vietnamese people remained always grateful for Father Alexandre de Rhodes, a Jesuit, who had invented the romanization of the Vietnamese language. He wrote many books in that romanized Vietnamese characters. He was also the promoter of the Societe des Missions Etrangeres de Paris. See also Khoi, op.cit., pp. 288-294; Emmanuel Jacques, "Opportunities in Viet-nam", World Mission, February 1951, pp.2-8; Phan-dinh-Khiem, Hanh-dong Xa-hoi, pp.153-159

finally celebrated his triumph over the unified Viet-nam in 1802. At that date, Nguyen-Anh became Emperor Gia-long, founding the dynasty of Nguyen, of which Bao-dai was a successor to the throne from 1926 to 1945.²⁹

Gia-long treated gratefully the French missionaries, who enjoyed peace for a while. But, the French missionaries undertook a double job, that of Christianization and that of French propaganda. Moreover, at that time, the danger of western colonization appeared more and more imminent. The successors of Gia-long became, therefore, severe with the missionaries. Terrible persecutions broke again and provoked the indignation of the French. It was reported that the first act of intervention in favor of the French missionaries in Viet-nam was conducted by an American Commodore in 1845.³⁰

Of course, the attitude of the Viet-nameese kings against the French missionaries was unwise. It was a time when the European powers, imbued with mercantilism, looked at East Asia with covetous eyes. The British had seized Penang in 1786, Malacca in 1824, Hongkong in 1842, and were fighting

29. Khoi, op.cit., pp.295-322; Masson, op.cit., pp.53-60
The French missionaries had made an appeal to the French Government to send French ships to Viet-nam to help them in their missionary work.

30. Joseph Cuenot, La Salle des Martyrs, pp.4-6; Chesneaux, op.cit., p. 95

to occupy Burma. The Dutch had obtained the East Indies in 1824 and were longing for Borneo. The French lagged behind in the colonial race. In their impatience, any pretext would be good for them to carve an empire out of this part of the Pacific. And a pretext was given them in the persecutions of the French missionaries by the Vietnamese kings. Because among the missionaries there were a number of Spanish Dominicans, they got the Spanish to participate with them in their expeditions against Viet-nam.³¹

In 1858, Admiral Rigault de Genouilly took Da-nang but could not hold it. He descended to the south, captured Saigon in 1859. In 1862, the king of Viet-nam was forced to cede three provinces around that city to France. In 1867, France annexed three more provinces and established the colony of Cochinchina.³²

At that time the French were weakened by the Franco-Prussian war. They could not use force on a large scale. Incapable of controlling the whole of Viet-nam by a single act of conquest, they invaded it piecemeal over the course of many decades. In 1874, after new aggressive activities, they exacted from the Vietnamese king the recognition of the French sovereignty over Cochinchina. Four years later, they made new

31. Harley Farnsworth MacNair and Donald F. Lach, Modern Far Eastern International Relations, pp.34-35, Allen J. Hammer The Struggle for Indochina, pp.63-64

32. Khoi, op.cit., pp.366-374

strides in north and central Viet-nam. In 1884, The Vietnamese authorities had to sign the Treaty of Protectorate with the French over the remainder of country. It was at this conjuncture that the French divided up north and central Viet-nam into two administrative units, Tonkin and Annam; Cochinchina having been cut off before.³³

But, while the King of Viet-nam and his officials surrendered before the western aggressive ambition, sustained by a superior armed force, the Vietnamese people was organizing a tumultuous movement of resistance. This movement began early in 1859, continued uninterrupted until it ended in the triumphant victory of the Viet-namense over the French at Dien-bien-phu on May 8, 1954.³⁴ At the first contact with the French troops, the Vietnamese had sketched a program of a long range defense of their rights. They had summarized their indomitable nationalistic feelings in a logical, strong, but very humane declaration in 1862. In that year the movement of resistance in Cochichina told the French:

All the inhabitants of the province of Gocong unanimously make this declaration: When we lose the government of our king, we are in desolation just like a child who loses its parents.

33. Chesneaux, *op.cit.*, pp.107-137; Khoi, *op.cit.*, pp.380ff Masson, *op.cit.*, pp.76-84. Cambodia was occupied in 1863. About the Franco-Prussion War, see Fisher, H.A.L. A History of Europe (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1939) pp.1022-1025

34. Lucien Bornet, Dien-bien-phu, pp.143-157. The whole book gives a documentary account of the triumph of the Vietnamese over the French in spring 1954

Your country belongs to the western seas, our to the seas of the Orient. As the horse and buffalo differ from one another, so we differ by language, writing and customs. Man was created formerly in distinct races. Everywhere he has the same value, but his complexion is not the same. Gratitude attaches us to our king. We will revenge his insults or we die for him. If you persist in bringing home to us the sword and fire, the disorder will be for long, but we will act according to the will of heaven. Our cause will finish in triumph. If you want peace, give back to our king his territory. We are fighting for this purpose. You have occupied our provinces to add to the riches of your empire, to the lustre of your reputation. Do you want a ransom in exchange for our territory? We will pay you that, provided that you cease fighting and bring your troops back to your concessions. We will be even grateful to you and your glory will be known in the universe. Do you want a concession to do business in this country? We consent to it. But if you refuse, we never cease fighting to obey the will of Heaven. We respect your value, but we fear Heaven more than your power. We swear to fight eternally and relentlessly. When everything will be wanting to us, we will take the branches of the trees to make flags and sticks to arm our soldiers. How, then, can you live among us? We ask you attentively to examine this request and to put an end to a state of things unfavorable to our interests as well as to yours.³⁵

Needless to say, the French did not pay any attention to the representations of the Vietnamese. If the latter planned to resist, the former, on their part, planned to set up punitive expeditions. The nationalists were partly killed, partly exiled to the Poulo Condores, or to the far-away Islands of Reunion. The rest of them were in prison.

35. Go-cong is the name of a province in South Viet-nam. This text is cited in Chesneaux, op.cit., pp.108-9; cited and commented in Paul Mus, Viet-nam, Sociologie d'une Guerre, pp. 224-225

According to a writer, who was in a position to know the question better than anyone else, "of the six Vietnamese emperors, since 1884, there were three exiled for opposition to colonial policy or for open rebellion; one abdicated; one reigned only three years, insufficient time to show his mettle. The sixth, Bao-dai, educated in France, has done nothing to displease colonial power or policy." ³⁶

Among the many revolts, the most important were that of De-tham in 1897, of Phan-boi-Chau in 1912, of Nguyen-thai-Hoc in 1930, of Nguyen-ai-Quoc (Ho-chi-Minh) from 1920 until the defeat of the French. ³⁷

The national plight was not the only concern of the intellectual people. Every unknown peasant, living in remotest villages, was hoping for happier days when the foreigners would leave the country. This burning aspiration of the mass of the Vietnamese people had an illustration in the following report of a French missionary in CochinChina. In 1902, a missionary, having to cross a river of the province of Long-xuyen, finally found a light boat and a villager to conduct it. On the river, the Vietnamese peasant seemed eager to ask a question. He grew bolder and addressed the Father: "I know that I may have confidence in you and that you

36. Ngo-dinh-Thuc, "Viet-nam through Vietnamese Eyes", World Mission, February 1951

37. Paul Deveze, La France d'Outre-Mer, pp.94-104

would not report to the administrator what I am going to ask you. Please, frankly tell me how long the French will stay in this country"? As the Father was wondering, he added: "You don't want to tell me that, but you should know. Is it in one or two years that the French would quit?" If this peasant could venture to ask a Frenchman such questions, how much more earnestly he must have discussed them with his fellow-countrymen. And this happened in Cochinchina, the part of Viet-nam which the French had considered as definitely theirs. 38

Instead of recognizing this vitality of the Vietnamese nationalistic spirit, the French ordinarily put emphasis on their accomplished pacification. In 1932, the year when revolts raged everywhere in the whole of Vietnam, Albert de Pourvoirville wrote:

Here is the conquered Annam: here is the Protectorate, composed of five countries of the Union, which establishes for the Indochinese peoples a homogeneity in the peace as they have never known. 39

The contrary would be correct. The entire colonial period was a time of continuous unrest for the Vietnamese. Open rebellions succeeding to secret plots, they were always

38. Mus, op.cit., p.223. The peasants of Viet-nam during the colonial period not only nourished angry feelings against the French but also supported the movement of resistance organized abroad with their scarce money.

39. Pourvoirville, op.cit., p. 35

hunting a propitious occasion to throw out the yoke of the French, because it was really heavy. ⁴⁰

The French had tried to make the world believe that its colonial policy was munificent. To themselves, they went on repeating that they had a "civilizing mission", a "religious mission", a "cultural mission" in Indochina. In reality, the amount of harm they did to the Indochinese outweighed greatly the good that they brought. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had a wonderful remark on this matter. In 1945, he said that the French had been in Indochina "over a hundred years and have done nothing about educating them, that for every dollar they have put in, they have taken out ten". ⁴¹

The proportion of "putting in" and "taking out" should have been more than one to ten. A dependable French author had made the account and said that the expenses France had made for the improvement of Indochina from 1900 to 1937 were 522 million francs. ⁴² On the point of view of "taking out", if Laurent Arthur is right, the Bank of Indochina alone obtained from Indochina a benefit of 400,000,000,000 francs a year. One can imagine how thorough was the French exploitation, when one adds to this financial drain, the exploitation of raw material and labor, and all kinds of heavy taxes. And one is inclined to agree with Claude Lefort who said that the pop-

40. Hammer, *op.cit.*, pp.54 ff.

41. Samuel I. Rosenmann, The Public Papers and Addresses of F.D.R., 1944-5, p.362

42. Chénouet, *op.cit.*, p.9

ulation of Indochina "lived on the verge of starvation" under the French rule.⁴²

The political picture was not brighter. A French author, who was by no means anti-colonial, had proved it. He wrote:

There were in 1939 a hundred and ten million men submitted to the French sovereignty, but forty-two million of them crowded on the territory of 550,000 square kilometers in the West of Europe (France). It was essentially to them that were applied the constitutional laws, the right to vote, the rights of man and citizen, the individual liberties (mine *italics*).⁴³

If the Frenchmen only enjoyed the "rights of man" and "individual liberties", other people in the French Empire were practically slaves in service of France. But the people of Viet-nam who had "fought a thousand years" against the Chinese domination could not be easily reduced to servitude.⁴⁴ They had resisted against the French to get back their "rights of man" and their "individual liberties". The French retaliated cruelly. In 1943, even in the midst of the Japanese occupation, the French Governor General, Vice-Admiral Jean Decoux, had succeeded to exile or to put in jail nearly 10,000 Indochinese.⁴⁵

Moreover, the French used to think that the movement of resistance in Viet-nam was a stepchild of the French education. On January 15, 1930, Alexander Varenne said: "It was a real

42. Claude Lefort, "Les Classes Exploitees", Les Temps Modernes, XVIII, March, 1947, pp. 1080-1081

43. Deveze, op.cit., p.11

44. Hammer, op.cit., p.62

45. Deveze, op.cit., p.161

drama for France to see the ideas plentifully thrown out by her spring up and turn against her". To know how plentifully the French education in the colonies was, it is enough to refer to the figures given in 1947 by R. Saller, Governor of the Colonies: he showed that while France, with 41,000,000 population has 17 universities, her overseas territories with 50,000,000 population have none. Needless to say that the Vietnamese didn't know French yet when they wrote the declaration of 1862. And, when the French gave some education to the natives, they did in a way that defied all common sense. In classes of history, for example, the Vietnamese children of ten years old were taught that "nos ancetres sont des Gaulois" (our ancestors are Gallics)⁴⁶

Until now, many French continue to justify their colonial policy in Indochina. In February 1947, the famous French writer, Francois Mauriac, still exalted French colonialism in glowing terms. He called it "a bountiful civilization", a "kind of crusade". Many wondered why this Catholic, so clever in other quarters, became so short-sighted in this question. Les Temps Modernes wrote about him that "it is scandalous that a Christian proves himself so incapable to

46. Deveze, op.cit., pp.13,19. About the French education in Indochina, I need no other authority than myself, because I was one of the boys who had repeated: nos ancetres sont des Gaulois.

desist from himself and his "ideas", and to refuse to look at himself, even for an instant, with the eyes of others". Francois Mauriac, however, was not more Christian than the French missionaries, and there were no more fervent advocates of colonialism than they were. The reasons for this attitude can be complex. One of them can be in the fact that Francois Mauriac held 12 shares in the Bank of Indochina, and the procurator of French Foreign Missions, 102 shares. ⁴⁷

But, recently, such an expert in the colonial problems as Albert Sarraut, a former Governor General of Indochina, did not hesitate to say:

Colonialism is an interested act of force...
The peoples who look for and hold colonies in the far-away continents primarily think only of themselves, work only for their power, conquer only for their profits. ⁴⁸

In other words, the French colonialism in Indochina can be described as a combination of economic exploitation, political slavery and intellectual oppression. Franklin D. Roosevelt, speaking of the French policy in Indochina, said that "France has milked it for one hundred years". It would be more accurate to say that France has starved the Indochinese. In 1944, for example, to get ready to defend themselves against

47. Les Temps Modernes, March 1947, XVIII, p.1041

48. Arthur, op.cit., p.50

an eventual Japanese taking-over of their sovereignty, the French in north Viet-nam had made a requisition of rice, which resulted in the starvation of about 2,000,000 Vietnamese.⁴⁹

So, when the status quo in 1940, was referred to the Vietnamese were not enthusiastic about it. Status quo meant to them that they had to live forever under the highly undesirable domination of the French. It was not to say that when the United States defended the status quo, it was defending colonialism. The foreign policy of the United States, especially the Atlantic Charter and many statements of President Roosevelt regarding Indochina, proved largely that the Americans were against any colonial exploitation. But, the United States chose the lesser evil. In 1940, by defending the status quo, it preferred, for the time being, a peaceful colonialism to the war. And in 1950, when it decided to help the French against the Viet-minh, it took the course of saving the French aims rather than to give Viet-nam to the communists.⁵⁰

Moreover, however liberal the United States might be, it cannot solve alone such an international question as colonialism. It needs the collaboration of other powers in the world, specifically that of the colonial powers. Therefore, it took time to wait for coming events, in which the colonial powers would

49. Cordell Hull, Memoirs, II, 1597; Hammer, op.cit., p.145; Deveze, op.cit., p.213

50. Julia E. Johnson, The "Eight Points" of Post War World Reorganization, p.48; The International Studies Group of Brookings Institution, Major Problems of United States Foreign Policy, 1950-1, pp.311-5

be forced to co-operate with American policy,

With regard to Indochina, history showed that different steps taken by the United States during the last fifteen years were vital to its independence.

1. In 1940-1941, when the Japanese were trying to take over Indochina, the United States, on one hand did not give the French any material support to fight against Japan; on the other hand, it energetically opposed to the Japanese activities by representations, by economic sanctions. The result was that when the Japanese succeeded in occupying Indochina, this occupation did not amount to a real exploitation, because of agreements previously concluded with the French. The French, on their part, thanks to the moral and diplomatic support of the United States, could keep their sovereignty, but were greatly weakened. And, the Vietnamese nationalists under the cover of Japan could organize to a certain extent.

2. From Pearl Harbor to the Japanese surrender, the United States always refused to give any support to General de Gaulle in his effort to reoccupy Indochina. This way, Japan was able to put the French in the jail of Indochina on March, 1945, and to give independence to the natives. The latter had taken profit of this occasion to fortify themselves against an eventual coming of the French.

3. After the Japanese surrender in 1945, the United States did not support the French, but neither did it support the Vietnamese nationalists. As a consequence, the Vietnamese Communist

leaders could not take over the country, nor could the French. After a long war, the French gradually consented to give a certain degree of independence to the Vietnamese, so that the latter would co-operate with them.

4. But the Vietnamese people knew that the French were deceiving them, so they took the side of the Communist leaders to fight for their independence. In 1950, the danger that Viet-nam would become a communist country became imminent. Then the United States decided to help the French to fight against the Communist leaders with the condition that France would give real independence to the States of Indochina. Despite the American aid the French were discouraged before the supreme efforts of the Vietnamese people. The United States then put pressure on the French, so that they put in power a non-communist and a real nationalist, Ngo-dinh-Diem.

5. In 1954, the French were defeated by the Vietnamese Communists, and were ready to recognize the Communists as masters in Viet-nam, but the United States opposed that move. Finally, Viet-nam was temporarily divided by the Geneva Conference on July 1954. From that time, the United States helped Ngo-dinh-Diem to build up a Free Viet-nam, free from colonialism and Communism.

In the following pages, we shall study one phase of this American policy, in other words, we shall see how, in 1940, the United States, while making strong representations against the Japanese activities in Indochina, did not give any material help to the French to fight against Japan.

The United States and Indochina in
The First Indochinese Crisis
The Episode of
General Georges Catroux
June-July 1940

For a long time, Japan had dreamed of a world empire. Exalted by their national pride, confident in their national forces, the Japanese planned to carry out their program of "Greater Eastern Asia Co-prosperity Sphere", which euphemistically meant the Japanese colonial policy. This program had been applied to China in 1937 by the invasion of the northern Chinese provinces.¹ As a consequence of this aggressive act, the rights of the American nationals in China were violated: right of extraterritoriality, rights of residence and trade, rights in special areas, rights to property, etc...² Whereupon the United States Government made its representations and urged Japan to continue the "open door" policy.³ The Japanese Government took this occasion to define their expansionist ideals in these terms:

1. T.H.Bisson, Japan in China, pp.1-39; Tatsuo Kawai, The Goal of Japanese Expansion, pp.61-67

2. William C. Johnstone, The United States and Japan's New Order, pp.23-116

3. Shepard Jones and Denys P. Meyers, Documents on American Foreign Relations, January 1938-June 1939, p.237
Hereafter, cited as Documents on American Foreign Relations.

At present Japan, devoting its entire energy to the establishment of a new order based on genuine international justice throughout East Asia, is making rapid strides toward the attainment of this objective. The successful accomplishment of this purpose is not only indispensable to the existence of Japan, but also constitutes the very foundation of the enduring peace and stability of East Asia.

It is the firm conviction of the Japanese Government that now, at a time of continuing development of new conditions, in East Asia, an attempt to apply to present and future conditions without any change concepts and principles which were applicable to conditions prevailing before the present incident does not in any way contribute to the solution of immediate issues and further does not in the least promote the firm establishment of the enduring peace of East Asia.⁴

The United States soon sharply realized that "the validity of the conception of Japanese authorities of a 'new condition' and a 'new order' in East Asia is highly paradoxical. The United States Ambassador warned that a failure to observe the policy of "open door" would breed "international frictions and ill-will, with consequences injurious to all countries, including in particular those countries which fail to observe it". At the same time, the United States confessed another

equally firm conviction that observance of that principle promotes the opening of trade channels thereby making available the market, the raw materials and the manufactured products of the community of nations in a mutually reciprocally beneficial basis.⁵

4. U. S. Congress, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan: 1931-1941, I, 797. Hereafter cited as Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan.

