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America's relationship with colonial Vie^t Nam : World War II to new world order

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AMERICA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH COLONIAL VIỆT NAM:
WORLD WAR II TO NEW WORLD ORDER

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

John Shea O'Donnell

May 2005

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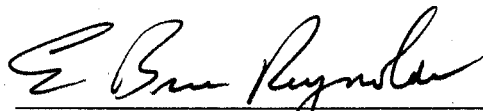
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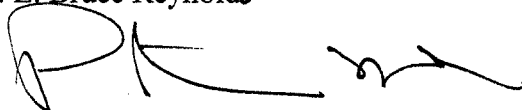
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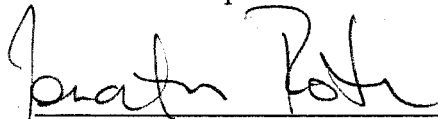
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ABSTRACT

AMERICA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH COLONIAL VIỆT NAM: WORLD WAR II TO NEW WORLD ORDER

By John Shea O'Donnell

World War II was the formative period of America's relationship with Việt Nam, which extended beyond the American Vietnam War. There are two intertwined stories to this era. One story is of the men (and women) on the ground in Việt Nam, as representatives of the U.S. in some fashion, who later offered Americans their first meaningful understanding of that country. The other story is about the intra- and inter-Allied (Americans, British, Russians, Chinese, and French) diplomatic relationships and related battles fought from 1941-1945 influencing policy formation for the post-war world. The piecemeal telling of the first story has led many Americans to develop a perception of lost opportunities in their country's relationship with Việt Nam, but the second story makes clear America's relationship with Việt Nam was nearly always subordinated to other relationships.

KAREN and LAKAMBINI

*For my weakness in pursuit of selfish ambition,
appreciation for your indulgence.*

*For the time we have lost together,
a reminder that the times we share are cherished.*

*For the hardship I have imposed on you,
hope for redemption.*

Acknowledgements

My professors at San José State University, E. Bruce Reynolds, Patricia Lopes Don, Daniel Cornford, and Jonathan Roth have all been extremely generous in offering me their guidance, support, and practical advice during my unexpectedly valuable time at this institution. Bruce Reynolds, who continues his career of research and writing about Thailand during World War II and American relations with that country, directed me to this project and also guided me through it. Unintentionally reinforcing my humility as my mentor, Dr. Reynolds nurtured my intellectual growth, has consistently made keenly insightful suggestions, and skillfully edited my drafts.

Dr. Reynolds introduced me to several important sources, perhaps most importantly to the man who was extremely helpful in locating relevant O.S.S. materials available at National Archives II in College Park Maryland, Larry McDonald. Patrick Denney also graciously provided me access to under-funded Indochina Center of the University of California, Berkeley's resources through the assistance of Sarah Maxim at Berkeley's Center for Southeast Asian Studies. Archivist David Clark assisted me in obtaining documents from the Harry S. Truman Library in Independence, Missouri. I would also like to thank Gail Corgiat, my patron for documents obtained at Wheaton College in Illinois.

Like his uncle before him, Vinh Chi Quan had changed his identity as an adult to thwart the authorities designs of making him fight in a war. His uncle had done so against the wishes of the French, while Vinh did so to thwart the efforts of the Vietnamese who had invaded Cambodia. Vinh is Chinese by blood, Vietnamese by

virtue of birth and life in that country until he reached his maturity. After the Communist government appropriated his family's hard-earned livelihood, they fled the country of his birth as "boatpeople" * like so many other ethnic Chinese. Finally, he is an American because his family adopted this country after their flight from Vietnam. A close friend, this man, who can claim several nationalities though none truly offer the solitude of a home, has served as an independent technical advisor on this project based on his independent scholarship in Chinese history and language, and his firsthand knowledge of Vietnam.

My eldest brother, Patrick, just escaped being eligible for the draft at the end of the Vietnam War and so, unbeknownst to him, his reaction to those events influenced my earliest childhood understanding of Vietnam. My mother, Judy, taught me never to be satisfied—both a curse and a challenge—and my father, Jim, always provided an alternative to these strictures imposed by my mother (may they both rest in peace). Finally, there is Karen, my wife, who has been my guide to the longest colonized country in Southeast Asia, the Philippines, first editor of my thoughts, companion to my soul, caretaker of our child, source of levity to combat frequent bouts of near mental exhaustion, and patron of my academic dreams both through her work and in sharing my debt, in lieu of any institutional sources of financial support for this project.

* Unlike his aunt's family, who fled Việt Nam by boat never to be heard from again, Vinh's immediate family was petitioned by another aunt who had successfully immigrated to the U.S. and so they fled by airplane instead of by boat.

Terms and Spelling Conventions Used

The terms “Annam,” “Annamese,” and “Annamite,” have been reluctantly dropped here, except when used in a quotation, as is the convention in most modern histories concerning Vietnam based on the Vietnamese view that the root word “Annam” (Pacified South) is a pejorative, recalling periods of Chinese and French subjugation. (“Annamite” is French; primary American documents used both “Annamite” and “Annamese” during and immediately after World War II.)