5. Ibid., I, 820: The American Ambassador at Tokyo to the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dec. 30, 1938.

After this first clash of views between the two countries the United States was going to take measures against Japan. On July 26, 1939, the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, notified the Japanese Ambassador in Washington, Kenzuke Horinouchi, that the Government of the United States wished to terminate in six months, i.e., on January 26, 1940, its commercial treaty of 1911 with Japan, in accordance with procedures prescribed by the treaty itself.⁶ But, when Japan undertook the southward advance over Indochina, in 1940, the American-Japanese relations underwent a gradual but serious deterioration, which was consummated in the tragedy of Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941.

The Japanese encroachments on Indochina had begun two years before. On July 7, 1938, Japan had made it known to the French Ambassador at Tokyo, Charles Arsene-Henry, that from that date, the French had to withdraw from the Paracels Islands and give them to Japan.⁷ On February 10, 1939, contrary to the Franco-Japanese agreement of 1907,⁸ the Japanese Navy took over the Hainan Island, off the coasts of North Indochina. The Japanese Foreign Office stated in this occasion that the operation of the Japanese forces was "for

6. Documents on American Foreign Relations, II, 244

7. Contemporary Japan, VII, 1938, p. 386; as cited in Harold S. Quigley, Far Eastern War, 1937-1941, p. 306

8. The Agreement of 1907 assured the respect of the integrity of China, the equal treatment of commerce, etc., and was signed at Paris, June 10, 1907. Ibid., p. 307, note 3

preventing unrest and disturbance in the contiguous regions and vicinities" of the territories of Japan, and that the agreement of 1907 was not violated, because "since then conditions in China have undergone a complete change".⁹ When the French Ambassador inquired about the same matter, on February 13, 1939, the Japanese Foreign Minister assured him that the occupation of Hainan does not "exceed military necessity".¹⁰ More than a month later, on March 31, Japan made another move. It announced its intention to take possession of the Spratley Islands and place them under the jurisdiction of the Japanese Governor-General of Taiwan. Under instruction of his Government, Ambassador Arsene-Henry, on April 6, handed to the Japanese Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, a note protesting against the Japanese action. Whereupon the Japanese official told the French Ambassador that

there is no room for consideration regarding the issue, which was decided on the basis of established policy, and that the Japanese Government would receive the note only as a matter of reference.¹¹

Also, in 1939 the Japanese had compelled the French Governor-General of Indochina to prohibit transportation of arms and ammunitions into China through the railroad Haiphong-Yunnan; and had bombed this railroad in the Chinese territory.¹² This

9. Quigley, *op.cit.*, p. 307.

10. Statement of the Japanese Foreign Office, Feb. 10, 1939 Contemporary Japan, VIII, 1939, p. 182, as cited in Quigley, *ibid.*, pp. 307-308

11. Statement of the Japanese Foreign Office, Feb. 13, 1939 *loc.cit.* It is not correct to say that the French Government did not protest, Chesneaux, *op.cit.*, p. 224

12. "French Indochina", The New International Yearbook 1940, p. 291

began to involve the United States in the Indochinese question because the merchandises transported through the Haiphong-Yunnan railroad were mostly of American origin, and those who did business there were mostly American citizens.

At the beginning of 1940, the American Embassy of Tokyo notified the Japanese Foreign Office a pro-memoria that reads:

The United States Government is informed that the portion of the railway between Haiphong and Yunnanfu which lies in Chinese territory has recently been subjected to frequent bombings by Japanese military airplanes. This railway in recent months has carried a considerable part of the trade involved in the normal commercial relations of the United States and China. American commerce must, therefore, necessarily be injured and the lives of American citizens engaged in that commerce may be endangered as a result of the Japanese bombings of that railway.....

The United States will have no other choice, if the bombing continues, than to add this to the extensive list of injuries commercial and otherwise which has been suffered by it as a result of the actions of the Japanese forces in China

The American note added that the Haiphong-Yunnan railroad was "an important means of ingress and egress" to the personnel of American official establishments at Chungking. Therefore, the Japanese bombing of it would have more serious consequences.¹³

In their reply, the Japanese authorities established the lawfulness of their actions, invoking the Franco-Chinese agreement of 1903 which applied to the laying of the Haiphong-Yunnan railroad, and said that the railroad was excluded from any claim to neutrality. They continued:

13. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, I, 674

At the present time, the Chiang regime is employing the railway as an important route for the supply of arms, ammunition and other military commodities, and therefore, the Imperial forces may properly take such military measures against the railway as they deem necessary.

With regard to the injury to American trading rights and to the danger to the lives of citizens, the note expressed the regret of the Japanese Government, but stated also that Japan could not cease bombing the Haiphong-Yunnan railroad. The text said:

As a part of the military operations which are developing on a large scale in China, the Imperial forces are taking proper military measures against the transportation of military supplies over Hanoi-Yunnan railway; consequently, although it is regretted that the lives of the American nationals and American commerce are exposed to danger, the circumstances are unavoidable. In view of the legal position above stated, it is believed that the American Government will appreciate the view of the Japanese Government; that the question of assumption of responsibility by the latter Government does not arise. ¹⁴

The United States rejected flatly the Japanese view. On March 11, 1940, in an answer to the Japanese note, the American Ambassador, Joseph C. Grew, made it clear that the United States Government did not admit "the relevancy to the question under consideration of the reference made by the Japanese Foreign Office to the Chinese-French Railway Construction Agreement of 1903" nor did it appreciate the view of the Japanese Government regarding the "lack of responsibility on the part of the Japanese Government for any loss of American life, or

14. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, I, pp 677-678

damage to American property" subsequent to current bombings of the railway by the Japanese military airplanes. ¹⁵

As for Indochina itself, in the middle of 1940, the situation was hopeless. On one hand it could not expect any help from France, which was succumbing to Nazi invasion. ¹⁶ On the other hand, it was already half-encircled by the Japanese. The latter were established in the Spratley Islands, in the Parcels Islands, in Hainan Island. More dangerous still, the Japanese Army at Canton had reached the Northern borders of Indochina, in the other side of Lang-son; and three other Japanese batallions were operating in the Chinese province of Kwangsi, beyond the frontiers of Laokay. ¹⁷ And, when the French authorities surveyed their military forces they found that, in all Indochina there were about 60,000 men in the Army, and practically no Navy. They had no modern airplanes and their strategy was that of the year 1901. ¹⁸

The Japanese, on their part, did not make a secret of their designs on Indochina. Repeatedly, they menaced the French authorities with the threat of an armed invasion if the carrying of supplies by way of the Indochinese railroad

15. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, I. 678

16. See, for example, William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, The Challenge to Isolation, 1937-1940, pp. 454-458

17. Jean Decoux, A la Barre de l'Indochine, Histoire de mon Gouvernement General, 1940-1945 pp. 76-77

18. Ibid., pp. 79-80, 85-86

into China did not stop at once. General Georges Catroux summarized the attitude of the Japanese military authorities toward Indochina as follows:

The Commander of the Japanese Army in Kweichow, Province of China (directly North of Indochina) was constantly threatening and criticizing Indochina for "assisting" China by permitting the transport of materials across Indochina into Chinese territory. The Japanese Army radio constantly broadcast these protests and demands - the Japanese were particularly angry regarding the transport of gasoline to Kuming under the Chinese-American agreement.

Being aware of the weakness of Indochina, General Catroux stopped the transit of gasoline on June 16, 1940, in an effort to appease the Japanese. ¹⁹

But this preventive measure on the part of the French Governor General came too late. Cataclysmic events had preceded him in Europe, which gave the Japanese a golden opportunity to satisfy their ambitions in regard to Indochina.

In fact, on June 16, while German troops were pouring toward Paris, Italy declared war against France. The fall of France appeared certain. ²⁰

Four days later, i.e., when in Indochina, General Catroux made his concession to the Japanese threat, the French Cabinet which had moved to Bordeaux voted 13 to 11 for an armistice. On that "decisive date in French history", the President of France, Albert Lebrun, asked Marshall Henry Philippe Petain

19. Statement of General Catroux, on Aug. 1, 1945; the General was, then, Ambassador of France to USSR, in Moscow. New York Times, August 2, 1940

20. Hamilton Fish Armstrong, Chronology of Failure, The Last Days of the French Republic, p. 77

to form a government. That same night, Marshall Petain sent for the Spanish Ambassador and asked Madrid to communicate to Chancellor Adolf Hitler the French Government's request for an armistice. 21

The next day, the fighting still continued on the soil of France. But in the evening, the world had heard already the mourning of Sir Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain:

The news from France is very bad, and I grieve for the gallant French people who have fallen into this terrible misfortune. Nothing will alter our feelings toward them, or our faith that the genius of France will rise again. What has happened in France makes no difference to British faith and purpose. We have become the sole champions now in arms to defend the world cause. We shall do our best to be worthy of that high honor. We shall defend our island, and with the British Empire around us, we shall fight on unconquerable until the curse of Hitler is lifted from the brow of men. We are sure that in the end all will be well. 22

On June 18, 1940, while all French cities and towns of more than 20,000 population are for practical purposes surrendered to the Germans by an official proclamation declaring them to be "open cities", General Charles de Gaulle, with a failing voice, appealed from London to the people of France not to cease resisting the invaders. He said:

The Generals who for many years have commanded the French armies have formed a Government. That Government, alleging that our armies have been defeated, have opened negotiations with the enemy to put an end to the fighting.

21. Armstrong, op.cit., pp.95,102

22. Ibid., p. 106

We certainly have been, and still are, submerged by the mechanical strength of the enemy, both on land and in the air. The tanks, the airplanes, the tactics of the Germans far more than their numbers were responsible for our retirement. The tanks, the airplanes, the tactics of the Germans astounded our generals to such an extent that they have been brought to the pass which they are in today. But has the last word been said? Has all hope disappeared? Is the defeat final? No. Believe me, I speak with knowledge and I tell you that France is not lost. The same methods which have brought about our defeat can quite well one day bring victory. For France is not alone. She is not alone - she is not alone. She has a vast empire behind her. She can unite with the British Empire, which holds the seas and is continuing the struggle. She can utilize to the full, as England is doing, the vast industrial resources of the United States²³

These developments, directly and indirectly, confessed aloud not only the weakness but real helplessness of France. General De Gaulle boasted of the French vast empire and counted on it to build up the resistance movement. But the Japanese who had given refuge to the Vietnamese nationalists for half a century, ²⁴ knew well that the French Empire was sustained only by the French armed forces, and these forces were actually wanting. The United States remained the hope of France, and the obstacle to Japanese ambition, but was the United States willing and ready to fight for the French in Indochina? All these facts concurred to show to Japan's leaders that the door was swinging wide open to them to impose their political will on Southeast Asia.

23. Armstrong, op.cit., p. 110

24. Devillers, op.cit., p. 36

In reality, Japan did not miss its chance. On June 19, 1940 when the French Government was receiving the German reply to Petain's request for an armistice, and while the people of France were waiting for the humiliating conditions which would come from the Nazi Chancellor,²⁵ the French Ambassador in Tokyo was invited by the Japanese Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Masayuki Tani, to the Foreign Office for an interview. What Japan had to offer to France then, was a "strong representation" regarding French Indochina. But, as it was revealed later, by "strong representation" the Japanese meant a real ultimatum; it was resolved, on the part of Japan, that if the French refused, force would be used.²⁶ In fact, during those days, it was reported that the Japanese Navy performed unusual activities in the South Seas.²⁷ Here are the main points of that representation:

1. The French Government is called upon to issue an order prohibiting exports of materials to the Chungking Government from Indochina;
2. The following measures should be adopted to enable an idea to be formed as to the measure of strictness with which the proposed order is carried out;
 - a. Statistics of gasoline, trucks, and railway equipment held in Indochina should be compiled for presentation to Japanese officials;
 - b. If necessary, staff members of the Japanese consulate in Indochina should be allowed to inspect materials in the presence of French officials;
 - c. Japanese officials should be allowed to station themselves at Hanoi and points along the Chinese border to see that specified materials are not exported to China from Indochina;

25. Armstrong, *op.cit.*, p. 102

26. "Kido Diary", entry for June 17, 1940; as cited in Herbert Feis, The Road to Pearl Harbor, the Coming of War Between the United States and Japan. p. 66

27. Decoux, *op.cit.*, p.66

d. French authorities are to close the Chinese border if these measures fail to ensure strict enforcement of the proposed embargo on exports of materials to the Chungking Government. ²⁸

Immediately, Arsene-Henry transmitted these points to his Government and to General Catroux. The French Ambassador did not forget to advise the French Governor General that a conciliatory attitude would be desirable in view of the circumstances. ²⁹ General Catroux realized this, and on that same night, without consulting the French Government at Vichy announced his acceptance of the Japanese proposals to Arsene-Henry. ³⁰

On the following day, June 20, 1940, the Tokyo Gazette made public the result of the Japanese diplomacy on the Indochinese question in these terms:

The French Ambassador called on the Vice-Minister at 3:30 o'clock this afternoon and stated that the French Government have since the 17th of this month forbidden the transportation of such commodities as gasoline and trucks to China, but that in view of the repeated representation of the Japanese Government they have decided to prohibit the transportation of materials and goods of an extremely wide range of varieties and that they have no objection to Japan's dispatching inspectors to the spot. This interview ended at 3:45 o'clock this afternoon. ³¹

Of course the conduct of General Catroux was hazardous. And he was blamed severely by his Government. But he could not do otherwise. Refusal to the Japanese demands would have entailed the loss of Indochina, because as already noted,

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28. Document on American Foreign Relations, II, p.271
 29. Andre Gaudel, L'Indochine Francaise en Face du Japon, p. 70
 30. Decoux, op.cit., p.66
 31. Documents on American Foreign Relations, II, p.272

Japanese forces were ready to invade it. Furthermore, in the mind of the French Governor General, his concession had the purpose of buying time, while he was waiting for help from the United States.

In fact, after having stopped the transit of gasoline through Indochina into China, General Catroux was anxious to know the attitude of the United States if the Japanese attacked Indochina. On June 18, 1940, he asked the French Ambassador in Washington to take up the matter with the State Department. The next day, he asked again the French Ambassador in Washington to request the State Department for permission to ship 120 aircraft and anti-aircraft guns to Indochina for the purpose of "maintaining the status quo in the Pacific". Unfortunately, here are the results of his demarches. Catroux said:

On June 20, the French Ambassador in Washington transmitted to me the reply of the Under-secretary of State: "The United States Government did not believe that it could enter into conflict with Japan and that, furthermore, it would take no action if Japan attacked Indochina".

The French Ambassador in Washington observed that in the circumstances, the only course open was to close the Chinese frontier. To this the Under-secretary of State remarked: "I will not answer officially but that is what I would do in your place." 32

With reference to the request for the permit to purchase arms in the United States, the Under-secretary of State, Sumner Welles, told the French Ambassador that the application "would

32. New York Times, August 2, 1945, p. 7

be welcomed like that of any friendly government". But, "nothing came from the request", concluded General Catroux.

The United States had declined also an invitation of the French and British Governments officiously to attend their conference held at Singapore from June 22 to June 27, 1940, for the purpose of a joint defense in the Far Eastern area. ³³

The discouragement in regard to help from the United States was voiced also in the telegram which Admiral Jean Darlan, Minister of the Navy and Merchant Marine of the French Government, sent on June 24, 1940, to Vice-Admiral Decoux, then Commander of the French Navy in the Far East. In this telegram it was revealed that there was "little local support to be expected from the United States", and that there was "no effective help to be expected from the United States in the near future". ³⁴ This was another proof that General Catroux had taken the right course when he made concessions to Japan. ³⁵

But was the United States indifferent to the interests of France and of Great Britain in the Pacific area? To understand the solicitude of the American Government regard-

33. Decoux, *op.cit.*, p.22

34. *Ibid.*, p. 34

35. General Catroux said that his appeal to the British for assistance was also unheeded. According to the message Lord Halifax, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, sent on June 30, to General Catroux, in answer to the latter's request, Indochina had no hope for effective military aid from Great Britain. General Catroux was told the same thing, on June 29, by Sir Percy Noble, British Commander in Chief of the China Station. *Ibid.*, pp.43,49

ing the situation in East Asia, it is enough to glance at this passage of Cordell Hull's Memoirs:

As I surveyed the chaos in Europe and tried to calculate the dangers that threatened us from that quarter, I could never for an instant relax the attention I had concentrated on the Far East. In addresses and statements in previous years, I had pointed out again and again the interrelation of the various areas of the world, emphasizing that war in one was certain to have disruptive effects in all others; but never had this fact become so evident as now. 36

To his own efforts, the Secretary of State added those of his political advisors, Stanley K. Hornbeck, Maxwell M. Hamilton, and Joseph W. Ballantine, three ranking Far Eastern experts. He told them:

I can't think of anything we have overlooked in trying to arrive at working relations with Japan. But I want you to take a fine-tooth comb and a microscope and go back over our relations with Japan and see if it is humanly possible to find something additional with which to approach them and prevail upon them not to gallop off on a wild horse. 37

He felt really relieved when in accord with them, he did find a solution to the problem of the Far East. To quote him:

We did make one special proposal, relating to the Pacific Ocean possessions of the European belligerents. I cabled Grew on June 22 to propose a formal exchange of notes with Japan guaranteeing the status quo of such possessions. I further proposed that our two Governments should consult should any question arise concerning the status quo of these territories. 38

Secretary of State Hull did not expect that Japan would be willing to bind itself in this exchange of note he proposed.