Chinese characters (traditional) are referenced for initial use of Vietnamese terms with pre-colonial origins, when Chinese was the written script of the state. The terms “Việt Nam” and “Vietnamese” are used to represent the nationalist goal of a state that was not yet in existence and after the critical event in 1945 as the political power began to revert to the Vietnamese people and away from the French Empire.* *Quốc ngữ*, or modern written Vietnamese with diacritical marks, is used for Vietnamese terms whenever possible except when the English equivalent is used in quotations. As is common with Asian names, the family name comes first in Vietnamese names. However, when one name is given it is usually the first name following Vietnamese convention except when practice dictates otherwise, this practice would cause confusion, or the meaning of a name is emphasized. For example, Hồ Chí Minh is shortened to Hồ following tradition, Nguyễn Ái Quốc is shortened to Ái Quốc to emphasize the meaning

* For a discussion of these terms, see Christopher E. Goscha, “Annam and Vietnam in the New Indochinese Space, 1887-1945,” “Annam and Vietnam in the New Indochinese Space, 1887-1945,” in *Asian Forms of the Nation*, ed. Stein Tønnesson and Hans Antlöv (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996): 93-130.

of this combination—“the patriot,” and Giáp is used when abbreviating Võ Nguyên Giáp’s full name.

Pinyin spelling is used instead of the Wade-Giles system for Chinese terms except for the personal name, *Chiang Kai-shek*, the Japanese *Kwangtung* Army, and *Hong Kong*, and where the Wade-Giles convention is contained in quotations. Chinese characters (simplified, or in classical style when the term refers to an institution still used principally by Taiwan) are referenced for initial use of Chinese terms. Japanese terms and names are followed in the first instance by the name rendered in Japanese (*kanji*). Japanese names are rendered with the surname first except for Japanese-American names which follow the Western tradition of surname preceded by given name.

The use of *quốc ngữ* and Chinese characters, in the first instance of pre-colonial Vietnamese terms, Chinese and Japanese terms, is given for the sake of clarity, and respect for the cultures (just as we use accent marks for French terms).