36. Hull, op.cit., I, 888

37. Ibid., I, 895

38. Loc. cit.

But he tried what he could do. On his part, the American Ambassador at Tokyo noted as follows the result of his activities during June, 1940, in executing the directives of the State Department:

My private conversations with Arita (Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs) on June 10, 19, 24, and 28 have led to no concrete results, but they have at least served to keep the door open between our two Governments, which was their primary purpose. 39

So, it is evident that the United States kept a watchful eye over the situation of the Far East and was not indifferent to the plight of the Europeans possessions in this area, as far as the peace of the world was concerned. It seems opportune to cite here the logical explanation given by Werner Levi, author of American-Australian Relations on the reason why the United States worried about the Japanese intention to move Southward. Levi wrote:

This threat to Southeastern Asia was a threat to life lines of the British Empire and to vital raw materials needed for the survival of Great Britain, which the United States considered vital for its own safety. Anything endangering the existence of Great Britain was therefore considered as indirectly endangering the United States. Consequently, Japan's southward move immediately provoked a stiffer attitude on the part of the United States and the planning of measures to prevent the realizations of Japan's intention. 40

Therefore, when Japan menaced Indochina, the United States

39. Joseph C. Grew, Ten Years in Japan, A Contemporary Record Drawn from Diaries and Private and Official Papers of Joseph C. Grew, United States Ambassador to Japan, 1932-1942 p. 321

40. Werner Levi, American-Australian Relations, p.146

was alerted. Indochina was in fact an important strategic spot. It was a rice bowl which could feed the Japanese troops for a long time. It possessed many strategic raw materials such as, coal, tin, wolfram, rubber, which could help the Japanese to prolong their fight. More important still, Indochina was the gate-way to Thailand and Malaya. It could serve as a spring-board for the Japanese to jump to Singapore, to the Netherlands East Indies, and eventually to the Philippine Islands which the United States was bound to defend. Besides that, the United States also had direct commercial interests in Indochina. In June 1940, there were about 125,000 tons of goods, mostly coming from the United States, accumulated on the docks at Haiphong, of which about 10,000 tons were being transported into China through the Haiphong-Yunnan railroad.⁴¹

But, at the height of the American concern, on June 17 or 18, the Japanese Director of Military Intelligence told the British Military Attache' in Tokyo that the Japanese people would be cowardly if they failed to take advantage of the disasters suffered by France and Great Britain in Europe to seize French Indochina, the Netherlands East Indies and Hong-kong. At the same time, the American intelligence service were receiving reports which suggested the possibility of a Japanese raid on Hawaii.⁴²

The United States, however, when it looked at the Pacific,

41. Langer, The Challenge, p. 597

42. Ibid., p. 595-6

did not have the same ambitions as France and Great Britain. Its plan, therefore, was different from theirs. As in the case of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, and the Open Door at the turn of the century, the policy of the United States in the second World War was imbued with more liberality and justice than that of the European nations. Regarding the situation in the Pacific the United States was trying not only to avoid war, but also to avoid colonialism, whereas France, for example was trying to avoid war only to save colonialism. This difference of aims resulted in a difference in tactics.

Coming back to General Catroux, we see that he was helpless before the Japanese ultimatum. But when he had made necessary concessions to Japan, many protests arose. The Chinese Government at Chungking announced, on June 23, its indignant feelings, stating that the relationships between China and Indochina were not only intimate in nature but also sanctioned by several conventions, the most recent of which, signed on May 16, 1940, agreed "to the transportation through Indochina of all kinds of merchandise including arms and ammunition". So, France should live up to her obligations and keep the Indochinese route open. If France yielded to the Japanese demands, the Chinese Government could view it with but the gravest concern. And the Chinese Foreign Minister ended his statement with a menace:

Therefore, in the case of armed Japanese invasion

of Indochina, the Chinese Government, in order to preserve China's existence and independence, will be constrained to take such measures in self defense as may be deemed necessary to cope with the situation in pursuance of its fixed policy of resistance against aggression. ⁴³

The protests of the French Government itself against the conduct of General Catroux was still more threatening to him.

General Catroux had accepted the Japanese demands without consulting the French authorities. Given the actual chaos of the French Government from which he received no communication for four days, ⁴⁴ and because of the emergency of the Japanese ultimatum, the French Governor General thought that he could act by his own discretion. But when he informed the French Minister of France Overseas at Bordeaux on June 20, 1940, instead of approval, he received a grave reprimand. ⁴⁵ Feeling that he was misunderstood, General Catroux presented his able defense to the Government of Marshall Petain as follows:

I think that you would appreciate more exactly the reality of the threat which Japan makes on Indochina, by considering the fact that one part of its Navy is directed toward the coast of Tonkin. This event will help you to understand the better, the decay whith which the capitulation of France has affected her in Asia, and to see that there is no more time for us to stand firm against Japan.

When one is beaten, when one has no airplanes and anti-aircraft guns, no submarines, one tries to keep one's property without having to fight, or one negotiates. That is what I have done.

43. Documents on American Foreign Relations, II, 272

44. Gaudel, op.cit., p. 70

45. Decoux, op.cit., p. 66

You tell me that I should have consulted you... I answer that I am at a distance of 4,000 miles from you, that you can do nothing for me, and lastly, that I would have been bound to a delay.

I have taken my responsibilities. I will do it again.....⁴⁶

This strong language of General Catroux resulted in the loss of his position in Indochina. On June 26, 1940, the French Government decided to recall him and named Vice-Admiral Decoux to his place. The formal announcement of this change was made four days later. ⁴⁷

But at this time of trouble, of shame, and of indecision in the situation of the "Mother-country", obedience proved to be a rough test for General Catroux. He was much opposed to the French request of an armistice and was strongly inclined to continue the war from the Empire in accordance with the appeal of General de Gaulle. On June 26, the day after the armistice was announced, Catroux said in a telegram to Vice-Admiral Decoux, that "I refuse to recognize an armistice or armistices, and I will not execute the conditions thereof". ⁴⁸

But being cautious, he did not plan to do anything which could give the Japanese a reason for exploitation. On June 29, when the Japanese transit control commission arrived at Hanoi,

46. M.Garcon, Le Proces du Marechal Petain, Compte Rendu Stenographique, II, 760

47. Decoux, op.cit., p.55

48. Ibid., p.37

he transmitted to the French Resident Superior of Annam this message:

For your personal information, I previously stated that when I shall receive my revocation, ... I will not proclaim the dissidence of Indochina. For such an act would be, as I know it, considered and exploited by the Japanese as a modification of the status quo in the Pacific. ⁴⁹

And it was in this spirit that he met the Japanese authorities the next day.

But, the Japanese, who failed to take over Indochina by the ultimatum of June 19, 1940, thanks to the conciliatory attitude of General Catroux, felt themselves "cowardly"⁵⁰ and tried again on June 29. With the Japanese transit control commission, there also arrived Japanese warships, a dredging-machine and a torpedo-boat, which took up stations in the harbor of Hai-phong, while another Imperial Navy unit was stationed at Hainan Island. ⁵¹ Simultaneously, Japanese troops were concentrated in Kwangsi Province, on the Indochinese border.⁵² Meantime, the control commission attempted to provoke reaction from the French authorities, by behaving themselves as in a conquered country. Any incident between the representatives of the two countries would be a good pretext for an immediate Japanese military occupation

49. Decoux, op.cit., p.37

50. See the statement of the Japanese Director of the military intelligence service, mentioned in page 42, this paper.

51. Decoux, op.cit., p.70

52. The New International Yearbook, 1940, p.291

of Indochina.⁵³

For a second time, however, the Japanese had to hold back their machinations, because of diplomatic pressure from Washington and even from Berlin, and directly because of Catroux's own machinations.

We have noted that Catroux's request for help from the United States was turned down by the Under-Secretary of State, because, at that time, quite apart from the fact that the War and Navy Departments did not have units that could be sent to Indochina, the American Administration was determined to avoid any complication in the Pacific area if "humanly possible."⁵⁴

But from June 21, 1940, the United States Government was deluged with pleas to take a strong stand on Indochina. That day, in a telegram,⁵⁶ Chiang-Kai-shek called the President's attention to the serious situation of Indochina. Consul Reed at Hanoi had also a word to say about the same question.⁵⁵ On June 27, the British Ambassador, Lord Lothian, accompanied by the Australian Minister, Richard G. Casey, asked the Secretary of State to decide whether Japan should be opposed or appeased; they reminded him that, in the latter case, "French Indochina might be occupied at any moment", and the security not only of the British Empire but that of the United States as well would be imperiled. On the following day, Secretary Hull made clear

53. Decoux, *op.cit.*, p.68

54. Hull, *op.cit.*, I, 888; see also page 38 of this paper

55. Tel. from Reed (Hanoi) June 21, 1940, cited in Langer, *the Challenge*, p.599

56. Tel. from Chiang Kai-shek, June 21, 1940, *loc.cit.*

his view, saying that:

neither should we make concessions so sweeping that Japan would accept them as a basis for agreement and then bide her time to make further demands or take further steps, nor should we embark upon military or economic action so drastic as to provoke immediate war with Japan.⁵⁷

Whereupon, Hull decided to leave the American Fleet at Hawaii, hoping that this was sufficient to deter the Japanese from a flagrant aggression against Indochina.⁵⁸

These talks and actions were still like the beating of distant drums so far as the Japanese were concerned and, as Ambassador Grew remarked they pretended not to hear.⁵⁹ But the records show that: "The Japanese Navy remained wary about a long war with the United States - a war that would be begun with only limited reserve of oil."⁶⁰

At the same time, negotiations conducted in Berlin by the Japanese Ambassador, Saburo Kurusu, with the purpose of getting Nazi favor, were not encouraging to Japan. Ambassador Kurusu pointed out that Japan had a marked interest in French Indochina and asked Germany to let it have a free hand in that territory.⁶¹ But, from Tokyo, the German Ambassador, Eugen Ott, sent to the Nazi Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, the wise advice that Indochina be used as a bargaining item to

57. Hull, op.cit., I, 899

58. Loc.cit.

59. Grew, op.cit., p.321

60. Feis, op.cit., p.69

61. Department of State Bulletin, June 16, 1946, XIV, 103

Japan in the Axis sphere. 62

But the main factor in frustrating the Japanese plan of a military invasion of Indochina at the beginning of July, 1940, was Catroux's prudent policy, a policy designed "to temporize and hold on, waiting for a more favorable turn to the war". 63

In fact, on June 30, 1940, General Catroux staged a show of political skill in manipulating a double enemy. On one hand, he managed to drive Vice-Admiral Decoux out of the Government General of Indochina, on the other, he tried to divert the Japanese from their territorial ambition. Both aims succeeded for the moment.

That same day, when the nomination of Jean Decoux to the Government General of Indochina was declared officially, Decoux transmitted to the French Government a telegram which begins:

In complete accord with General Catroux, and basing on many qualified advices (italics mine), I estimate it dangerous in every aspect immediately to replace the Governor General in actual circumstances.....64

Then, General Catroux availed himself of this delay to secure his position vis-a-vis the Japanese. Had the latter consented to respect the French sovereignty on Indochina, he would have thrown off altogether the authority of Marshall

62. Loc.cit.

63. The New York Times, August 2, 1945, recording the statement of General Catroux on the situation of Indochina on June-July, 1940

64. Decoux, op.cit., p.56

Petain. Though the Japanese soon proved to be too ambitious for his ability of concession and he had to stop, his attitude at the start of the negotiation with the Japanese head of the transit control commission, General Isaku Nishihara, had saved Indochina from an immediate danger, Catroux said:

I gave the Japanese Army no pretext for intervention, insisted on mutual respect for the transit agreement, and refused encroachment on the sovereign rights of France.

In order to divert Japanese attention from their territorial aims, I pressed them toward economic under-⁶⁵standing so that it could be advantageous to both countries.

General Catroux was very positive in the last point. He presented to the Japanese a memorandum of present and future foreign trade of Indochina in which he described the downward trend of exports to France since autumn 1939 of such staple products as rice, onions, coal. In conclusion, he went ahead of the Japanese demands and said:

Accordingly, it is a matter of urgent necessity for French Indochina to seek an outlet for her exports other than France, especially in the countries of the Pacific. Regarding staple products, fortunately Japan has replaced France as a large buyer of agricultural products, and it might be well said that Japan has saved French Indochina from an economic crisis. America, too, has increased her purchase of French Indochina rubber since the outbreak of the European war, but there is a limit to the export of other goods to the United States; Japan is a good customer of coal, iron, ore, salt, etc..., and there is a great prospect of increasing exports of rubber, tin and rock phosphate to Japan, while French Indochina can buy Japanese cotton yarn, cotton textiles, rayon, porcelain wares, and chemical products. ⁶⁶

65. The New York Times, August 2, 1945

66. Documents on American Foreign Relations, III, 274

About this, Vice-Admiral Decoux remarked that the quasi-daily conversations between the two generals took soon a much more political than technical interest, so that "no one still thought of listing the goods, the transport of which into China would be hence prohibited".⁶⁷

Secondly, General Catroux also declared he turned down "an offer by the Japanese General Nishihara for a Japanese Alliance", and refused to "recommend such an alliance to the Petain Government".⁶⁸ However, if he did not conclude any alliance with Japan, he did make far-reaching concessions. On July 2, 1940, the Japanese controllers were allowed to station themselves in six points in Indochinese territory, namely, Mon-cay, Lang-son, Cao-bang, Ha-giang, Lao-kay, and the port of Hai-phong.

Since early in July, the Japanese had also insisted on the following demands:

- a) The supply of provisions and munition to the Japanese Army at Kwangsi through Tonkin;
- b) The right faculty for this Army to send the wounded and the sick to the Tonkinese hospitals;
- c) Particularly, the right of transit for the Japanese forces toward Yunnan through Tonkin.⁶⁹

General Catroux discerned in these demands the possibility of exploitation in favor of the French interests; on July 9, 1940 he granted permission for the operation of Japanese supply services through Indochina, and the right to evacuate the wounded and the sick into his territory. The next day, he told the Jap-

67. Decoux, op.cit., p.68

68. The New York Times, August 2, 1945, p.7

69. Decoux, op.cit., pp.68-69

anese authorities that he was disposed to let them supply munitions to their army at Kwangsi and evacuate this army through the Tonkinese delta, provided that Japan would guarantee to respect the French sovereignty on Indochina and on the Spratley Islands, and to withdraw their forces from Hainan. In response to this proposal, General Nishihara hinted the possibility of a military alliance. ⁷⁰

Up to July 10, 1940, General Catroux conducted the negotiations with the Japanese General, Nishihara, at his own discretion, without informing the French Government, now moved to Vichy. When General Nishihara suggested a military alliance, Catroux asked the advice of the French Ambassador at Tokyo. After five days, Ambassador Arsene-Henri warned that "we are here on a very dangerous ground". The secret of General Catroux was thus leaked out and on July 18, 1940 he was ordered by Vichy to suspend all negotiations and to transmit the government of Indochina to Vice-Admiral Decoux. ⁷¹

In the afternoon of July 19, 1940, his last day in office, General Catroux had a long talk with his successor. In conclusion, he said:

Since the beginning, I resolved to go beyond the Japanese demands so to unbend the relations with the Japanese mission and to create a favorable atmosphere to our conversations. To this effect, I have closed up the frontiers to the export into China, and I just have done the same thing to the reverse movement for

70. Decoux, op.cit., p. 69

71. After the occupation of Paris by the Germans, the French Government moved to Bordeaux, and, on June 30, 1940, from Bordeaux to Vichy, Garcon op.cit. II, 869

a month, at the request of the mission, despite the many damages such a measure would cause to us. It will be up to you to re-open the frontiers on August 7, in the direction of China-Indochina.

I have even admitted the establishment of a mixed airline over Canton and Hanoi, and accepted in principle the installation of a cable between Canton and Hai-phong. All this represents a great assistance to the Japanese. So, in return, I demand the conclusion of an accord which would guarantee the maintenance of the French sovereignty on Indochina. I have added that, such an accord, of course, would be negotiated between Tokyo and Vichy, but that, if the Japanese Government gives me right now the fundamental guarantee in question, I would be in measure to accentuate my policy of supporting Japan.

But, time rolled by while the political guarantee, which I discounted to be granted and which was promised to me, is not notified to me. On the contrary, the mission was developing its activities and accentuating its encroachments. We have, therefore, reached the point where, in my opinion, it behooves us to stiffen our attitude, to react against the unbearable abuses of the Japanese and henceforth, to censure the mission in the strict execution of its mandate. That will be your immediate task. ⁷²

So, on July 20, 1940, ended a phase of the Indochinese history which Paul Baudouin, the French Foreign Minister of the Government of Petain, called the "Phase Catroux". ⁷³

General Catroux was blamed for his policy.

But, if he had stiffened his attitude toward the Japanese right in the beginning of the Japanese encroachment on Indochina Japan would have invaded the French colony before any other power could have taken any measure against it, and then would have presented its occupation as a fait accompli. ⁷⁴

72. Decoux, op.cit., pp.68-72

73. Ibid., p.95

74. Garcon, op.cit., I, 276

The United States and Indochina in
The First Indochinese Crisis
June-September, 1940

The Japanese Occupation
of North Indochina
September 1940

If August, 1940, was a month of activity for the Japanese authorities, September was a month of realization. Of course, to break the status quo and to get into Indochina was regarded as a difficult undertaking if the United States stood firmly upon its established rights and policies. Nevertheless, Japan went ahead with its program and, at the end of September, 1940, the Japanese military felt at home in Hanoi, the capital of Indochina.

The political agreement signed by France and Japan on Indochina on August 29, 1940, was to go into effect after the conclusion of a military accord to be negotiated, on the spot, at Hanoi, between the military authorities of the two countries. Here, difficulties arose, because of the persistent opposition of Vice-Admiral Decoux to any arrival of Japanese troops.¹

1. Baudouin, op.cit., pp.211-223

On July 20, 1940, Vice-Admiral Jean Decoux began his Government General of French Indochina. After the long talk he had had the day before with his predecessor, General Georges Catroux, he was more confirmed than ever in his view of "defense and no defiance"² against Japan. The next day, when for the first time he received the Chiefs of Services of his administration, he proclaimed that "whatsoever would be the gravity of the situation which I should have to confront with, I would not be a liquidator of Indochina".²

To General Nishihara, whom he met some days later, he showed the same firmness. In his own account, he said:

I declared without equivocation that he had not to rely on me in treating the questions which were beyond my competence, or exceed my personal responsibilities. I added that I would act only in full conformity with the French Government, which, of course, should remain in the serious circumstances of the moment the only master of important decisions to be taken.³

On July 23, Vice-Admiral Decoux telegraphed to Vichy telling the Government what his predecessor had done, saying:

My conclusion, after a thorough examination of the situation, is that concessions, very big, going even beyond what they (the Japanese) demanded, have been given the Japanese without any counterpart, to the effect of creating a favorable atmosphere, in view of obtaining from them guarantees.

Facts, however, have proved that our concessions had the unique result of developing Japanese appetites. The expected counterpart, which, from another principle exceeds the power of the Governor General, has not been accorded, and I doubt that it will ever be.

2. Jean Decoux, *op.cit.*, p.78
3. *Ibid.* pp. 91-92

I am eager to put a good order to these errors, to stop the Japanese encroachments, to reopen the frontier to a certain extent, after a previous accord of the Japanese mission on the goods to be transported or transited. I will also try not to make any concession without immediate and substantial counterpart, but I am placed in a serious state of fact, tending in reality to a peaceful conquest of Indochina by Japan. I will try to reduce the Japanese mortgage, of which I have to take into account.

To this effect, it would be of interest to come back to normal methods. I propose, therefore, to deal on local questions with General Nishihara, and to submit to you the conclusions, which I have arrived at, so as to enable you to get in touch with the Government of Tokyo by normal diplomatic avenues.

On July 27, the French Government, after deliberation, gave full agreement to the plan sketched by the Governor General of Indochina. Emboldened by this blessing, Vice-Admiral Decoux, on July 29, could reply to General Nishihara, who would leave the next day for Tokyo to report the result of his mission to the new Japanese Cabinet, that the Governor General could not agree with Japan on the following points:

- a) Interdiction of all transit of Japanese troops across Indochina.
- b) Interdiction of transport of ammunition and war material, save provisions, for the Army of Kwangsi.
- c) Interdiction of the establishment of a Japanese station of wireless telegraph in the Indochinese territory.⁵

While Vice-Admiral Decoux was proud of his attitude, the Japanese had just set a program to curb him.⁶ In fact, On July 27, the Japanese Government had made a great decision. The

4. Decoux, *Op.cit.*, p.93

5. *Ibid.* p.92

6. The program was not intended to curb Decoux in person. It was of a general scope, but applied to Indochina, it kept in check the aims of the French Governor General.

Liaison Conference, the first of its kind, whose power went beyond that of the Cabinet and the Court, had approved a policy presented by the new Cabinet of Prince Fumimaro Konoye, called "Gist of the Main Points in Regard to Dealing with the Situation to Meet the Change in World Conditions". The story how this policy was arrived at is worth telling.

In July 1940, the Japanese militarists were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the Cabinet of Admiral Yonai. It was the Yonai Government which failed to take over the French Indochina when the fall of France offered an excellent opportunity for such an undertaking. Late in June, the Japanese forces were twice ready to invade Indochina, but twice they had to withdraw because of the relatively circumspect procedure of the Government, because of the diplomatic opposition of other nations, and because of the adroit maneuverings of General Catroux. The conversations between the Japanese Ambassador, Saburo Kurusu, with Joachim Ribbentrop fell also far short of the hopes of Admiral Yonai, who, on July 7 sent Naotake⁷ Sato, a former Foreign Minister, for a good-will mission to Berlin. Sato did gather the fact that Germany had no ambitions in respect to the French and Dutch colonies in the Far East, at least for the time being, but did not get any pledges from Ribbentrop.⁸ The reason was that Ribbentrop followed the re-

7. Naotake Sato came to Berlin on July 8, 1940. See International Military Tribunal, Far East Tokyo, 1946-8. Record p. 6170 by F. C. Jones, in his Japan's New Order in East Asia, Its Rise and Its Fall 1937-45 p. 222

8. Ibid. pp 6187-40; Jones, Ibid p. 223

commendations of the German Ambassador in Japan who held that Germany would probably give Japan a free hand in Indochina only "if Japan obliges herself to tie down America in the Pacific area, perhaps by a promise to attack the Philippines and Hawaii in the event of America's entry into the war against Germany."⁹ But these conditions did not influence the Yonai Cabinet as it appeared in the broadcast of the Japanese Foreign Minister, Hachiro Arita, who, on June 22, 1940 had mentioned Japan's policy of non-involvement in European affairs.¹⁰

To cope with the cold attitude of Ribbentrop, the Foreign Ministry of the Yonai Cabinet drafted a German-Japanese agreement and discussed it with representatives of the Army and Navy¹¹ on July 12 and 16. The proposals of this agreement were that Japan should recognize German leadership in Europe and Africa, should cooperate with Germany, by measures short of war, in bringing about the surrender of Great Britain, and in favoring the position of Germany in its trade with Greater East Asia, that Germany and Japan should confer on the measures to be taken, if either of both powers were threatened by the USSR, that both powers should prevent American interference with

10. Tel. from Ott to Berlin, June 24, 1940 (Tokyo War Crimes Documents, No. 4025C) Cited in The Challenge to Isolation, 1937-1940, by William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, 1952, 604. Jones. Op.cit. p.223, note 4

11. The members were Ando and Ishizawa, Section chiefs of the Foreign Ministry; Lt. Colonel Takayama, of the War Ministry; Major Tanemura, of Army General Staff; Comm. Shiba, of Navy Ministry, and Captain Ono, of Naval General Staff. IMTFE, Exhibit Nos. 527 and 528. See Jones, Op.cit p.224, note 1 Feis, Op.cit. p.79

their respective activities in Europe and in Asia. In return Germany should support Japan in its ambitions over the South Seas region, including French Indochina and Netherlands East Indies.¹²

But time had run out for the Yonai Cabinet. The militarists were already out of patience; they talked of assassination; they plotted to kill all the leading advocates of friendship of the United States and Great Britain;¹³ at the end, they bluntly asked for a cabinet change.¹⁴ On July 16, the Minister of War, General Shuroku Hata, powerless to control the Army, resigned, and so did the Prime Minister.¹⁵ The next day former Prime Ministers and senior members of the Privy Council convened to choose a successor to Admiral Mitsumasa Yonai, a man who should be able to manage as "having the consent of the Army and being close to them".¹⁶ That same night the Emperor issued an imperial mandate to Prince Fuminaro Konoye to form a new government,¹⁷ which was practically set up on July 18.

On the evening of July 19, 1940, though they would be formally invested with power only three days later, the Foreign Minister, Yosuke Matuoka, the Minister of War,

11&12 The members were Ando and Ishizawa, Section chiefs of Foreign Ministry; Lt. Col. Takayama, of the War Ministry; Major Tanemura, of Army General Staff; Comm. Shib, of Navy Ministry, and Capt. Ono, of Naval General Staff. IMTFE, Exhibit, No. 527 and 528. See Jones, Op. cit. p. 224, note 1; Feis, Op. cit. p. 79

13. "Kido Diary", entry for July 5, 1940; See Feis, Op. cit. p. 78

14. IMTFE Diary Exhibit, No. 3205; Feis, Loc. cit.

15. "Kido Diary", entry for July 16 & 17. Feis, Op. cit. p. 79

16. IMTFE Ibid. No. 3340; Feis, Ibid. p. 80; Langer, Op. cit. p. 606

17. IMTFE, Loc. cit. See also The Undeclared War, by William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, p. 4. Feis, Ibid. p. 80

Lieutenant-General Hideki Tojo, the Minister of Navy, Vice-Admiral Zengo Yoshida, met with the Prime Minister for an exchange of views. What was going on in that important meeting can be seen in these few words of Prince Konoye, who said that ".....because Matsuoka spoke out as though he advocated war with the United States, the Navy Minister was aghast at first. However, he was placated when Matsuoka followed with moderate explications".

After a week of intra-ministerial deliberations, and of discussions with the court and military men, the new cabinet approved the result on July 26, 1940, under the title: "Gist of the Main Points in Regard to Dealing with the Situation to Meet the Change in World Conditions".¹⁸ In this very important political document two main purposes were set forth: a) to hasten the end of the conflict in China; b) to solve the problem of the south within such scope as would not lead to war with other powers (italics of Feis)¹⁹ When the Liaison Conference adopted this policy on the following day, it made

18. IMTFE. Exhibit No. 1310; Feis. Op.cit. p. 84. About this program Herbert Feis remarked: "Like almost all Japanese official documents (and not only Japanese) of the sort, this was so composed to allow different definitions by different persons at different times. The ambiguity was useful. Gaps in meaning served to conceal secret purposes; obscurity of phrase permitted future twists of aim. Authority within Japan could become unified only in a haze. Therefore the student can never be sure of exact shades of intent, or even that he has culled out from the many parts and sections those that were most meant".

19. The summarization is of Herbert Feis, Op.cit., p.85

its decisions:

- (1) To maintain a firm attitude toward America on the one hand; to effect on the other hand a sweeping readjustment of Japanese relations with the USSR, as well as a political combination with Germany and Italy.
 (2) To take stronger measures against French Indochina, Hong Kong and foreign concessions in China looking to the prevention of aid to the Chiang regime... (3) To practice more vigorous diplomacy toward the Netherlands East Indies, in order to acquire vital materials. 20

The Konoye cabinet carried out faithfully these decisions during its year in office. But even before it began to work, dissensions reappeared. Thus Marquis Kido, the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, recorded an observation of the Emperor:

I was received in audience and told by His Majesty his impression in regard to the execution of the plans decided at the Imperial Liaison Conference (of July 27). The Government body, Army and Navy cliques, all hold different ideas in regard to the execution of the plan. Premier Konoye believing that the China incident cannot be easily settled, wants to try to reduce the area of occupation in China and start the southward operation. Thus he seems to be trying to divert the discontent of the people over the failure in China towards the South. The Army wants to leave the situation in China as it is, and to advance south if there is an opportunity. But the Navy seemingly does not wish to advance south until the war in China is settled. 21

20. Feis, Loc.cit. The Japanese based their decisions on the principle of self-defense. But Herbert Feis observed rightly that: "The concept of national self defense has as many hues as a rainbow. Each country has its filter, and each bends the rays to its own wants and fears. To the men who wrote Japanese policy in July, 1940, national self-defense meant any action deemed necessary to place Japan in a position to win a war in case it could not achieve its aims without war...It seeks to conceal aggressive (sic) and threatening Japanese aims, by stressing the strategic justification of Japanese measures.p. 86 Ibid. The Liaison Conference was attended by the leading cabinet officers and the Chiefs of Staff of Army and Navy.

21. "Kido Diary", entry for July 30, 1940; Feis. Op.cit. p.87

Amidst these differences of opinions, one thing emerged clearly, namely to use the expression of Ambassador Grew, "Japan goes hell-bent toward the Axis".²²

During these days when Japan planned policy touching America, the United States, on its part, though particularly of Japan, and not in a nice manner.

Early in July 1940, rumor was afloat that Japan attempted to buy great quantities of aviation gasoline and lubricants. The Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, for example, on July 18, reported to the State Department that Japan was offering to buy any and all quantities. At the same time, according to word sent to Washington by the American consuls at Kobe and Osaka, Japan was planning to accumulate stocks on Hainan Islands. These indications were conclusive of an imminent southward movement of the Japanese.²³

On July 19, 1940, the Secretary of State left for a conference of the American Republics at Havana, without definite ideas on how to cope with the new developments in the Pacific. But other officials of the Government were thinking of a solution. The evening before at a dinner where Henry L. Stimson, the Secretary of War, Frank Knox, the Secretary of the Navy, Henry Morgenthau, Jr., the Secretary of the Treasury, were present with the British Ambassador, Lord Lothian, and the

22. Joseph C. Grew. Ten Years in Japan. p.324. This book is a contemporary record drawn from the diaries and private and official papers of the U.S. Ambassador in Japan, from 1932-1942

23. Feis. Op.cit. p.89

Australian Minister, Richard G. Casey, an idea was brought out "that we now had an opportunity under the new legislation of stopping the supplies of oil to Japan."²⁴ The next morning, Morgenthau suggested to the President: "There is a possibility that a plan can be quickly developed with the co-operation of the British Government to stop oil and gasoline for Japan. Lord Lothian, whose proposal it partly is, is enthusiastic about its possibilities and will ascertain his Government's reaction, should you deem the plan feasible".²⁵

This was the plan: The United States was, on the ground of national defense, to stop all exports of oil; Britain was to get all its oil from the Caribbean area; Britain and the United States were to buy up any surplus production in that area; Britain was to arrange with the Dutch government to destroy the oil wells in the Indies; and, finally, it was to concentrate bombing attacks on the synthetic oil plants in Germany. Where²⁶ then, and how, would Japan and Germany get oil for war?

The plan sounded good, and the President convoked Stimson, Knox and Sumner Welles, the Acting Secretary of State, to the White House for discussion.

The President pointed to the map across the room and said that he had sat there day after day watching the map and that he finally came to the conclusion that the only way out of the difficulties of the world was by starving of the people of Europe, particularly in regard to their supply of fuel to carry on the war.... The President has ideas by which America could, acting under the recent legislation, prevent all of the petroleum supplies - particularly aviation oil - from going to the Nazi Axis powers. American oil could be stored in the ground and the cost of the Government buying it in that condition would be comparatively small. This

24. Unpublished diary of Henry L. Stimson, entry for July 18, 1940. cited by Feis, Loc.cit.

25. Stimson diary, entry for July 19, 1940; Feis, loc.cit

26. The plan is summarized by Feis, op.cit. p.90

would prevent oil from going to Spain and through Spain to the Germans. Great Britain would take care of the Venezuelan supplies, and so on. When they got to the Far Eastern side, Sumner Welles put in an objection that an embargo against Japan would cause Japan to make war on Great Britain. I ventured to doubt this and the question came up of whether or not the New Netherlands wells could not be put out of commission and thus Japan deprived of her objective for going to war with Great Britain. Altogether it was a long and interesting discussion but whether or not it was intended to be a factual one was left in the air. ²⁷

New developments proved that it was intended to be a factual one. The next day, July 20, 1940, the President signed a bill for a two-ocean Navy, designed to enable the United States to deal not only with Germany, but with Japan as well. ²⁸ Two days later, the Treasury staff presented to the President the Text of a proclamation, placing under control export of all kinds of oil and all scrap metals. Simultaneously, the President received a telegram from General De Witt, Commander at San Francisco of the 9th Corps Area, reporting that tremendous Japanese purchases of aviation gasoline were being made and concluding: "Should the Army and Navy need it in quantity, during the next six to nine months there would be a shortage of aviation gasoline if these Japanese purchases are consummated". ²⁹

The President, on July 25, 1940, signed the proclamation and informed the press of its contents. Accordingly, newspapers spread a language that meant an "embargo". The New York Times announced: "Embargo put on Oil, Scrap Metal, in

27. Stimson diary, entry for July 19, 1940 cited by Feis, cit. loc

28. The New York Times, July 21, 1940, p.1

29. Feis, Op.cit. p.92

License Order by Roosevelt".³⁰

But in the afternoon of the same day, when the proclamation was sent to the State Department for countersignature, Sumner Welles hurried to persuade the President to discard it in favor of a lesser one. The President agreed. In the new text, signed on July 26, the President said;

Now, therefore, I, Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States of America, acting under and by virtue of the authority vested in me by the said act of Congress (Act to Expedite the Strengthening of the National Defence, approved July 2, 1940) do hereby proclaim that.... I have determined that it is necessary in the interest of the national defense that on and after August 1, 1940, the additional materials hereinafter listed shall not be exported from the United States except when authorized in each case by a license as provided for in the aforesaid proclamation:

1. Petroleum products
2. Tetraethyl lead 31
3. Iron and steel scrap

It is obvious that the regulations dealt no more with all kinds of oil and all scrap materials, as they were drawn up in the first document. But these heitations and corrections would, in time, loose their raison d'etre, when the Japanese encroachments became real in French Indochina.

After the week of discussions and planning came the time for action.

On July 26, 1940, the day when the United States proclaimed restrictive measures against Japan, as it is just said, the Jap-

30. The New York Times, July 26, 1940 p.1 That same day, the New York Herald Tribune gave the story under this heading: "U.S. Embargo is Clamped on Metals and Oils.

31. Department of State Bulletin, July 27, 1940 (vol. III. No. 57) p.49. The text is reprinted in Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan; 1931-1941, II 216, 217

Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs of the new cabinet met the American Ambassador in Tokyo. In this interview, Yosuke Matsuoka, according to Joseph C. Grew, "referred to an article which he had written some time ago stating that if the United States and Japan ever have to fight each other they should know precisely the causes and reasons for which they were fighting and that if war comes, it should not develop, as in so many other cases in history, through misunderstanding". As if to clear up a probable misunderstanding between the two countries, the Foreign Minister expressed the concept of history of the Japanese people.

Mr. Matsuoka then said that history is based largely on the operation of blind forces which in a rapidly moving world cannot always be controlled. ³²

Matsuoka was not content to make this notion known only to Grew, but still wanted him to convey it to the President of the United States. To quote Grew:

Mr. Matsuoka asked me now to express privately to the President that he shared his lifelong hope and interest in the preservation of world peace. He added, however, that he had come to understand that since the world is constantly evolving, changing and growing, peace cannot be safeguarded by adhering to the status quo. The League of Nations failed he said, because its member states had not had the courage to implement Article 19 of the Covenant, which provides for adjustments to meet such evolution and changed circumstances. A new order must come into being in the world, and the peace of the world must have as its foundation our adaptation to the development and change. ³³

The tenor of this message rehearsed the doctrine of the "Gist of the Main Points in Regard to Dealing with the Situation

32. Grew, Op.cit. entry for July 26, 1940, under the title "First conversation with Foreign Minister Matsuoka". p.322

33. Ibid, p.323

to Meet the Change in World Conditions", that the Japanese Cabinet stenciled down in indelible ink on that very same day. It was also an orthodox continuation of the Japanese militarist line of thoughts tracing back to the Tanaka Memorial³⁴ in 1927, and to the diplomatic reply of Japan to the request of Open-door of the United States in 1938.³⁵ On this message, the President commented that "a genuine and durable world peace, in our opinion, cannot be achieved by other than orderly processes and by dealing fairly and justly, both of which entail respect for the rights of all concerned, and which allow all nations to attain their legitimate aspirations."³⁶ But, before this answer reached the Japanese Minister, Japan had begun to carry out its expansionist policy.

On August 1, 1940, the Japanese Government announced the summary of its fundamental national policies, the basic aim of which "lies in the firm establishment of world peace in accordance with the lofty spirit of Hakko Ichiu, in which the

34. The Tanaka Memorial, is a report that Baron Giichi Tanaka was supposed to have given his Emperor, on July 25, 1927. It expresses the views of the militarists, especially in the passage that follows: "In the future, if we want to control China we must first crush the United States, just as in the past we had to fight in the Russo-Japanese War. But, in order to conquer China, we must first conquer Manchuria and Mongolia. In order to conquer world, we must first conquer China. If we succeed to conquer China, the rest of the Asiatic countries and the South Seas countries will fear us and surrender. Then the world will realize the Eastern Asia is ours and will not dare to violate our rights." Otto D. Tolischus, Through Japanese Eyes. p. 58

35. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan I.800

36. Grew. Op.cit. entry for August 3, 1940, under the title "President Roosevelt Replies to Foreign Minister Matsuoka," p.323

country was founded, and in the construction, as the first step, of a new order in Greater East Asia, having for its foundation the solidarity of Japan, Manchoukuo and China".³⁷

More explicit, Foreign Minister Matsuoka, on the same day, stated that "accordingly the immediate aim of our foreign policy at present is to establish, in accordance with the lofty spirit of the kodo (Imperial way) a great East Asian chain of common prosperity with the Japan-Manchoukuo-China group as one of the links".³⁸ It was understood that the next link would be French Indochina, because, without delay, he handed a memorandum to the French Ambassador, Charles Arsene-Henri, requesting that France provide bases and transit facilities in Indochina to Japanese troops, and threatening force, if France did not yield.³⁹

The following day, in Indochina, the acting head of the Japanese military mission, Colonel Kenryo Sato, who represented also the Japanese South China Army, delivered to Vice-Admiral Decoux a document, in form of an ultimatum which included the following passage.