Illustrations

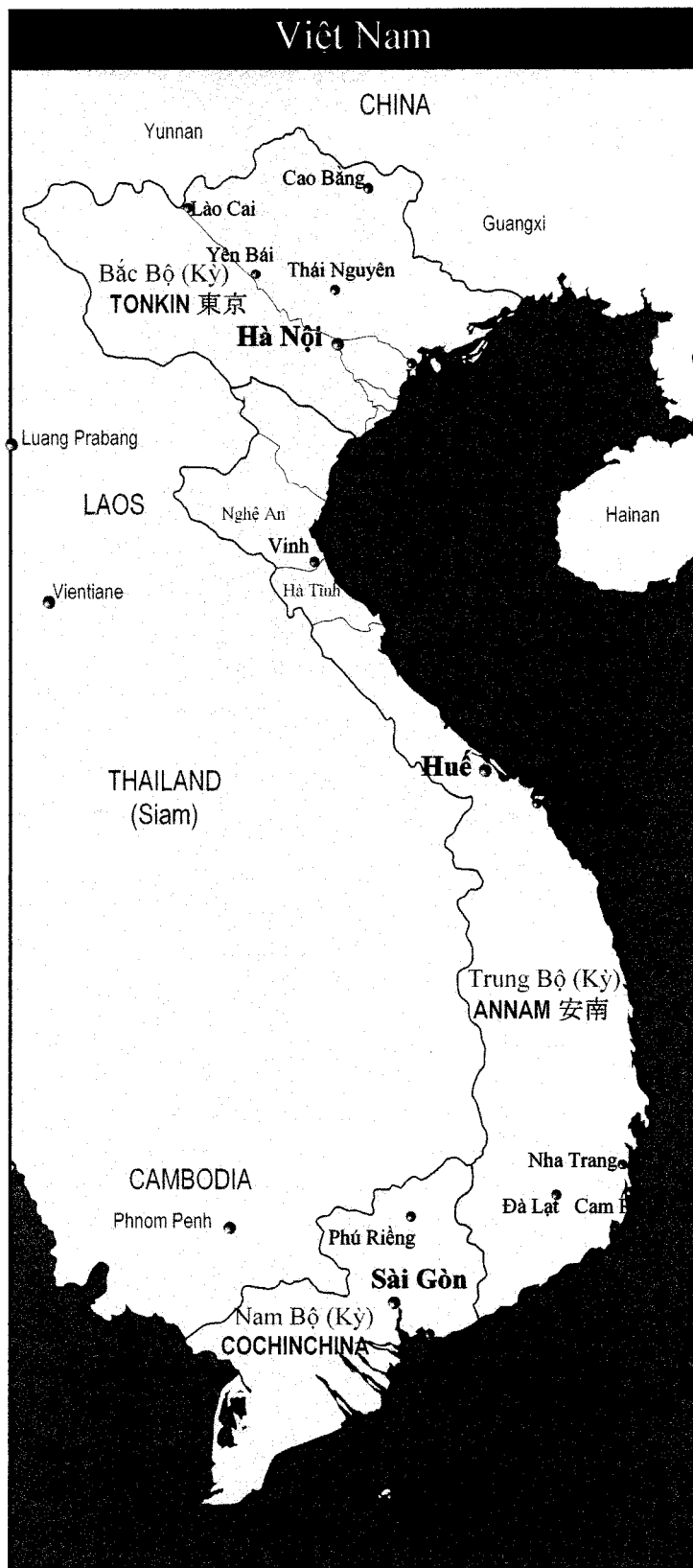
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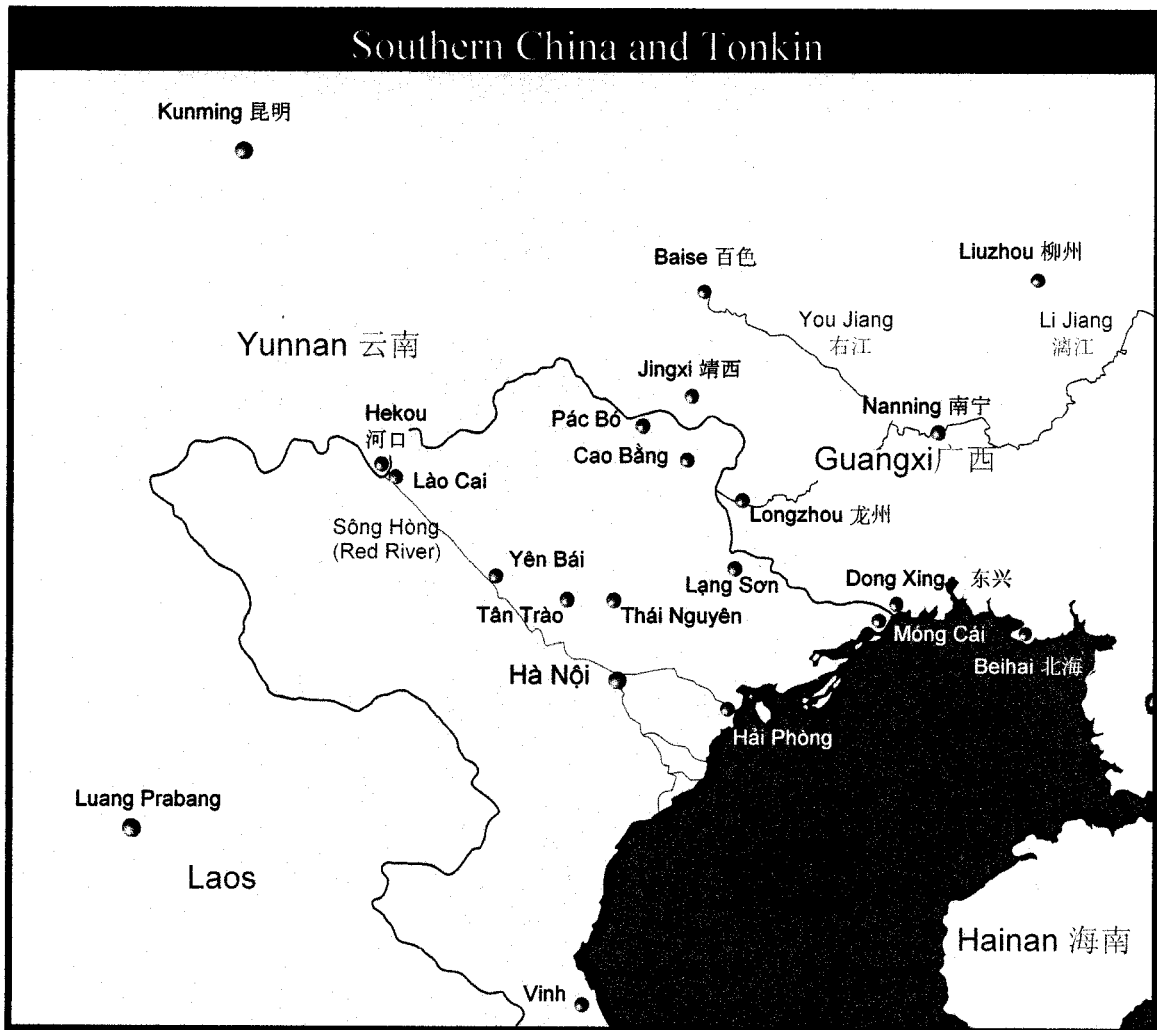
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Map 1



Map 2



Map 3

Select important towns on the Chinese-Indochinese border and the Indochina-Yunnan Railway during the Pacific War:

- 1) Hekou (河口), which was connected to Lào Cai by a bridge where the Red River entered Indochina and a railroad connected Kunming with Hà Nội, considered an excellent listening post having agents of eleven organizations resident but considered a bad malarial area.
- 2) Jingxi (靖西), a town inhabited mostly by the Tay ethnic minority whose population extended to Lang Son.
- 3) Longzhou (龙州), roughly 18 miles from the border with Tonkin, and 100 miles to the sea coast where refugees from Indochina were found as were Japanese spies, members of Allied military missions, and Vietnamese nationalists.
- 4) Dong Xing (东兴) connected by bridge to Móng Cái, headquarters of the First Military Territory headed by Lieutenant Colonel LeCoq.
- 5) Đông Đẳng is on the border, approximately 14 kilometers from Lang Son.
- 6) Lang Son, headquarters of the Second Military Territory and the largest garrison in Tonkin with 9,000 French and Vietnamese soldiers, commanded by Colonel Robert.
- 7) Cao Bằng, the main town of the Deuxieme Territoire, or French Intelligence in Indochina during WWII, and was also the center for all the Japanese espionage system directed at China. Indochina-Yunnan Railway roughly followed the Red River from Hải Phòng to Lào Cai, then continued north to Kunming (昆明).

(Sources: Ilion, Cao Bang, Indo-China, 5 October, 1944, File 273, Box 135, Entry 140, RG 226, *NARA II*; ["Gordon's Diary," no date given], 16 and 24, File 3, Box 229, Entry 210, RG 226; Major Austin O. Glass to Lieutenant Colonel Robert B. Hall, 1 June 1944, and Major Austin O. Glass to Colonel John G. Coughlin, 20 May 1944, File 340, Box 423, Entry 140, RG 226; and Plan and Operation-Meynier Group, 20 November 1943, File 250, Box 17, Entry 148, RG 226.)

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Senator J.W. Fullbright: We ourselves contributed approximately \$2 billion helping the French maintain their domination of the Vietnamese between 1950 and 1954, did we not?

General Maxwell D. Taylor (USA, Ret.): A considerable sum, I don't have the figure.

Fullbright: The exact amount doesn't matter—but it was a considerable sum. It is rather odd—when we revolted against the British the French helped us.

Taylor: Roles do change, Senator.

Fullbright: Roles do change in a most peculiar manner. I don't recall in all our history where we ever assisted a colonial power to assist in the domination of its colony, do you?

Taylor: Again, I would remind us all we are not talking about the situation at that time, we are talking about the Communist colonialism which is now attempting to assert itself.

Fullbright: I agree with you, General, and I don't wish to argue strategy about how you wish to defeat the enemy, and they obviously have become our enemy. They were not necessarily so in 1946. But in the position we have taken here. North and South Vietnam which you now call two countries—prior to the subjugation by the French forces in 1884 was one country, wasn't it?

Taylor: In a very loose sense of the word.

Fullbright: It had been one country for 2,000 years, had it not?¹

Introduction

The preceding exchange represents two sides of the debate on the U.S. involvement in Việt Nam by 1966, on the eve of what Americans have revealingly termed the *Vietnam* War. The vast majority of Americans had little understanding of Việt Nam, and policymakers largely ignored those who did. America's relationship with Việt Nam had begun during World War II. General Taylor's use of the division of Việt Nam to connote two separate countries and his reference to Communist colonialism were products of a twisted "reality" the U.S. had adopted during the Franco-Vietnamese War. The division of Việt Nam into North and South was the result of political struggles

¹ United States Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *The Truth about Vietnam*, edited by Frank M. Robinson and Earl Kemp (San Diego: Greenleaf Classics, Inc., 1966), 19, 254, and 263. The Vietnam hearings were held before the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate, chaired by Senator Fullbright, on January 28, 1966, and ran through February 4, 8, 10, 17, and 18. General Taylor came before the committee due to his importance in helping to formulate American policy towards Việt Nam as a personal military representative of President Kennedy in 1961 and 1962, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1962 to 1965. In 1966, he was a special consultant to President Johnson.

between the British, French and Guomindang Chinese Governments, and military expediency on the part of the Americans during World War II. Soon after that war, the top French colonial administrator of Indochina was the first to refer to Vietnamese nationalists, who had gained a firm position in the North, “imperialists” to impugn their aspiration to reunify the country as a sovereign nation. This study examines the American relationship with Việt Nam during World War II following it through the end of 1945, when the Franco-Vietnamese War broke out, from the vantage point of the Vietnamese struggle for liberation from colonialism.