The project of Franco-Japanese defensive alliance which General Catroux had initiated implies a military collaboration. It is an absolute and immediate necessity to solve the China Incident, and the transit of Japanese troops in Indochina is the very soul of that alliance. Consequently, Colonel Sato demands the transit of troops

37. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, I.109
Hakko Ichiu means "the world as one family".

38. Ibid p.111

39. IMTFE, Record, p.6922; Jones, op.cit. p.227

40. Decoux, op.cit. (see next page)

sent against Chiang Kai-shek, the utilization of Indo-chinese air bases of which the Japanese troops assume charge; finally, all facilities for the transportation of arms, munitions and provisions.

It was added that the resistance of the Governor General to such demands was "difficult to understand and without grounds, and that in case of Chinese incursion into Indochina, Japan would have to enter also for its legitimate defense, and summarily that the projected alliance would be realized immediately, otherwise Franco-Japanese relations would end up by falling into worse conditions".⁴⁰

This document mirrored exactly the mind of Foreign Minister Matsouka; so Vice-Admiral Decoux was told when alarmed, he inquired of the French Ambassador in Tokyo.

Also, on August 2, 1940, while in Japan, Matsuoka informed Ambassador Ott of the Japanese initiatives on Indochina and asked Germany not to object to them but to help them in putting pressure on Vichy.⁴¹ The French Government got the news of the Japanese aims from Arsene-Henri. Big reactions ensued, from which it resulted that "the propositions of Mr. Matsuoka appeared to be a simple step toward complete military occupation of Tonkin, which would be itself the prelude of transformation of Indochina into an economic annex of Japan and a colony for Japanese settlement. The French feared that concessions would, furthermore, amount to an active association with "Japanese

40. Decoux, op.cit. p.94; Charles-Roux, op.cit. p.250; Langer, The Undeclared War, p.9

41. IMTFE, Record, pp.6295-6; Jones, op.cit. p.227

aggression against China", and would strain their relations with the United States, which just gave a blow to Japan by restrictions on export of aviation gasoline and scrap iron. The French Government, therefore, replied to Japan with a highly conditional tone, requiring that first Japan should recognize "the French sovereignty on Indochina, the integrity of the Indochinese Union and the French interests in the Far East". After that the French would consider what facilities they should accord to Japan.⁴²

At the same time, the French Minister of Colonies sent to the Governor General of Indochina this telegram:

The Japanese Government has delivered to our Ambassador a memorandum in which it demands urgently the free transit of Japanese troops through Tonkin, the installation of air bases, and an agreement in principle to an almost total attachment of the Indochinese economy to that of Japan. These demands are accompanied by oral threatenings. We have just answered in the negative. But we have proposed to open immediately a negotiation which would cover a wide range of subjects. Be ready, then, to repel by force any attack from Japan. But avoid carefully any trouble with the members of the Japanese Control Commission.⁴³

From now on the Vichy Government became occupied with the Japanese. It had to renew the policies of General Catroux which it had repudiated. Hardly had it replied to Tokyo before it turned to the United States for help. It instructed Count Saint-Quentin, the French Ambassador in Washington, to inform the American Government of the Japanese demands and to make it

42. Charles-Roux, op.cit. pp.250-251

43. Decoux, op.cit., pp.95-6. Telegram from Vichy to the Governor General at Hanoi, August 3, 1940

known that "the resistance of the French Government to the Japanese demands would necessarily depend to a large extent on the nature and effectiveness of the support which the American Government would be disposed to give it."⁴⁴ Unfortunately, the French Ambassador could only, on August 6, 1940 report to his Government the following indication of James C. Dunn, the Political Advisor of the State Department:

We have been doing and we are doing everything possible to keep the situation of the Far East stabilized. Furthermore, we have been taking various steps to manifest the economic pressure of the United States, and we have been keeping our Fleet based on Hawaii. Our position toward the development of events in the Far East is well known. It is an indication of our actual attitude and our future activities. We hope that the negotiations, which have been projected, can be delayed as long as possible, given the internal situation which is susceptible of evolution".⁴⁵

When Count-Saint-Quentin was given these explanations, he asked Mr. Dunn if they "meant that the United States would not

44. Memorandum from the French Embassy in Washington, August 6, 1940, cited by Langer, op.cit., p.10

45. Charles-Roux. Op.cit. p.251. In the memo to the Under Secretary of State, Mr. Dunn wrote "I told the French Ambassador that we have been doing and are doing everything possible within the framework of our established policies to keep the situation in the Far East stabilized; that we have been progressively taking various steps, the effect of which has been to exert economic pressure on Japan; that our Fleet is no based in Hawaii, and that the course which we have been following, as indicated above, gives a clear indication of our intentions and activities for the future. I also raised with the French Ambassador the question whether it would be practicable for the French to delay discussion with the Japanese with respect to Indochina for the period. Memo form Mr. Dunn to Under Secretary of State Welles, Aug. 6, 1940, cited in Langer, op.cit. p.10. See also Private Diaries of Paul Baudouin, 188-193

use military or naval force in support of any position which might be taken to resist the Japanese attempted aggression on Indochina"⁴⁶ Because Mr. Dunn did not make any effort to correct this interpretation, Count Saint-Quentin concluded in his report to the French Government:

The United States will not take any decisive measure against Japan, as long as the threat of a final victory of Germany over Great Britain will not be discarded.⁴⁷

The French Government, however, was disappointed by this "uninterested attitude of the United States". On August 8, 1940 when, in Indochina, Vice-Admiral Decoux rejoiced on the news that Sato's threat was disavowed by the Japanese Government⁴⁸ Vichy informed Washington of the line of conduct it was going to take. The French Foreign Minister telegraphed to Count Saint-Quentin:

The fact that the American Government is not in a position, at a time when the Japanese pressure becomes precise, to give concrete effects to its policy, compels us to seek a line of conduct susceptible to avert immediate risks which are threatening us. In doing so, we will try all our possible conducts to gain time.⁴⁹

But the United States, on its part, was also doing its best though within the framework of its "established policies", to give a helping hand to the French. The State Department, after getting reports of new demands by Japan on French Indochina, had already called "these to the attention of the

46. Charles-Roux, op.cit. p.252

47. Loc.cit.

48. Decoux, Op.cit. p.96

49. Charles-Roux. Op.cit. p.252

Japanese Foreign Office".⁵⁰ In fact, on August 6, 1940, the Acting Secretary of State, Sumner Welles, had instructed Grew as follows:

New agencies have carried reports that Japan has made secret demands on France regarding French Indochina. As reported, these demands include right on part of Japan to move armed forces of Japan through that French possession, the right of armed forces of Japan to use air bases at certain points there, etc.....

The statements given by the Secretary of State to the press on April 17 and May 11, 1940, set forth this Government's belief that (1) intervention in the domestic affairs of the Netherland East Indies, or (2) any alteration, by other than peaceful processes, in their status quo would be prejudicial to the cause of security, stability, and peace in the entire Pacific area, not just in the region in question. Also, there was set forth the observation of the Government of the United States that the belief restated in the preceding sentence was based on a doctrine unequivocally supported by this Government. The same belief and the same observation naturally applies to French Indochina, likewise. This Government is seriously perturbed, therefore, over the demarche which it is reported that the Government of Japan has made to the French authorities.

If no objection is perceived, it is my desire that at your early convenience you call upon the Minister for Foreign Affairs and that you express to him, as under instruction from your Government and along the lines above indicated, the concern felt by the Government of the United States regarding the reported developments.⁵¹

In the afternoon of the next day, August 7, 1940, Ambassador Grew called on the Foreign Minister and conveyed him the representation of the American Government as he was instructed to do. Ambassador Grew said:

In replying to my opening remarks, the Minister said that (1) he wished to withhold his comment; (2) that admitting certain demands had been made on Indochina, still he could not reveal their precise character; and (3) that

50. Hull, Opacit, I, 903

51. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, II 289-290 telegram from the Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Japan, August 6, 1940

in regard to the recent article in the New York Times, a cabled report of which he had with him, he considered its various points as either grossly exaggerated or completely unfounded. The Minister declined to comment on the two demands listed in the Department telegram.

But the Japanese Foreign Minister told Ambassador Grew in strict confidence that "Japanese demands had been already accepted in principle by the French Government". Later, in the same afternoon, however, Minister Matsuoka sent him a message asking him not to disclose the object of his call. To this, the Ambassador declined to assent, and, in Grew's words, "the Foreign Office informed us, after further telephone conversation that the press release would say that I had called to inquire about press reports published abroad regarding late developments in relations between French Indochina and Japan, and that the reports were declared to be inaccurate by the Foreign Minister".⁵²

The more circumspectly the Japanese Foreign Minister tried publicly to deny his demands on French Indochina, the more earnestly he worked in secret. On August 9, 1940 the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Chichi Ohashi, presented anew to the French Ambassador a draft pretending to obtain from France the transit of Japanese armed forces through Indochina and the disposition of air bases, of wireless stations, of means of communications for the Japanese troops which were going to fight Chiang-Kai-shek.⁵³ Upon a firm refusal of

52. Foreign Relations of United States, Japan. II290-291
Memorandum by Ambassador in Japan, Aug. 7, 1940

53. Charles-Roux. Op.cit. p.253; Baudouin, op.cit. pp193, 198-199

Arsene-Henri,⁵⁴ he came again the next day with a revised text, specifying the area which would be conceded to Japanese use. Arsene-Henri still stood firm, requiring more precision, especially on the points needed for air bases. This time Chiuchi Ohashi stood firm, pleading the need for military secrecy, and the French Ambassador, with sigh and protest, accepted the Japanese proposals in principle.⁵⁵

But these proposals were the subject of a vigorous reaction at Vichy. General Maxime Weygand, the Minister of Defense, who relied on the figures given by General Maurice-Pierre Martin, the Chief of Staff of the Colonial Forces, favored a categorical refusal, whatever the risks. Henri Lemery, the Minister for Colonies, and other Ministers were of the same stand. Only Paul Baudouin, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs had his own opinion on this matter. Paul Baudouin was a former head of the Bank of Indochina, should have known better than anybody else the interests of France in this possession. And he was of the view that "the concessions consented to the Japanese did not injure the independence of our beautiful colony".⁵⁶

This submissive attitude of Baudouin, coupled with the new pressure of the Japanese Ambassador in France, R.Sawada,

54. IMTFE Record, pp.6888-6890, Jones, op.cit. p.227

55. Ibid. pp.6892-3; Jones, loc.cit.

56. Laurent, op.cit., p.54

who, on August 12, 1940, notified that "the Japanese Government expected a complete and rapid acceptance of its demands"⁵⁷ discouraged the helpless French Government. On August 13, therefore the latter decided not to reply to the Japanese by an abrupt denial, but to allow Arsene-Henri to enter in the road of concessions.⁵⁸ The next day, the Japanese authorities put new pressure on the French Ambassador in Tokyo⁵⁹. In Vichy on August 15, the French Government dispatched new proposals to which Minister Matsuoka answered by threatening "military action".⁶⁰ That same day, the Japanese Foreign Ministry renewed its requests for German support, but was told by Germany that "our influence on French policy was limited".⁶¹ Despite this lukewarm Nazi friendship, the Japanese decided to go ahead with their own plan.

Impressed and depressed, the French Government reverted to the methods taken by General Catroux just two months earlier and on the evening of August 16, 1940, they dropped for the time being the idea of armed resistance against the Japanese.⁶²

57. Baudouin.Op.cit.p.199

58. Decoux, Op.cit. p.96

59. Charles-Roux,Op.cit p.253

60. Charles-Roux,ibid.p.254

61. IMTFE Record,pp.6295-6; Jones,op.cit.p.227

62. Baudouin.Op.cit.pp.203-4,211. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the French historians used to forget the real weakness of France, and to complain that the United States was powerless; Jacques le Bourgeois, for example, in his Saigon sans la France said: "Being consulted for a second time, the Americans expressed their powerlessness." p.6 see also Charles-Roux,op.cit.p.252

On the following day, the French Foreign Minister told the American Charge d'Affaires at Vichy, Robert D. Murphy, that "in the absence of any material support from Great Britain and the United States as distinguished from the enunciation of principles", France felt obliged to yield.⁶³ The same day, Minister Baudouin informed the Chinese in regard to the general terms of the Franco-Japanese negotiations.⁶⁴

On August 19, Foreign Minister Matsuoka made it clear to the French Ambassador in Tokyo that military necessities were so urgent that he could not wait for the French agreement. At the same time, Vice-Admiral Decoux advised Arsene-Henri not to make any important concessions, saying:

I estimate that in regard to military, naval or aerial matters, we can cede nothing important, without bringing damage to our sovereignty on Indochina and dangerously compromising all French possessions in the Far East.⁶⁵

Vichy was really embarrassed by these developments. That same day, the French authorities invited Robert D. Murphy to their cabinet meeting and, after informing him of the Japanese aims, asked him to transmit to Washington the following suggestions:

In the event that we are forced to accord the transit to the Japanese forces, it would be opportune to have Tokyo informed that the Government of the United States considers this expedition as essentially temporary and wants to see these forces definitely evacuate the Indochinese territory as soon as the military operations in the Chinese territory would be ended.

63. Telegram from Murphy, August 17, 1940, cited in Langger op.cit. p.12

64. Decoux, op.cit. p.247

65. Ibid. pp.97-98

Loyally the American Charge d'Affaires did as he was asked to, but he did not forget to confirm that "it would be vain to expect the American Government anything other than a verbal condemnation of Japanese moves." ⁶⁶

Robert D. Murphy was not wrong in his prediction. On August 21, 1940, Count Saint-Quentin transmitted to Vichy the conversation he just had with Sumner Welles, in which the latter said:

We understand the situation of the French Government, and since we are not in a position to come to its assistance, we do not feel that we have the right to reproach it for according military facilities to Japan. But, if we were to recommend to Tokyo that its occupation be temporary, we would be accepting the principle of it. But this would be a violation of the status quo, the maintenance of which we shall continue to insist upon. ⁶⁷

So, there was no hope from the United States, for the time being. However, Vice-Admiral Decoux still preferred to risk an armed conflict with Japan rather than yield to Japanese demands. ⁶⁸ He received news of the Franco-Japanese conversations from the French Embassy in Tokyo on August 20, 21, and 22. After giving serious consideration to them, he warned Vichy in a telegram, dated on August 24; The French Governor General said:

1. I estimate that all concessions in military matters especially the entering of Japanese troops in our territory and the utilization of air bases, would amount to a real peaceful transfer of Indochina to the Japanese Government....The transit of troops once accepted, it would be impossible to fight against new encroachments, which would soon come to a total ejection of our authority and an definite occupation of Tonkin as the first step;

66. Charles-Roux, Op.cit. p.255; see also Langer, op.cit. p.12

67. Loc.cit.

68. Decoux, Op.cit. p.97

2. This capital concession would appear to the eyes of the Chinese as a hostile act, coupled with its treacherous character, and would inevitably entail severe retaliation on their part, against Tonkin, which would at once become the battlefield of two belligerents, as well as against all our establishments in China;

3. The French prestige, already affected by the presence of the Japanese mission, could not withstand the consequences of this new abandonment, which would withdraw from us the Indochinese populations and provoke against France violent reactions on the part of all the big powers interested in the maintenance of the status quo in the Far East.

What Vice-Admiral Decoux proposed as a solution was a refusal, polite but firm, "to all demands concerning military, naval and aerial matters".⁶⁹

Vice-Admiral Decoux had an immediate confirmation of his second provision. In fact, on August 26, 1940, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chungkung Government declared that "whenever the Japanese use the facilities accorded them by France to attack China through Indochina, Chinese forces will enter at once into Tonkin".⁷⁰

On the following day, the Governor General of Indochina was really angry when he learned the exact tenor of the exchange of notes between Vichy and Tokyo. He could not help sending to the French Government his representation, stating that "having full consciousness of my responsibility as head of the colony, and with personal conviction of serving the superior interests of Indochina and of France, I protest energetically against the solution from weakness which Mr.

69. Decoux, Op.cit. p.98

70. Ibid. p. 247

Henry seems to judge inevitable".⁷¹

The strong wording of this telegram as well as of other similar against the policy of Vichy, would highly embarrass those who defend Decoux as a skillful diplomat who had saved Indochina by his timely concessions.⁷²

But Paul Baudouin was more realistic. He challenged the military figures given by General Martin du Gard, pointed out that any resistance would lead to the total loss of Indochina; and he was in a position to understand how great would be this loss, especially in the economic point of view. Therefore, on August 29, 1940, Foreign Minister Matsuoka and Ambassador Arsene Henry signed a political accord, under the terms of which France sanctioned the Japanese "new order" in French Indochina.⁷³

Here are the main propositions of this fundamental accord:

1. The Japanese Government recognized the French sovereignty in Indochina, and promised to respect its territorial integrity in all its parts;
2. France, on her part, admitted the preponderance of Japan in the Far East, and agreed to accord certain military facilities in Tonkin to Japanese forces, to allow them to liquidate the China Incident;
3. A military convention should be concluded without delay at Hanoi between the French and Japanese commands to arrange at the best the manner of applying of the political accord.⁷⁴

By the accord of August 29, 1940, the Japanese realized a part of their program set forth during the week of July 19-26, but it marked at the same time the defeat of Decoux's

71. Decoux, Op.cit. p.99

72. Bourgeois, Op.cit. pp.8-12

73. Charles-Roux, Op.cit. p.258. Garcon, Op.cit., II, 762

74. Decoux, Op.cit. p.100

stand. As for the United States, the result of its proclamation of July 26, relating to restrictions of export of iron and oil remained undecided. This hesitating attitude was due to the divided opinion of the Roosevelt administration, as previously reported. But the cause must be found in the public who did not see clearly the reason why the United States should enter into conflict with Japan to save European colonialism.

The New York Daily News, for example, on August 5, 1940, editorially wrote:

.....French Indochina is on the list of properties which Prince Konoye hopes to pick up for Japan. So are the Dutch East Indies. So, apparently, is British-owned Hong Kong; and it would surprise few people if the American owned Philippine Islands should turn out to be on that same list.

There are such pickings in the Orient for a strong, aggressive nation, like Japan, when the western world has a major war going on. Prince Konoye doesn't intend that the grass shall grow under Japan's feet while the white folks bleed themselves still whiter. The whole structure which he plans is to go by the resounding name of "the New Order for Greater East Asia."

What puzzles us is why so many Americans are so worried by the prospect of these changes.

We can't see any reason for moral indignation over Japan's expected seizure of the lands above mentioned. The Dutch never exercised democracy in the Dutch East Indies. They exploited those rich islands and their easy-going natives methodically and thoroughly.

Certainly the French didn't bring the blessings of democracy to Indochina. They farmed and mined it just as the Dutch did the East Indies. Britishers in Hong-kong have never been famed for a chummy, democratic attitude toward the Chinese. When you come down to it, our efforts to bring democracy to the Philippines have been pretty much blocked by the Filipino's own dislike of us and all our ways.