This project began as a fulfillment for a master’s thesis concerning the predecessor to the CIA, the Office of Strategic Service’s operations in Việt Nam during and immediately after World War II, but grew to fill a need for a more comprehensive study to provide a more meaningful context for these operations. Selective portions of the story from the perspective of the U.S. Government were released by the *New York Times* from leaked portions of the Department of Defense’s *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967* (1971), and through the publication of the “Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War,” *Hearings before the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 92nd Congress* (1973).² The Department of Defense study relied heavily on previously published State Department documents and secondary sources without revealing too much of what was still unavailable to the scholarly community. The first glimpses of information withheld by the U.S. Government and individuals

² Department of Defense, *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967*, book 1 of 12 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971); “Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War,” *Hearings before the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 92nd Congress* (Washington: United States GPO, 1973).

fearful of repercussions for telling their own stories in the midst of wartime was revealed in the “Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War,” and former OSS officer, Charles Fenn’s *Ho Chi Minh* (1973). Nearly three decades after the events he participated in and protected from the wrath of a wartime Government by the Atlantic Ocean, Fenn was in a unique position to publish his book from his residence in Ireland. By comparison, R. Harris Smith’s *OSS: The Secret History of America’s First Central Intelligence Agency* (1972), based on interviews, was so riddled with errors that it can no longer be considered a legitimate source of information.³

The OSS’ chief of secret intelligence for Indochina during the last several months of the war and participant in postwar events in Hanoi for a little over a month from August 22 to October 1 1945, Archimedes Patti’s *Why Viet Nam? Prelude to America’s Albatross* (1980) has stood as the most valuable published contribution to our understanding of OSS activities in Việt Nam for more than a quarter of a century. In 2001, Dixie Bartholomew-Feis completed her Ph.D. dissertation, “The Men on the Ground,” offering the best addition to Patti’s book based on OSS and other government documents released to the public since Patti’s book. Bartholomew-Feis’s work is notable because it lacks the prejudice of Patti’s and the author has combined commendable research of primary and secondary sources with interviews of participants from the two of the most important OSS-related operations, the GBT group and the Deer Team. The present study builds further upon these two works with more recently available OSS

³ Charles Fenn, *Ho Chi Minh* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1973); R. Harris Smith, R. Harris, *OSS: The Secret History of America’s First Central Intelligence Agency* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

documents, but equally important, attempts to broaden the scope of these studies by placing the OSS story within a meaningful context based in both primary (including State Department unpublished and published records) and specialized secondary sources.⁴

In addition to the aforementioned works, we have available English-language studies emphasizing specific nationalities or a relationship between two nationalities. These works vary widely in quality, and with few exceptions, reflect authors' specialization and use of primary sources. Accordingly, the relationships the various groups of participants in this historical drama do not receive sufficient attention. Sir Llewellyn Woodward published an excellent study of British foreign policy during World War II in 1952. Martin Thomas and John Dreifort have used British sources to explore the Anglo-French relationship around Việt Nam during World War II, while Peter Dennis and Peter Dunn have focused on the British occupation of southern Indochina.⁵

Making use of his special access to the Chiang Kai-shek Government in Taiwan's archives, King Chen's study was the best work available in English for three and a half decades on Chinese involvement in Indochina during the war and immediately afterwards. In 2001, Peter Worthing expanded on Chen's work, particularly on the Chinese occupation of northern Việt Nam, based on newly available archival sources in

⁴ Archimedes Patti, *Why Viet Nam? Prelude to America's Albatross* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Dixie R. Bartholomew-Feis, "The Men on the Ground," Ph.D. Dissertation (Ohio State University, 2001).

⁵ Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1962); Martin Thomas, "Free France, the British government and the future of French Indo-China, 1940-45," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 28/1 (March, 1997): 137-60, and "Silent Partners: SOE's French Indo-China Section 1943-1945," *Modern Asian Studies* 34, 4 (2000): 943-76; John E. Dreifort, *Myopic Grandeur: The Ambivalence of French Foreign Policy Toward the Far East, 1919-1945* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1991); Dennis, Peter. *Troubled Days of Peace: Mountbatten and South East Asia Command, 1945-46* (Oxford: Manchester University Press, 1987); and Peter M. Dunn, *The First Vietnam War* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1985).

mainland China. He also added to the story of American activities during the occupation.⁶

Raoul Aglion and Mario Rossi have used French sources in describing the Franco-American relationship during the war. Martin Shipway provides a classic study of French colonial diplomacy related to Việt Nam during this period (Alain-Gérard Marsot offers an excellent condensed, journal-length version).⁷ Japanese sources have been used in studies by Kiyoko Kurusu Nitz and Sachiko Murakami.⁸ Over the years, the Foreign Languages Publishing House in Hà Nội and a few American publishers have offered numerous Vietnamese works from and related to this period in English translation.⁹ Beginning in the 1950s, Bernard Fall offered some of the best critical studies of Việt Nam based on Vietnamese sources. Ellen Hammer used both American and French sources for her 1954 work, *The Struggle for Indochina*, which places her

⁶ King C. Chen, *Vietnam and China, 1938-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969); Peter Worthing, *Occupation and Revolution: China and the Vietnamese August Revolution of 1945* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, China Research Monograph 54, 2001).

⁷ Raoul Aglion, *Roosevelt and de Gaulle: Allies in Conflict* (New York: The Free Press, 1988); Mario Rossi, *Roosevelt and the French* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1993); Martin Shipway, *The Road to War: France and Vietnam, 1944-1947* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996); and Alain-Gérard Marsot, "The Crucial Year: Indochina 1946," *Journal of Contemporary History* 19, 2 (April, 1987): 337-354.

⁸ Kiyoko Kurusu Nitz, "Independence without Nationalists? The Japanese and Vietnamese Nationalism during the Japanese Period, 1940-45," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 15,1 (March, 1984), 108-33; Sachiko Murakami, "Japan's Thrust into French Indochina, 1940-1945," Ph.D. Dissertation (New York University, 1981).

⁹ Although not an exhaustive list of Vietnamese works available in English, the texts used here are: *Days with Ho Chi Minh*, edited by Hoi Thanh and Thanh Tinh (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1962); Ho Chi Minh's 'Prison Diary,' and Phan Boi Chau's 'Prison Notes,' in *Reflections from Captivity*, edited by David G. Marr, translated by Christopher Jenkins, Tran Khanh Tuyet and Huyn Sanh Thong. (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1978); Hồ Chí Minh's *Selected Works*, volumes I, II, III, and IV (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961); *The Military Art of People's War: Selected Writings of General Vo Nguyen Giap*, edited by Russell Stetler (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970); Trường Chinh's *Primer for Revolt; the Communist Take-over in Viet-Nam*. New York, Praeger, 1963), *President Hồ-Chí-Minh: Beloved Leader of the Vietnamese People* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1966.), and *History of the August Revolution*, (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1972); Võ Nguyên Giáp's *Unforgettable Days* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1975) and *Unforgettable Months and Years*, translated by Mai Van Elliott (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1975).

along with Bernard Fall as the early preeminent American scholars writing on World War II in Việt Nam.¹⁰ While much of Fall's work remains classic, William Duiker, David Marr, Huỳnh Kim Khánh, Hue-Tam Ho Tai, and Tran My-Van have expanded significantly on the work available in English based largely on Vietnamese sources, though the range of sources they utilize is far broader.¹¹

Mark Philip Bradley's study in a comparatively concise, less than 200-page work, *Imagining Vietnam & America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950*, provides a valuable understanding of the misperceptions that have marked the relationship between the two countries.¹² Gary R. Hess, who offers the most accurate analysis of Roosevelt's thinking on the future of Indochina, has also written a classic study of *The United States' Emergence as a Southeast Asian Power, 1940-1950*. Finally, in his study of Summer Welles' approach to postwar planning, Christopher O'Sullivan

¹⁰ Bernard Fall, *The Viet-Minh Regime; Government and Administration of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1956), and "The Political-Religious Sects of Viet-Nam," *Pacific Affairs* 28, 3 (Sept., 1955): 235-253; Ellen J. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954). Hammer and Fall's works are now dated, but Philippe Devillers's *Histoire Du Viêt-Nam de 1940 à 1952* (1952) continues to be widely cited though it has never been translated into English. Along with Batholomew-Feis and Murakami's works, Isaac Milton Sacks' now mostly dated "Communism and Nationalism in Viet Nam 1918-1946," Ph.D. Dissertation (Yale University, 1960) was perhaps the most valuable work by an American scholar on the subject, which has never been published. Sacks underwent Vietnamese language training with OSS officers who had served in Việt Nam, though he does not specify whom.

¹¹ William J. Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), and *Ho Chi Minh: A Life* (New York: Hyperion, 2000); David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971. Reprint, 1980), *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), and *Vietnam 1945: the Quest for Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Huỳnh Kim Khánh, *Vietnamese Communism, 1925-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982); Hue-Tam Ho Tai, *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); and Tran My-Van, "Japan and Vietnam's Cao daists: a wartime relationship (1939-45)," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27/1 (March, 1996): 179-93, and "Japan through Vietnamese Eyes (1905-1945)," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 30,1 (March, 1999): 126-46.

¹² Mark Philip Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam & America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2000). Bradley also offers perhaps the most comprehensive bibliography of United States- Việt Nam relations available.

has produced an extremely important work for understanding Roosevelt's attitudes towards postwar stability, trusteeship and colonialism.¹³ In these studies, the authors typically sacrifice the story about the relationships of groups of participants in the historical drama (which provides a meaningful contextual explanation) to their country of specialization.¹⁴

Moving a step further, Christopher Thorne made a remarkable contribution of research in his study of the relationship between the U.S. and Great Britain, *viewed from both sides*, in Asia during World War II in *Allies of a Kind* (1978).¹⁵ Stein Tønnesson's *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945: Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh, and De Gaulle in a world at war* (1991) offers the most satisfying methodological approach found on the subject of Việt Nam during World War II. While his research involves military and diplomatic files in France, Great Britain and the U.S., Communist Vietnamese newspapers in Việt Nam, as well as several interviews, his focus is diplomatic history and, in the portion dedicated to American diplomatic activity, President Franklin Roosevelt.