If these territories should be taken over by the Japanese, it would only mean a change of bosses for their inhabitants, most of whom probably wouldn't care, and probably would be neither better nor worse off after the

seizure.⁷⁵

The next day, August 6, 1940, the Washington Time-Herald had imperative lines like these:

.....

Would it not be well to consider not only what might happen to Japan, but what might happen to the United States.

Do we desire, like poor France, to precipitate a war for which we are not prepared?

How silly it seems now for France to be indicting Dauladier and his government for having gotten into war.

What satisfaction can there be in such action?

How much better it would have been for France to have kept out of war in which it had so much to lose and so little to gain.

How much better it would be for us to learn from the experience of others and keep out of a war for which we are in no way prepared - not to one-tenth the extent that France was prepared.

We have nothing to gain in a war with Japan.

We have everything to lose.

There is nothing that Japan has that we want to take.

There is nothing that we have that we want war with Japan to destroy - not our youth - not our cities - not our slowly reviving property - not our social system - not our peace and happiness.

Let us realize and appreciate our benefits.

Let us conserve and protect our advantages.

Let us maintain the independence our fathers won for us and the isolation God in his goodness gave us.⁷⁶

When many people were thinking along these lines, the administration could not overlook their opinion, although many others followed the opposite direction. The efforts of the Government to combine both streams of thought led to the result that "during the month of August, 1940, licenses were issued for the export of Japan of \$21,000,000 worth

75. Congressional Record, 76th Congr. 3rd Sess. vol. 86, pp. 4768-69

76. Ibid. 76th Congr. 3rd Sess. vol. 86, pp. 4792-93

of American petroleum product, somewhat more than the total for the entire first six months of the year. In short, American oil was still flowing freely to Japanese storage tanks."⁷⁷

This was the practice. In theory, however, the United States maintained a strong attitude toward Japan. When, on August 3, the Japanese Embassy registered a protest against the United States for having singled out Japan for discriminatory treatment in the export destinations of aviation gasoline,⁷⁸ the American Government, six days later, handed to the Japanese Ambassador, Kensuki Horinouchi, a reply that read

Reference is made to the Japanese Ambassador's note of August 3, 1940, in regard to action taken by the Government of the United States, in pursuance of section 6 of the Act of Congress approved July 2, 1940 entitled "An Act to expedite the strengthening of the national defense" to restrict the export of aviation gasoline from the United States. The Japanese Ambassador indicates that the impression created by that action, in view of Japan's large imports of American aviation gasoline, is that Japan has singled out for and subjected to discriminatory treatment. Accordingly, the Japanese Ambassador records the Japanese Government's reservation of rights and its protests against the policy of the Government of the United States involved in the action under reference.

The Government of the United States desires to state that the action under reference, as was mentioned in the proclamation issued by the President of the United States on July 26, 1940, referred to in the Japanese Embassy's note under acknowledgement, is necessary in the interest of the national defense and that, accordingly, this Government considers a protest by any foreign government against that action to be unwarranted.⁷⁹

77. Langer, Op.cit. p.18; see also Feis, op.cit. pp.98-99

78. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, II, 218-9

79. Ibid. pp.219-220

And the United States continued this dual attitude until, on August 27, 1940, the White House found a solution to help Great Britain, and confidence emerged that Britain would be able to win Britain's war and to hold its position in the Far East. From September on, the policy of the United States against Japan became more and more precise.⁸⁰

The tragedy of Indochina also underwent a change: from August 30, 1940, Vichy withdrew to the background, while Hanoi came to the fore, with Vice-Admiral Decoux and General Nishihara as the main actors.

80. Hull, op.cit., I, 838

The United States and Indochina in

The First Indochinese Crisis.

June-September 1940

The Japanese Activities

July and August - 1940

The week of July 19, 1940 to July 26, 1940 was a time of great planning in foreign policy for Japan, for Indochina, and even for the United States. Each country acted independently, but the decision of the one touched the very security of the other. When the French agreed between themselves to check the advance of Japan, the Japanese authorities were discussing plans for stronger measures against French Indochina. And while, by these measures, the Japanese thought of making their empire economically independent of the United States, the latter brought home the fact that it was not. But because the United States moved slowly, though steadily to oppose Japan, the Japanese Government could realize its program of occupying Indochina. After the "inspectorate"¹ obtained late in June, as we have seen, the Japanese succeeded in bullying the French into complete acceptance of their demands at the end of August, 1940.

1. Time magazine, reviewing the situation of Indochina during the month of June, 1940, has called the condition Japan had imposed on Indochina an "inspectorate". July 8, 1940, XXIV, 30.

On August 31, in a telegram to the French Government, the Governor General still firmly maintained that "a landing, pretending to be peaceful, by these troops would destroy the only chance which is left to us to save the colony", and that "if we have to run the risk of losing Indochina, it is better to lose by defending it rather than by betraying".² Unfortunately, that same day he received from Vichy the notification of a political agreement concluded in Tokyo; this was an agreement concerning which Nishihara had spoken to him the day before.

In fact, on August 30, 1940, the head of the Japanese military mission had presented him the text of a military agreement, demanding that it be accepted by September 2 (midnight) at the latest. The text was already provided with the signature of the Japanese General. In reply to such an action, Vice-Admiral Decoux said only that he needed instructions from his Government at Vichy.³ Whereupon, with a threatening mood, General Nishihara told the French Governor General "to stop sleeping, to get busy or take the consequences."⁴

By no means intimidated, Vice-Admiral Decoux called a meeting of the Council of Government for September 2. The

2. Decoux, op.cit., p.102

3. Ibid., p.103

4. Report of Nicholson to Secretary Morgenthau, Sept. 21, 1940. (Morgenthau Diaries, M.S. Vol. 308, pp. 239ff) as quoted in Langer, The Undeclared War, p.13 - On September 12, 1940 it is reported that, when at midnight General Issaku Nishihara called on Decoux with the Japanese demands, the latter, who was in bed, replied: I am not getting up. If the Japanese want to declare war, they can do it tomorrow morning. The New York Times Sept. 12, 1940, p.10

The meeting actually took place on that day, and the Council backed up his position. In the words of the Governor General -

I found, in the Council, a unanimous approval of my stand, the general opinion of the members being that Indochina should not yield to threats, nor renounce indispensable guarantees. The Council estimated, however, that it must avoid by all means an abrupt break with Japan. ⁵

Furthermore, General Maurice Martin, the Supreme Commander of the French Colonial Forces, assured Decoux that with the troops under his command he should be able "to keep at bay, on the Tonkinese frontier, aggressive forces amounting even to three divisions and for several weeks." ⁶

With these supports, Vice-Admiral Decoux, on the evening of September 2, 1940, rejected the Japanese ultimatum, while admitting the principle of an immediate beginning of negotiations as provided in the accord of August 29. ⁷

Later that night, a telegram from Vichy came to him. It was complex in character but with a more conciliatory tone. The French Government informed him of an accord given to the Chinese diplomat, Wellington Koo, that Chinese troops could cross the Indochinese borders in case of a Japanese invasion of Indochina. Then the following directives were indicated:

1. With respect to the Chinese. Two cases to be considered:
 - a) If Chinese troops penetrate into Indochina before any Franco-Japanese military accord: to oppose this penetration;

5. Decoux, *op.cit.*, p.104

6. *Loc.cit.* Garcon, *op.cit.*

7. Garcon, *op.cit.* II, 762

b) If Chinese troops penetrate into Indochina as sequel to a Franco-Japanese military accord permitting regular Japanese forces to enter the territory: to retreat while keeping contact with them but to stand aside from any fighting which might occur between the Chinese and the Japanese. The extreme limit of the retreat must permit the French troops to bar the Chinese from reaching the delta.

2. With respect to the Japanese. Two cases also to be considered:

a) If the Japanese seek to disembark or to penetrate into Indochina before any accord had been concluded on the subject between the French and Japanese authorities; to oppose this action by force;

b) If the Japanese troops penetrate into Indochina in pursuance of a Franco-Japanese accord: to comply with the clauses of the accord, permitting the Japanese to use roads, etc., without abandoning the defense of anyone of the places or establishments which possess vital importance in the military view.⁸

These details greatly annoyed the Governor General of Indochina. He informed Vichy, at once, that he would use force against any aggression.⁹

On his part, General Nishihara was disconcerted by the attitude of Decoux. A little after midnight on September 2, 1940, he withdrew his ultimatum and informed the Vice-Admiral that he was willing to open negotiations. He added, however, that if satisfactory terms could not be arrived at, the Japanese troops would advance into Indochina on September 5, 1940.¹⁰

On September 4, General Nishihara ordered General T. Suzuki

8. Decoux, op.cit., p.106

9. General Maxime Weygand disdainfully called these details "pap for cats".

10. Decoux, op.cit., p.107

to evacuate the Japanese nationals from Hanoi as though war was imminent. But, agreements were reached. These were known as "basic accord of September 4, 1940". General Martin, before signing this preliminary document, had added to it important observations. He requested that to the degree that the final convention should not have been attended, and the date of the entry into force of that convention should not have been fixed, the Japanese land, naval and aerial forces could not advance into Indochinese territory and waters. He also ruled out any act susceptible of being construed as pressure and said that he would consider as an act of pressure any attempt on the part of the Japanese to cross the frontier, any concentration of Japanese troops near the Indochinese frontier, any activity of the Japanese Navy off the Indochinese coasts and any flight over Indochinese territory. In conclusion, the accord reads:

In case the above-mentioned conditions should not be respected by the Japanese forces, the French military command would be authorized to break the engaged negotiations and to resume its freedom of action.¹¹

The intention of the French authorities, when they inserted these conditions in the preliminary accord, was not only to check the Japanese threat of invasion, but also to delay as long as possible the final agreement. For, despite the efforts of the American Government to avoid holding out hope of armed assistance to Indochina, the French still did not give up the

11. Decoux, op.cit. p.107

the idea that eventually some help might come from the United States to fight against Japan.¹²

In spite of the French precaution, on the night of September 5-6, 1940, a Japanese battalion crossed the Indochinese border near Langson and occupied the hills of Dong-dang. Immediately, Decoux declared that the Accord of September 4 was violated and broke off negotiations.¹³

On September 7, General Nishihara hurried to the Palace of the Governor General to present excuses. He explained that the incident was the result of an error of manoeuvre and ordered the Japanese battalion to withdraw at once. But the negotiations remained at a standstill until September 13, when Decoux made it known that he had received instructions to resume them.¹⁴

The United States was not informed of the Franco-Japanese political agreement of August 29, until September 5, 1940 at the time of the Japanese pressure exerted in Langson.¹⁵ During that time the American foreign policy continued its regular way. On September 1, Ambassador Grew wrote:

American-Japanese relations are marking time. In a recent instruction I saw indications that our Government may be getting ready to show its teeth, an instruction which I highly applauded. Outright invasion of

12. On September 12, 1940, it was reported that Decoux had sent three telegrams to President Roosevelt to ask for help. The New York Times, September 12, 1940

13. IMTFE, Record, p.6930, as cited in Jones, op.cit. p.229

14. Loc.cit.

15. Hull. op.cit., I, 903

French Indochina has been held in check in spite of military pressure, but if it should become evident that Germany is going to win the "battle of Britain" I would look for an early move not only on Indochina but likewise in Hong-kong and probably, eventually, the Netherlands East Indies. 16

Two days later, he received instruction from the Secretary of State to call Matsuoka's attention to the fact that within the past few days reports from several sources had come to the Department of State,

to the effect that the Government of Japan has presented an ultimatum to the French authorities in Indochina on Japan's demands for permission to Japanese armed forces, for purposes of military operations against China, to pass through French territory and to use military bases and other facilities.

The Secretary of State added that the American Government "wishes to point out the unfortunate effect on American public opinion from the point of view of Japanese-American relations if these reports prove to be correct". He also wanted Matsuoka to be reminded that, according to the press, the Japanese Foreign Office had said on June 19, 1940 "that Japan attached importance to maintaining the status quo in French Indochina."¹⁷

The next day, September 4, 1940, in response to inquiries by press correspondents, Hull repeated publicly what he had instructed Ambassador Grew point by point, emphasizing the fact that "should events prove these reports to have been

15. Grew, Ten Years in Japan, p. 328

17. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, II, 291-2. Hull, op.cit., I, 903

well founded, the effect upon public opinion in the United States would be unfortunate."¹⁸

In fact, the development of events in Indochina had stirred up anti-imperialistic feelings and the concern over the long-range home security of the American people; more consideration was centered on the possibility of an imminent Japanese invasion of Indochina and its consequences. On September 5, 1940, under the title "Threat to Indochina", the New York Times editorially showed the seriousness of the situation:

Japanese invasion would, for one thing, have a serious effect upon the war in China, which now keeps Japan so deeply involved that it acts as a measure of insurance for the British at Singapore, the Dutch in the East Indies, ourselves in the Philippines. China's capacity for resistance has been impaired already by Japanese blockading activity on the coast of Indochina. It will be reduced still further, if the present trickle of arms through Indochina is stopped altogether, and if the Southern Chinese armies should be threatened with a Japanese encirclement from French soil on the South.

An invasion of Indochina would be serious too in giving the Japanese a stranglehold on neighboring Siam where their influence has been increasing during recent years. And this, in turn, would affect the safety of Signapore, which may yet be menaced from its hinterland as Gibraltar has been menaced by German-Italian penetration of Spain. The whole status quo in Eastern Asia would be upset by a Japanese move into Indochina, for such a move would be a precedent and an entering wedge for further Japanese depredations elsewhere. If the Pacific status quo means anything to the United States, our Government and people will do well to keep

18. Department of State Bulletin, (Sept. 7, 1940), III, 196
The same day, Prince Konoye, Matsuoka, the Ministers of War and Navy decided that Japan's Sphere of Living would comprise the whole of Southeast Asia. Langer, The Undeclared War, p. 25

their eyes upon the developments of the next few days in distant Indochina.¹⁹

As for public opinion, there was a growing opposition to the conduct of Japan. According to the Gallup poll, on August 3, 1940, the proportion of people willing to risk war "to keep Japan from becoming more powerful" was 51 per cent, with 31 per cent opposing and 18 per cent undecided. On September 7, however, to the same question, the pros had risen to 70 per cent and the cons fallen to 18 per cent, others being undecided.

On September 11, Secretary Hull discussed the agreement France had signed with Japan on August 29, with the new French Ambassador, Gaston Henry-Haye. The Secretary remarked that the French Government "cannot imagine our surprise and our disappointment when it took this step without any notice whatever to us". He was told, however, that Japan had given assurance that the stationing of Japanese troops in Indochina would be merely temporary. The French also solicited the United States to seek from Japan the same assurance.²⁰

In answering this request, the Secretary expressed again

19. The New York Times, September 5, 1940, p.22. About the status quo, in November 1937, Prince Konoye had declared before the Italian good-will mission: "I cannot but feel that at this present time, when the negative principle of maintenance of the status quo, built up after the last World War, has forfeited its function as a result of...conflicts and contradictions the responsibility for the creation of peace devolves on three powers, Italy, Germany and Japan."

20. Hull, op.cit., I, 904

to Vichy his surprise to learn of the extent of the French concessions to Japan and pointed out that there was little warrant for entering into agreements which assented to a derogation of principles. "We deprecated", Hull said.

France's recognition of Japan's claim to a preponderance of interests and a preferred economic position in Indochina and of Japan's violation of French and other rights and interests. As for asking Japan for assurances similar to those given to France, I said we perceived no reason to associate ourselves with an assent to an unlawful procedure by asking for such assurances. Moreover, what value could anyone give such assurances? ²¹

To these discreet representations of the American Government, the French Foreign Office replied the next day saying that the political agreement of August 29, 1940, was negotiated under constant threat of an ultimatum, and that in the present negotiations at Hanoi, efforts were being made to limit the concessions demanded by Japan. The French then begged the Secretary to understand their situation and asked the Government at Washington to maintain its position in regard to the status quo in East Asia.²²

Also on September 12, 1940, Ambassador Grew sent to Washington a most important telegram, of which he said that "a magnum opus finally went off to the Department today in a message of more than twelve pages". It was a general analysis of the Japanese situation and the fruit of Grew's thoughts during the fifty days since the new Government took office in

21. Hull, op.cit., I, 904

22. Charles-Roux, op.cit., p.259

Japan.²³

This telegram was considered as a "green light" allowing the Department of State to take stronger and more effective measures against Japan. In fact, it marked a new stand of the American Ambassador in Tokyo. Grew himself confessed that:

In previous communications, I have expressed the opinion that sanctions by the United States would set Japanese-American relations on a downward curve. It is true that our own newly instituted program of national preparedness now justifies measures which need not fall within the realm of outright sanctions. On the other hand we must envisage the probability that drastic embargoes on the export of such important products as petroleum, of which the United States is known to possess a superabundance would be interpreted by the Japanese Government and people as actually sanctions which might and probably would lead to some form of retaliation.²⁴

But the situation in Japan changed fast, and Grew had reached the conclusion that such steps became vitally necessary to preserve the status quo in the Pacific. He undertook, then, to describe the hazards which could be involved "in a laissez-faire policy". His reason now was that the United States and Great Britain were the leaders of the English speaking nations around the world, which were threatened today by Germany, Italy, Soviet Russia and Japan...a group of dictatorial powers. The United States and Great Britain could not deal with these powers by the use of diplomacy, because diplomacy might occasionally retard but could not effectively

23. Grew, Turbulent Era, A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years 1904-1945, II, 1223

24. Grew, Turbulent Era, p.1224

stem the tide. To deal with them, force or display of force alone could attain some result. This firm policy was particularly needed toward Japan which became a predatory power. And Grew analysed: Japan had submerged all moral and ethical sense, she had become frankly and unashamedly opportunist, she had sought at every turn to profit by the weakness of others, and her policy of southward expansion was a definite threat to American interests in the Pacific and a thrust at the British Empire in the East. In conclusion, the important telegram read:

American security has admittedly depended in a measure upon the existence of the British fleet which in turn has been, and could only have been, supported by the British Empire.

If we conceive it to be in our interest to support the British Empire in this hour of her travail, and I most emphatically do so conceive it, we must strive by every means to preserve the status quo in the Pacific at least until the European war has been won or lost. In my opinion this cannot be done nor can our interests be further adequately and properly protected by merely registering disapproval and keeping a careful record thereof. It is clear that Japan has been deterred from taking greater liberties with American interests only out of respect for our potential power; it is equally clear that she has trampled upon our rights to a degree in precise ratio to the strength of her conviction that the American people would not permit that power to be used. Once that conviction is shaken it is possible that the uses of diplomacy may again become accepted. 25

Later, Ambassador Grew proudly and also gratefully noted that his message of September 12 aimed to present "what the Department ^{was} later good enough to characterize as

25. Grew, Turbulent Era, pp.1224-9

a 'cogent argument and penetrating analysis'".²⁶

The Secretary of State then reviewed once his policy in the light of Grew's message and found that the policy followed by the President and himself had long since traveled well beyond the use of words to express disapproval of Japan's actions. In fact, the American Government had abrogated the commercial treaty of 1911 with Japan, imposed moral embargoes, legal embargoes, undertaken a vast program of rearmament, maintained the fleet at Pearl Harbor, and assisted in various ways the Government of Chiang Kai-shek. Hull cited also some effects of his "policy of firmness" on the situation of Indochina and said:

The Japanese Army's original intentions toward French Indochina had involved a wholesale invasion of the colony. Grew indicated in his cable that the Japanese Government had been able, at least temporarily, to restrain the military from these plans, and attributed this "degree of caution" at least partly to the position of the United States.²⁷

26. Grew, Turbulent Era, p.1230. Testifying in 1945 before the Congressional Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack, Grew summarized as follows the reason of his reversal of position: "The Japanese Army was steadily encroaching further into the Far East and into East Asia. They were potentially threatening our vital interests. And from that point of view the situation had very much changed indeed. That, I think, was the main reason why I sent that telegram, but one must remember that my so-called greenlight telegram was not something which had developed in a question of a few hours or a few days. It meant a progressive line of thinking over a period to the crux of the situation". 79th Cong. Pearl Harbor Attack, 1st Secs., Part 2, p.638

27. Hull, op.cit., I, 905

This position of the United States was strengthened, on the same September 12, 1940, by more restrictions on American exports. Objections had long delayed these measures, but events in Indochina were judged serious enough to allow them.

On September 10, in preparation for the proclamation concerning regulations, the Secretary of State had instructed Ambassador Grew to state to the Japanese Foreign Office that if Japan continued to violate American rights, the United States might be compelled to take measures of defense. Hull's telegram argued that if the United States must take positive measures for self-defense in its relations with Japan, such retaliatory measures would be amply warranted and would have been brought about by Japanese disregard, "persistent and continued", of the rights of the United States.²⁸

The way thus having been cleared, on September 12, 1940, the United States determined that it was necessary to the national defense "that on and after this date the following-described articles and materials shall not be exported from the United States except when authorized in each case by a license". These articles and materials were equipment for production of aviation motor fuel from petroleum, petroleum products, hydrocarbons or hydrocarbon mixtures by process involving chemical change, equipment for production of tetra-ethyl lead; they included also any plans, specifications or

28. Telegram to Grew, September 10, 1940, cited by Langer, The Undeclared War, p.19

or other documents containing descriptive or technical information of any kind useful in any design, construction or operation of any such equipment of aircraft or aircraft engines.²⁹

These new measures were soon justified by new proof of Japanese disregard toward the United States. In the words of Cordell Hull, we read:

A good indication of the attitude of the Konoye Government toward us came two days later when the Foreign Office handed Grew a reply to the representations we had made concerning French Indochina on August 7. The reply was written in pencil. It admitted that negotiations had been carried on with the French Indochinese authorities, but gave no details. It asserted that Japan had been making efforts not to bring about undesirable changes in the status quo in the Pacific, in so far as the status quo did not interfere with "the firm preservation of the minimum right to existence".³⁰

Secretary Hull remarked at once that the restriction - "in so far as the status quo did not interfere with 'the firm preservation of a minimum right to existence'" - was a serious challenge to the status quo. This challenge appeared in a clearer light in the text of the Japanese answer, in which it was pretended that the Imperial Government, because of the need to construct a new order in East Asia, had, therefore, carried out negotiations with regard to French Indochina, and on that basis

29. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, II 220-1

30. Hull, op.cit., I, 905 On September 3, Secretary Hull had instructed Grew to make representations on the same subject (See above, p.93) But "the Vice-Minister denied that he knew anything about an "ultimatum", he denied not, however, "that armed forces of Japan did intend to seek passage through French Indochina. Ohashi said that the Japanese intention was a matter of military necessity; that there would be no permanent occupation of French territory; and that Japan would withdraw the forces in question as soon as the military necessity ceased to exist". Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, II 292-3

had continued progressively with satisfactory local negotiations. Then the answer said:

Under the ever-changing conditions of today, past rules and norms rapidly become inapplicable to actual conditions. It is clear that, merely to adhere blindly to such rules and norms is not the way to stabilize world peace. Despite the fact that in the western hemisphere epoch-making changes are actually being made in the status quo, Japan has as yet expressed no opinion for or against those changes. It has to be pointed out that intrusion by the United States in an area which is so remote from that country as in this case brings about the same effect upon Japan's public opinion as the meddling attitude of a third country toward the policy of the United States concerning third-power territories in western hemisphere would bring upon public opinion in the United States.³¹

The philosophy underlying the Japanese foreign policy was that the status quo could not be any more applicable in present conditions. Moreover, the penciled "oral statement" hinted that the United States itself had violated the status quo in the western hemisphere, pointing to the American deal with British Newfoundland.³²

Secretary Hull acutely perceived the tone of insult in that communication and was thinking of a strong reply. Meantime he took a cautious course.

On September 16, 1940, Lord Lothian suggested that the United States should take "some steps that would deter Japan from occupying Indochina". The Secretary of State showed him the difficulty of giving support to such remote countries. He said that the United States had gone almost "to the limit in

31. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, II, 293-4

32. Hull, op.cit., I, 836-8

resisting Japanese aggression step by step without running the very serious danger of a military clash". His idea was to encourage Indochina "to delay and parley and hold out to the last minute against Japanese demands." He expressed also the hope that Japan would not dare make a military attack at this time. ³³

The French, on their part, had another occasion to prove that they were following the advices of the Secretary of State. Under pretext that Japan was basking Thailand in the aggressive attitude which the latter was manifesting on the Indochinese borders since the beginning of September, the French Ambassador in Tokyo threatened to delay the conclusion of Franco-Japanese negotiations.³⁴ But this menace was immediately neutralized by a Japanese counter-threat of using force.³⁵

On September 17, 1940, however, Vice-Admiral Decoux noted a new tendency in the Japanese position which he thought favorable to French interests. Up to that date, the Japanese authorities invoked, as major argument for the transit of Japanese troops through Indochina, the need they felt to engage at once in military operations against Yunnan. Now they recognized the cogency of the technical objections brought forth by the French against such an undertaking, and declared that they were ready to give up the idea. But they reclaimed the entry of Japanese forces into Tonkin. Decoux did not like to see the negotiations reach a conclusion on this point, always expecting that "an

33. Hull, op.cit., I, 906

34. Decoux, op.cit., pp.133-4

35. IMTFC, Record, pp.6931-2, as cited in Jones, op.cit. p.299

American intervention would come in time, and that a powerful veto of the Washington Government would finally oppose the Japanese pretensions". He added that, to this effect, he kept the American consul at Hanoi exactly informed of the situation.³⁶

The policy of buying time practiced by the French authorities exasperated the Japanese. On September 19, 1940, they made it known to Arsene-Henry and Decoux that the Imperial Army would enter Indochina on September 22, whether the military convention would have been concluded or not.³⁷

Cornered to the final phase, the French authorities, on the following day, agreed to a compromise, which comprised these essential elements:

1. Utilization of four (or five) air bases in Tonkin;
2. Limitation to 6,000 Japanese troops to be stationed in Indochina;
3. Retreat through Tonkin of a part of the Japanese troops now in difficulty in Kwangsi;
4. Landing, on the night of September 22-23 of first Japanese elements in the port of Hai-phong;
5. Because the Japanese Chief of Staff does not contemplate any more ground operations against China until new orders, temporary renouncement to the entry of the 25,000 troops provided for that eventuality.³⁸

In this juncture, the Japanese presented to the French fresh demands. They pretended that the landing of 6,000 troops at Hai-phong and the crossing of 25,000 troops from Canton through Tonkin would operate simultaneously. They asked also that a Japanese Headquarters would be set up at Hanoi and a hospital for the Japanese troops would be provided. The French

36. Decoux, *op.cit.*, p.81

37. *Ibid.*, p. 109

38. *Ibid.*, p. 111

considered the demands unacceptable. ³⁹

There were critical moments. The Japanese militarists were thinking that Japan could not ever hope to afford the monumental expenditures for navy, army and air force that America had been appropriating and that, therefore, Japan must strike quickly to attain all its ends before the American preparedness program was well advanced. "This radical clique believes that America can now be defied with impunity and argues that America will not accept Japan's challenge as long as Britain so urgently needs American-made war materials."⁴⁰ So, in a threatening mood, the Japanese authorities left Hanoi and boarded a warship in the Gulf of Tonkin, as war was imminent. Only General Nishihara stayed in a hotel at Hai-phong. On September 21, 1940, the Japanese Navy staged a big demonstration. But, finally, the Japanese as well as the French, did not want a fatal break, the former for fear of the United States, and the latter because they were unable to fight alone against Japan.⁴¹

Consequently, on September 22, 1940, in the afternoon, the Franco-Japanese negotiations resumed. At 3 P.M., General Nish-

39. The French Delegation to the Franco-German Armistice commission told General von Stuelpnagel, head of the German Delegation, that the Japanese demanded the permanent stationing of 32,000 troops in Indochina. IMTFE, Record, p.6790, as cited in Jones, op.cit., p.230

40. Decoux, op.cit., p.112

41. Devillers, op.cit., p.77

ihara at Hai-phong signed the text of a military convention which was sent him from Hanoi with the signature of General Martin. The principal clauses of the Martin-Nishihara convention were:

1. Right of the Japanese Army to use three air bases in Tonkin.
2. Right of the Japanese command to station 6,000 troops in the North of the Red River;
3. Possibility of an eventual crossing through Tonkin of Japanese forces going to operate in the direction of Yunnan. The total amount of troops stationed in Indochina should not be in any case over 25,000 at the same time.
4. Passage through the Tonkinese delta, for the re-embarkation, of the battalion of Canton now concentrated at the frontier. This movement, however, can be undertaken, by the terms of the accord, only after a special arrangement which will regulate the plan of transportation of the force in question. 42

The text showed clearly the surrender of the French authorities to the Japanese menace. But the Indochinese Government, in announcing the agreement by proclamation, said it granted the Japanese only "certain facilities of a military nature without further delay", in exchange for Japanese guarantees to respect the territorial integrity and French sovereignty of Indochina. Decoux said that the agreement represented "one of the greatest marks of confidence one country can give another". And General Maurice Martin who signed the convention termed it "the first manifestation of a durable friendship between France and Japan". 43

42. Decoux, op.cit., p.112

43. San Francisco Examiner, September 23, 1940, p.1

The friendship between the two countries, however, proved to be quite precarious. The battalion of Canton, mentioned in the convention, knew of the ultimatum of September 19, 1940, and was eager to invade Langson. Right after the conclusion of the convention, in order to prevent any accident, General Nishihara had sent an emissary to Langson to inform the Japanese battalion of the news and also of the restriction concerning its passage through Tonkin. The emissary got there on time. But the officers commanding the Japanese troop did not want to receive him. They carried out, at 10 P.M. that night, an attack on the French outpost at Dong-dang near Langson. Suddenly, France and Japan were at war. ⁴⁴

Vice-Admiral Decoux had confidence in the French force. According to the report given him by the Supreme Commander, French troops at Langson could fight victoriously not only against one but three Japanese battalions. Soon, however, came the truth. The French, after heavy defeats, sought and obtained an armistice at 8 P.M. on September 25, 1940.⁴⁵

But the victors of the battle of Dong-dang were not happy, either. American public opinion turned strongly against them. Already on September 24, the New York Times had denounced Japan in an editorial. It said that Dong-dang was a signpost along a new road of conquest which Japan may regret advertising to

44. Gaudel, op.cit., pp.85-8

45. Decoux, op.cit., pp 114-6; Devillers, op.cit., p.78

the world in this violent fashion. Then it declared:

Once more it appears that an unbridled young military oligarchy - the Japanese Nazis - defied the Government this time to follow the example of Russia and Italy in striking a once powerful neighbor when he is down. But in violating the territory of Indochina by force, while the French put up unexpected resistance, Japan not only takes a decisive step beyond the confines of China. She runs into the opposition of the United States, expressed by Secretary Hull yesterday, and applies what may turn out to be the final pressure to expedite the conclusion of an agreement between this country and Great Britain for the Joint use of naval bases in the Pacific.⁴⁶

In fact, on September 23, 1940, Secretary Hull, after receiving the text of the Martin-Nishihara convention, had stated:

Events are transpiring so rapidly in the Indochina situation that it is impossible to get a clear picture of the minute-to-minute development. It seems obvious, however, that the status quo is being upset under duress. The position of the United States in disapproval and in deprecation of such procedures had repeatedly been stated.⁴⁷

The San Francisco Chronicle was not content with this attitude of the American Government. On September 25, 1940, it indignantly announced:

The State Department at Washington is preserving an angry silence because America is too weak to declare war and protests are regarded in Tokyo as merely an added indication of weakness if they are not supported by force.⁴⁸

But the stand of the United States against Japan in the second half of September, 1940, was not that of weakness. Already on the 19th, at the news of the Japanese ultimatum to

46. The New York Times, September 24, 1940, p.22

47. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, II, 297

48. San Francisco Chronicle, September 25, 1940, p.1

the French, Secretary Hull had instructed Ambassador Grew to inform the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs of the report and to express to him the great surprise of the American Government that "the Japanese authorities in French Indochina should have taken action giving rise to this report."⁴⁹

On September 20, 1940, Ambassador Grew acted upon the instructions of the State Department. The Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs agreed that the report was correct, except for some minor points. He explained that the Governor General of Indochina, ready to sign an agreement on September 6, 1940, refused afterward to do it for reasons not evident to the Japanese Government. Whereupon, the Japanese Government, inquiring of the French Government the cause of that uncooperativeness, found that the Governor General was not acting in good faith. The latter, moreover, had boasted to the foreign Consuls stationed in Hanoi that he was using obstructive tactics. For that reason, the Japanese Government had presented the ultimatum.

The Foreign Minister repeated also what he said many times before, namely that the measures taken were designed to enable Japan to attack Chiang-Kai-shek, and that the Japanese, as soon as the hostilities have ceased would withdraw at once from Indochina. Japan also would respect the integrity and sovereignty of Indochina, and there would be no interference in the status quo of East Asia.

49. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan II, 294

Finally, Matsuoka did not object to the idea that there were economic clauses in the agreement, but gave assurances that exploitation would not ensue. He still confidentially told Ambassador Grew that a request was first made by France for a renewal of guarantees pertaining to the integrity of Indochina, and therefore, "permission had been asked by Japan for the movement of forces across Indochina and for the use temporarily of airports as 'compensation' for complying with the French request." ⁵⁰

In this occasion, Ambassador Grew presented to the Minister the text of the reply of the Secretary of State to the "oral statement" of September 14, 1940, of the Japanese Government. The most telling passage of the reply was:

It is the opinion of my Government that the status quo of a third country is seriously affected when one of the two countries which is engaged in hostilities with another insists, in order to attack the other, upon the right of the use of airdromes and the right of passage for troops through the third country. In the light of the Japanese Government's announced desire that the status quo be maintained in the Pacific area there appears to be an inconsistency in connection with the stipulations of this nature which are being made upon the authorities in Indochina by the Japanese Government. ⁵¹

That same day, September 20, 1940, Under-Secretary Welles, referring to the Japanese activities in Indochina, sharply reminded the Japanese Ambassador in Washington that "the United States would....feel it necessary to furnish such means of assistance in the way of supplies, munitions, etc., for these vic-

50. Grew, Ten Years in Japan, pp.330-2

51. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, II, 296-7

tims of aggression in the Pacific area as might be required." ⁵²

The American Government received the text of the Martin-Nishihara convention on September 22, 1940. In this connection, Secretary Hull made the long resounding statement mentioned earlier. And because the French Government announced that the United States had approved the political Franco-Japanese agreement of August 29, the State Department, in a press release on September 23, after citing Hull's statement, added:

This Government has not at any time or in any way approved the French concessions to Japan. The attitude of this Government toward developments in French Indochina is as expressed by the Secretary ⁵³ of State this morning and in previous public statements.

The highhanded course of Japan in Indochina really "raised the temperature in Washington".⁵⁴ On the same September 23 the so-called Liaison Committee, of which Under-Secretary Welles was a member, considered the problem of providing arms to Indochina, if only a few rifles.⁵⁵ About this move to aid Indochina, the San Francisco Chronicle, on September 26, announced on its front page:

In a decision of diplomatic drama, loaded with far-reaching consequences, the Roosevelt Administration moved today to extend its policy to "all aid short of war" to stiffen Indochina's resistance to Japanese aggression. At the present moment, Indochina's representative in Washington, Colonel H. Jacomy, is flying the 10,000 miles air route from the White House to his Hanoi headquarters, with the hot news he has received from the New Deal spokesmen.⁵⁶

If, afterward, Washington decided against selling arms and

52. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, I, 881

53. Ibid., II, 297; Hull op.cit., I, 907

54. Ibid., p.15 Langer, The Undeclared War, p.20

55. Ibid., p.15

56. San Francisco Chronicle, Sept.26,1940. p.i

munitions, it was partly because the American preparedness was still at its beginning, partly because the United States was afraid that the American aid might go over to the Japanese.⁵⁷

On September 25, 1940, other concrete measures were undertaken against Japan. The Administration made it public that, "to assist China to meet her present foreign exchange needs, the Import-Export Bank has agreed to lend China \$25,000,000 that will be liquidated through the sale of the tungsten."⁵⁸

That day, news was abroad that "a further tightening of the American embargo on war materials to Japan 'appears inevitable' as a result of Nipponese forays into Indochina". In fact, on September 26, the White House proclaimed that more restrictions were brought on the exportation of iron and steel, scrap effective October 16, 1940. From that date, "the exportation of all grades of iron and steel scrap will be placed under the licensing system".⁵⁹

Of course, the Japanese were ready to criticize the firm policy of the United States. Domei, Japanese-News Agency, with close connections with the Foreign Office, declared that the Japanese Army and Navy were prepared to counter any uncalled-for intervention by a third power. And Yakichira Suma, Foreign Office spokesman, said that, since the Japanese movement into Indochina was the result of an agreement in "peaceful talks" no foreign

57. Langer, The Undeclared War, p.15
 58. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, II, 222
 59. San Francisco Examiner, September 25, p.7; Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, II, 223

country could object. Apparently, the spokesman was referring to the American note presented to the Japanese Foreign Office on September 20, 1940, in which it was stated that the American Government "urges upon all governments the employment of peaceful means only in their relations with all other regions". 60

Criticisms of Hull's attitude were heard in the United States itself. On September 25, 1940, an editorial of the New York Daily News, quoted in Congress, ran as follows:

A sharp statement registering Secretary of State Hull's disapproval of Japan makes United-States-Japanese relations a little worse than before. This time, Mr. Hull, who, of course, is the Roosevelt Administration's official mouthpiece in affairs like this, objects to Japan's grab at French Indo-china.