¹³ Gary R. Hess, "Franklin Roosevelt and Indochina," *The Journal of American History* 9, 2 (Sept., 1972): 353-368; Christopher D. O'Sullivan, *Sumner Welles: Postwar Planning, and the Quest for a New World Order, 1937-1943* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

¹⁴ This characterization is not meant to be a criticism of the authors mentioned here or to be dismissive of the breadth of their research of sources beyond those listed. It is an effort, rather, to position the focus of their work relative to the possibility of approaches available to them, and the heavy reliance on their respective specialization can be seen throughout the present work. David Marr, for example, uses Vietnamese, French, American and Japanese-language sources yet his focus is overwhelmingly toward the Vietnamese, his specialization. Dreifort uses both French and English sources, but his contribution the present work is primarily his use of English sources. Evaluations of these particular works are made in footnotes in the chapters within which their arguments are discussed, if not in the body of those chapters themselves.

¹⁵ Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). Unfortunately, Arthur J. Dommen's three and a half century-epic, *The Indochinese Experience of the French and the American* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001) stands as a good example for what a synthetic work should avoid. It lacks both a coherent purpose in its breadth and analytical attention to detail.

While strictly reliant upon American primary sources and the U.S.'s relationship with Việt Nam as the core issue, the current study attempts a synthesis of these works, but particularly the contributions of Tønnesson, O'Sullivan, Patti, and Bartholomew-Feis with an updated, deeper look into America's involvement there.¹⁶ Another important contribution of this study is an examination of the change in American policy as Harry Truman succeeded President Roosevelt in April 1945, four months before the Pacific War ended.

ROADMAP FOR THIS WORK

There are 15 chapters in this work. All chapters except for Chapters 6-10 generally follow a chronological sequence, though there is some overlapping, to focus on certain groups or areas. The first chapter introduces Việt Nam's history, explains how the French came to become its colonial master, and discusses early resistance efforts. Chapter 2 explores French colonialism in Việt Nam prior to World War II. Chapter 3 shows how Japan's relationship with Western European empires and the U.S. was different from the beginning, in an effort to explain how the Japanese came to impose its own hegemony over French Indochina. This chapter also highlights the nature of the

¹⁶ Stein Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945 : Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh, and De Gaulle in a World at War* (London: Sage Publications, 1991). Tønnesson offers the best account of secondary literature, or historiography, on Việt Nam during World War II, some excellent aids to those who wish to follow in his research steps and explore areas he lacked time to examine. A paper he authored some years later which revisits an argument introduced in his 1991 work, referenced in Chapter 7, provides an excellent list of scholarship on Roosevelt's attitudes toward colonialism in Indochina. A portion of Chapter 5 is dedicated to challenging his argument about Roosevelt and the Japanese coup d'état of Indochina in March 1945.

Japanese military “occupation” of Indochina prior to March 1945. The American response to Japanese military aggressions is the focus of the subsequent chapter. A British and French effort to establish a Free French, pro-colonial, Japanese resistance and intelligence effort in Indochina is the topic of the first half of Chapter 5. The second half is devoted to the events surrounding the Japanese coup d’état of the French in Indochina in March 1945. A chronological approach is reestablished with Chapter 11, which examines OSS operations in Việt Nam and Vietnamese August Revolution beginning after the coup through the end of the war. The next three chapters examine events in a divided Indochina, and Chapter 15, the final chapter describes events leading up to the outbreak of a Franco-Vietnamese War in December 1946.

The Japanese coup d’état of March 1945 provides a natural division point for the chronological discussion because many things changed as the result this event and President Roosevelt coincidentally died a month and a few days later, marking the end of his policy approach and the beginning of a new one toward Indochina. Consequently, a thematic approach is used in Chapters 6-9 to examine particular issues in detail. President Roosevelt’s approach to colonialism and the opposition to his approach both within his government and from the British and French are the subjects of Chapters 6 and 7. The next chapter continues this policy analysis through the first several months of the Truman Administration when the State Department established a post-war policy towards Việt Nam. Chapter 9 expands upon the introduction provided at the end of Chapter 2 of Hồ Chí Minh and the Việt Minh. A modified version of this thematic approach is applied to Chapters 4 and 5, and Chapters 11-13. The pre-March 1945 coup period is divided

between Chapters 4 and 5 to present a more focused approach to OSS based in China, and French and British initiatives through the South East Asia Command (SEAC) towards Indochina. The post-war British occupation of southern Việt Nam is discussed in Chapter 11, and the Chinese occupation in northern Việt Nam is the subject of Chapters 12 and 13. The Conclusion offers a distillation of this study, which may aid the reader at any point during the journey, not necessarily at the end.

The spelling conventions adopted here and three maps precede this introduction, and a glossary is located at the end of the work as aids for this complex story.