What moral objection there can be to the grab escapes us. France grabbed Indochina in 1883, after 30 years of off-and-on warfare between the natives and French missionaries backed by French soldiers. France is now three-fifths occupied by the Germans, and the government of the other two-fifths of France has consented to the Japanese Indochina grab.

Yet Mr. Hull complains that the Far East "status quo" is being upset... "under duress". What business is that of ours? What duty have we to preserve the status quo in the Far East? 61

But this isolationistic view was not shared by the general public, who wanted the American policy to be stronger. Generally, it was believed that "our threats without action have played directly into the hands of the Japanese militarists, as certainly as action without threats would have strengthened the

60. The New York Times, Sept. 24, 1940, p. 11; Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, II, 297

61. Congressional Record, 76th. Congr. 3rd. Sess., vol. 86

hands of the antimilitarists".⁶²

Furthermore, the new show of strength of the United States had obtained a quick result. On September 26, 1940, in the evening, just a day after an armistice was signed on the incident of Langson, Governor General Decoux received a message from the French Ambassador in Tokyo assuring him that the Emperor had given an order to the Japanese troops to cease all hostilities, and that General Ando, Commander of the Army of Canton would be relieved from his command. It was also reported that General Tominaga, Vice-Minister of War, who had backed the solution at Langson was relieved of his post because of this.⁶³

Another action showed the setback of the Japanese militarists in Indochina. On October 5, 1940, the Japanese Commander at Langson gathered the French and Indochinese soldiers. He knelt in receiving an Imperial rescript which he brought with respect to his lips. He opened the message, and after additional kneelings, he read it aloud. The text, signed by the Emperor himself, said that the incident at Langson was an unexpected event, an error of manoeuvre, and consequently, had no importance with respect to the situation as a whole. It declared that the Japanese troops coming from China must evacuate rapidly and that the French sovereignty on Indochina was incontestable.⁶⁴

62. Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., vol. 86
p. 6033

63. Decoux, op.cit., p. 117

64. Gaudel, op.cit., p. 62

On the other hand, the Japanese tried to prove that their coming to Indochina was really the consequence of an understanding between the French and Japanese authorities. To this effect, on September 27, 1940, Japan and France announced a joint-communique, which read:

The Japanese Government has given the French Government an assurance they will respect the rights and interests of France in East Asia, especially the territorial integrity of French Indochina and the French Sovereignty over all parts of the Union of Indochina, while the French have agreed to accord to the Japanese Army and Navy special facilities in Indochina which are necessary for the execution of the latter's military operations.

In order to decide upon the concrete matters pertaining to the above-mentioned extension of military facilities, conversations were held at Hanoi between the Japanese and French military authorities. As a result of these conversations a satisfactory agreement was concluded on September 22. ⁶⁵

Japan sought also to consolidate its position vis-a-vis the United States. That same day, it concluded a Pact with Germany and Italy, a pact which was a realization of the program arrived at by the Japanese Liaison Conference on July 26 and 27. This was a momentous achievement on the part of Germany as well as of Japan. Hitler and Ribbentrop had made all their efforts to draw Japan to their side, even before the European war, but in vain. Each time, when Japan needed the German help for its Southward expansion, the question of a German-Japanese military alliance came up, but Japan always

65. Documents on American Foreign Relations, II, 294

hesitated. Recently, on August 10, 1940, reports from Shanghai still said that "diplomats arriving from Germany declare that Hitler is intensely annoyed that Japan has not formally adhered to the Axis".⁶⁶

The reason for this indecision, which lasted so long on the part of Japan, was that the Japanese Court and Navy circles remained opposed to any pact which might involve the country in war with great sea powers, especially with the United States. But the militarists gained more and more influence in the Konoye cabinet, and the Japanese attitude changed with rapidity during the month of September. According to Ambassador Grew, the Tripartite Pact

became a potential consequence of the trend of Japanese policy from the moment of the establishment of the Konoye Government, but the pact itself came to a head with unexpected swiftness. A veil of secrecy had been drawn over the proceedings, which were carried on principally by Herr von Stahmer, a special German emissary, in Tokyo, and although speculation was of course rife, very few people in Tokyo had any idea that the negotiations would evolve so rapidly.⁶⁷

The cause of the Japanese swiftness in the conclusion of the pact was complex. But what played the main role in Japan's decision could be attributed to its recent occupation of North Indochina. The above-mentioned reports from Shanghai said also that Hitler "is even more intensely annoyed that Japan is trying to enrich herself by attempting to obtain ascendancy over the colonial possessions of France and the

66. The New York Times, August 11, 1940

67. Grew, Ten Years in Japan, p.332

Netherlands". And what Japan mostly needed at the present moment was Hitler's support. To gain it, the only course open to the Japanese was to adhere to the Axis. In the end, the Japanese did. Secretary Hull remarked correctly that Japan "had held off her signature until German pressure succeeded in forcing the Vichy Government to accede to Tokyo demands". 68

That the pact was aimed at the United States seemed obvious from the text of the pact itself, the third article of which read:

Germany, Italy and Japan....further undertake to assist one another with all political, economic and military means if one of the three Contracting Powers is attacked by a Power at present not involved in the European War or in the Chinese-Japanese conflict.⁶⁹

Japan was more preoccupied, however, with its expansionist program and the German support thereof. Their efforts were crowned with success, because the Tripartite Pact almost repeated textually what Prince Konoye had announced on August 1, 1940 as his government's policy: the idea of a living space for the Japanese people, the philosophy of a new order of things, and the plan for a Greater East Asia. The Pact said:

The Governments of Germany, Italy and Japan consider it the pre-requisite of a lasting peace that every nation in the world shall receive the space to which it is entitled. They have, therefore, decided to stand by and cooperate with one another in their efforts in Greater East Asia, and regions of Europe respectively. In doing this it is their prime purpose to establish and maintain a new

68. Hull, op.cit., I, 908

69. Documents on American Foreign Relations, III, 305

order of things, calculated to promote the mutual prosperity and welfare of people concerned. 70

Of course, the Pact provoked a serious reaction in the United States. On the same day, after discussing with the President, Secretary Hull issued the following statement:

The reported agreement of alliance does not, in the view of the Government of the United States, substantially alter a situation which has existed for several years. Announcement of the alliance merely makes clear to all a relationship which has long existed in effect and to which this Government has repeatedly called attention. That such an agreement has been in process of conclusion has been well known for some time, and that fact has been fully taken into account by the Government of the United States in the determining of this country's policies. 71

The next day, September 28, 1940, while newspapers were announcing that "war in the Pacific between America and Japan has come measurably nearer with startling suddenness", Under-Secretary of State delivered an important address entitled: "Our Foreign Policy and National Defense"; Welles affirmed that the American policy in the Far East differed in no way from the American policy in relation to other countries of the world. He referred to the doctrine of "the open door", then denounced the Japanese endeavor to create a new order in Asia by the "instrumentality of armed force" and by a highhanded course which clearly showed that Japan alone "shall decide to what extent the historic interests of the United States and the treaty rights of American citizens in the Far East are to

70. Documents on American Foreign Relations, III, 304

71. Hull, op.cit., I, 909

be observed". In conclusion, he asserted that from the standpoint of reason and of common sense, all problems presented on the Far East could be solved peacefully through negotiations, provided there existed "a sincere desire on the part of all concerned to find an equitable and a fair solution which would give just recognition to the rights and to the real needs of all concerned". 72

And, if Japan openly sided with Germany and Italy, the United States would stand by Great Britain. Secretary of State Hull indicated this direction in his ensuing comment made on September 30, 1940:

As an ordinary precaution, Japan has had to assume that whether or not the United States and Great Britain have express agreements in regard to naval and air bases across the Pacific and including Singapore, the special relations between our two countries are such that overnight we could easily establish cooperative relations for the mutual use of all these bases. 73

That same day, Lord Lothian wanted to know the views of the American Government about a British announcement on the reopening of the Burma road, to be effected on October 17, 1940. Secretary Hull replied that the United States "had pursued a definite and somewhat progressive line of acts and utterances in resisting Japanese aggression and treaty violations during recent years." Then he emphasized:

72. The New York Times, September 29, 1940, p.2: It announced the address of the Under Secretary of State as follows: "Welles address: Threat to Indochina Scored in Address by Welles". See also Foreign Relations of United States, Japan, II 112-3

73. Hull, op.cit., I, 909

The special desire of this Government is to see Great Britain succeed the war. Our acts and utterances with respect to the Pacific area will be more or less affected as to time and extent by the question of what course will most effectively and legitimately aid Great Britain in winning the war. 74

On its part, Japan was trying to justify its action, affirming that the three-power alliance was not aimed at any particular country, and appealed to the United States for a fair understanding. 75

As the Japanese efforts in this sense proved to be of effect, at the end the Japanese authorities resolved to answer threats by threats. On October 5, 1940, Prince Konoye departed from his usual calmness and uttered the fatal word of war. He declared flatly that should the United States refuse to understand the real intentions of Japan, Germany and Italy and persist in challenging them in the belief that the recent pact among them represented a hostile action against the American Government, "there will be no other course open to them than to go to war". 76

74. Hull, op.cit., I, 911

75. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, II, 172

76. Documents on American Foreign Relations, III, 280

Conclusion

The Road to Pearl Harbor.

From October 1940 to December 1941, the tension between the United States and Japan grew with the developments of the Japanese activities in Indochina, until the final break, which resulted in the historic attack by Japan on the American fleet at Pearl Harbor, on December 7, 1941.

To begin with, the Japanese possessed in North Indochina a solid foothold for their further advance in other Indochinese regions, and consequently into other countries of Southeast Asia. The first step was difficult, but they had made it. By the accord of September 22, 1940, with the French authorities, they had brought into Indochina not only their presence, but also their military forces, which were unquestionably superior to those of France in that area. Moreover, Japan had secured the support of the Axis Powers by signing the pact of September 27, with Germany and Italy. What remained to the Konoye Government was to go ahead with its program of southward expansion, despite the opposition of the United States.

On the other part, the United States, after the "green light" message of Ambassador Grew, was more convinced that Japan would be deterred only by a firm policy which would be expressed by completion of American preparedness and by greater restrictions of exports to Japan. But the more the American

Government took restrictive measures against Japan, the more the latter became irritated and tried to consolidate its grab on Indochina and Southeast Asia so to escape the need of American supply. Neither country made concessions to the other.

On October 8, 1940, the State Department warned American citizens to leave the Far East. It stated that it was taking "precautionary steps" for the safety of the Americans by "suggesting" that those who were not detained by essential and urgent businesses should consider coming out of "various disturbed areas", among which Indochina was named.¹

This step had an immediate repercussion in Japan. The next day, the Japanese Foreign Office at once asked Ambassador Grew about the action of the United States in "ordering" the Americans in the Far East to evacuate. Ambassador Grew told Vice-Minister Ohashi that the United States issued no "order" but only a suggestion as a precautionary measure.²

But the United States did not make any secret of its challenging attitude. On October 12, in an address, President Roosevelt declared:

The Americans will not be scared or threatened in to the ways the dictators want us to follow. No combination of dictator countries of Europe and Asia will halt us in the path we see ahead for ourselves and for democracy. No combination of dictator countries of Europe and Asia will stop the help we are giving to almost the last free people now fighting to hold them at bay.³

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1. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, II, 114
 2. Grew, Ten Years in Japan, p.346
 3. The Public Papers and Addresses of F.D.R., IX, 466

The "almost last free people", the President talked about were obviously the British, whose survival depended heavily on their Empire. The United States, therefore, firmly opposed the Japanese actions in Indochina, mostly in order to save the British Empire in the Pacific. Along this line, Secretary Ickes, on October 17, 1940, reminded President Roosevelt that a real embargo against Japan appeared imperative. In his letter to the President, he said that "we didn't keep Japan out of Indochina by continuing to ship scrap iron, nor will we keep Japan out of the Dutch East Indies by selling it our oil." ⁴

While the United States was considering the extension of its licensing system, Japan was involved in the border dispute between Indochina and Thailand. The Japanese sought to impose their mediation, which was finally accepted by the contesting countries on January 21, 1941. In consequence, Franco-Thai negotiations opened in Tokyo. The outcome of these negotiations was that both Thailand and Indochina were isolated from the influence of third Powers and integrated into the Sphere of Greater East Asia. ⁵

The United States was watching closely the Japanese activities. It knew that the Japanese southward advance was being pushed with all energy by the militarists, that their

4. Roosevelt Papers, Secretary's File, Box 58, as cited in Langer's, The Undeclared War, p.35

5. Decoux, op.cit., p.143; Gaudel, op.cit., pp.110-115

stranglehold in Indochina continued with ever-increasing intensity. According to Ambassador Grew, Japan's acquisition of naval bases in Cam-ranh Bay, Indochina, was "patent evidence of her intention to acquire jumping-off facilities for an eventual attack on Singapore".⁶

Secretary Hull, on his part, saw a real possibility of danger that could not be overlooked by any peaceful countries. This was that the military group in control in Japan,

by a sudden, unannounced movement, could any day send an expedition to the Netherlands East Indies and Singapore. Or they could, inch by inch, and step by step, get down to advanced positions in and around Thailand and the harbor of Saigon, Indochina.⁷

To counter this Japanese tide, the United States had taken a series of new restrictions:

The proclamation of December 10, 1940, put under the licensing system the exportation of iron and steel.⁸

The proclamation of December 20, 1940, extended the licensing control to such other articles and materials as bromine, strontium, metals and ores, abrasives, equipment and plans for the production of aviation lubricating oil, etc.,.....⁹

The proclamation of January 10, 1941, regulated the exportation of copper, brass and bronze, zinc, nickel and potash.¹⁰

6. Grew, Ten Years in Japan, p.369

7. Hull, op.cit., II, 988

8. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, II, 232

9. Ibid, II 236

10. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, II, 238

In the months of February and March, other proclamations followed one another in short intervals: on February 4, proclamation on exportation of well and refining machinery, radium, uranium, and calf and kip skins; ¹¹ on February 25, on exportation of belladonna, atropine, sole leather and belting leather beryllium, graphite, electrodes, and aircraft pilot trainers; ¹² on March 4, on exportation of cadmium, carbon black, cocoanut and other oils, glycerine, shellac and titanium; jute, borax, phosphates; model, design, photographic negatives, documents or other articles containing a plan or technical information of any kind which could be used in connection with any process or operation of any articles or materials above-mentioned; ¹³ on March 27, on exportation of 51 additional items. ¹⁴

On March 11, 1941, the President had signed the Lend-lease Bill, a momentous aid which would help Great Britain to win the war. ¹⁵

On April 14, 1941, another proclamation was announced, by which the exportation of all machinery, of vegetable fibers and manufactures, of theobromine, caffeine, sodium cyanide, calcium cyanide and casein. ¹⁶

On May 28, 1941, the United States established export control in the Philippine Islands. ¹⁷

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11. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, II 241
 12. Ibid., II 248, 250
 13. Ibid., II, 252-4
 14. Ibid., II 258
 15. The New York Times, March 12, 1941, p.1
 16. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, II 260-1
 17. Ibid., II, 262

To these American manifestations of firmness, the Japanese reacted in their own way. Instead of halting their conquest, as was expected by the Americans, they were going to extend it. A Japanese weekly journal, the Diplomacy, had indicated this direction, as early as on February 11, 1941:

Japan will have to get iron from French Indochina and oil from the Netherlands East Indies, as Japan has been prohibited from getting them from America. What has made the Japanese concentrate their attention to the South Seas region is the execution of an unrestricted, blustery policy by the United States. 18

In May, 1941, Japan had ended successfully its mediation in the border dispute between Indochina and Thailand. In June, after repeated meetings and deliberations, the Konoye Government recognized that a military occupation of all Indochina was essential and urgent. They proceeded with this "wisest course," and, on July 14, 1941, presented new demands to the Vichy Government with the warning that if a favorable reply could not be obtained by July 20, force would be employed. These new demands were substantially that the Japanese should be allowed to operate necessary land, sea, and air forces in South Indochina, to occupy eight air and two naval bases in the same region. 19

Negotiations between France and Japan were opened at Vichy on July 17, 1941. The French Government could not do

18. Otto D. Tolischus, Through Japanese Eyes, p.106

19. Decoux, op.cit., pp.150-3; Leon Marchal, Vichy, Two Years of Deception, pp.128-130, 168

anything but accept the Japanese proposals. On July 21, a preliminary agreement was signed which was followed two days later by local arrangements at Hanoi. The theme of "common defense of Indochina" was thus established.²⁰

Washington was alarmed by these developments. The Japanese Ambassador besought the American Government not to rush to any "hasty conclusion", but the United States thought it time to retaliate. On July 26, 1941, an executive order froze all Japanese funds and assets in the United States. And the new measure was jubilantly hailed by the press.²¹ This was a "vicious circle of reprisals and counter-reprisals". Farsighted statesmen pessimistically predicted that "the obvious conclusion is eventual war".²²

But, before war actually occurred, another vicious circle took place. It was a succession of proposals and counter-proposals the United States and Japan presented to one another. While the American President wanted Japan to evacuate Indochina "in toto", Japan stated that its troops would stay in Indochina but would not proceed further. The American proposals were unacceptable to Japan, just as the Japanese ones were to the United States. Negotiations were doomed to failure.²³

20. Loc.cit.

21. Langer, The Undeclared War, pp.651-2

22. Ibid., p. 654

23. F.D.R., His Personal Letters, II,1190; Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan, II, 546-550

The Konoye Government chose the way of negotiations. It fell, therefore, on October 16, 1941, and was replaced by the Government of Hideki Tojo, a militarist leader. Tojo came to the Premiership to get Japan ready for war. If he continued to negotiate with the United States, it was only a device intended to hold off American action until the pro-²⁴per time for Japan to begin war.

The United States had no warlike premeditation. It prepared itself for war in order to strengthen its diplomacy. Before the means of negotiations were exhausted, the United States was caught off guard by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, on December 7, 1941. But, at that time, the United States and Great Britain were already in a position to win the war against Japan.²⁵

Secretary Hull summarized the American policy in 1940 and its result:

If our policy had shown any signs of weakness or wavering, Japan would not hesitate to take over all Indochina and the Netherlands Indies, and perhaps Malaya as well.

Our Far East policy in the months following the fall of France gave us another year and a half in which to get ready, while denying to Japan many of the materials needed for a greater military machine. It enabled us to extend invaluable help to Britain so that, when Pearl Harbor came, Britain was stronger than in the summer of 1940.²⁶

24. See, for example, the New York Times, October 27 and 31, 1941.

25. See, for example, Robert E. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins, II, 487-528; Winston Churchill, The Grand Alliance, pp. 605-606.

26. Hull, op.cit., I, 916

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