Campagne du Tonkin: Prise de Sontay from Chocolat Delespaul-Havez—Lille, 1898

Chapter 1

The French Conquest of Đại Nam 大南

In the minds of Americans, their involvement in Việt Nam after the French pulled out following their decisive defeat at Điện Biên Phủ was necessary to stop the spread of communism, not to halt nationalist aspirations of the Vietnamese. The following discussion hopes to recast our understanding of Việt Nam through an exploration of the modern history of that country. This chapter begins by setting the historical context for the French conquest of the Vietnamese. The next chapter explores various questions that help to illuminate the context for discussion in subsequent chapters of Japanese, American, French, British, and Chinese involvement in the Vietnamese territories of colonial Indochina, while paying particular attention to America's role. Why did the French conquer Việt Nam? How did French goals there change over time? What were the social ramifications of French colonial rule and how did they relate to changing French goals in Indochina? How did resistance to French colonialism change over time? While pursuing answers to these questions, we are reminded that in this pre-World War II period, French rule and Vietnamese reaction to it was largely confined to small

proportions of both populations. French interests in Vietnam were based primarily on prestige and commercial interests. French physical presence in Indochina remained an overwhelmingly military one, and Vietnamese resistance was largely confined to relatively small segments of their population. Even when peasants, who predominated in Vietnamese society, became involved in the protests that erupted on a large scale in the early 1930s, their goals were palliative in nature rather than revolutionary. France would continue to dominate Việt Nam so long as the larger French population was not overly concerned with the costs of maintaining control. The critical mass of Vietnamese society would remain quiescent under foreign rule until they were mobilized to recognize its impact, and a viable alternative was offered.

It is also important to preface these discussions with a clarification of terms. Above all, the argument proposed here, is that Vietnamese resistance inevitably became anti-colonial or anti-French, revolutionary, or nationalist. Once the French had firmly controlled Vietnamese territories, movements led by intellectuals sought either to reform Vietnamese society or regain national sovereignty. The two became intertwined because reformers realized they could not reform society without political authority, and nationalists sought to reform society as a necessary path to overcome a stronger foreign adversary.

THE FRENCH CONQUEST OF ĐÀI NAM 大南

When the French, with superior military capability, imposed their will over Việt Nam 越南, or Đài Nam 大南 as it was called in the second half of the 1800s, they applied

the term Indochine (Indochina) to their empire in mainland Southeast Asia because the territory bore heavy influences from India and China. Cambodia and Laos, like the rest of Southeast Asia exclusive of Việt Nam (and for differing reasons, the Philippines): Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia were strongly influenced by India, while Việt Nam fell within the Chinese orbit of influences that also included Korea and Japan. The historic homeland of the Vietnamese, Đông Kinh, is derived from a Chinese term, 東京, or eastern capital.¹ The state already had a rich history as both colony and colonizer.

Various Chinese dynasties had dominated the Vietnamese for all but 106 years from 111 B.C.E. to 939 C.E., and the Ming Chinese (1368-1644) ruled over them as well for 20 years, leaving an indelible mark on Vietnamese culture. Similar to the cases of Korea and Japan, several language forms have been used in Việt Nam: Chinese characters, *chữ nôm* 字喃 (language of the Southerners), and *quốc ngữ* 國語 (national language). Chinese characters were used for the first written language of Việt Nam under Chinese rule, *chữ nôm* was an adaptation of Chinese characters for Vietnamese words, and can be found in writings as early as 1282, but *quốc ngữ* came much later with Western European contact.² In addition to Chinese characters, Vietnamese culture has assimilated the *tam giáo* 三教 (three schools of thought or religions) from China:

¹ Vietnamese is a recent historical designation of the people of Việt Nam, as conceived of as a nation-state. Kinh are the ethnic majority people exclusive of highland minority people and remnant Cham, and as a result this term is most appropriate for the pre-colonial era.

² See John DeFrancis, *Colonialism and Language Policy in Viet Nam* (New York: Mouton Publishers, 1977), 26-7, 48-61 and 83-87. DeFrancis explains that *quốc ngữ* is a derivative of *tây quốc ngữ*, literally meaning “Western (i.e. French) country language” in reference to the fact that it was a Romanized script, but as the prefix was dropped, the original meaning of the term was lost.

Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, and at various periods other aspects of Chinese culture such as the civil service exam system based on prescribed Chinese, particularly Confucian texts.³

Despite having adopted elements of Chinese culture, however, Vietnamese culture remained distinctive in its religious practices, such as a unique variant of ancestor worship and the deification of national heroes, as well as the more pedestrian elements of cuisine, costume, body fashion, and general physical bearing.⁴ Some scholars believe that the basis for the Vietnamese people's dogged determination to remain independent rests in their language even though it has "incorporated a wide range of Chinese terminology, modes of expression, and basic sentence patterns," according to a scholar specializing in Modern Vietnamese history, David Marr.⁵ Vietnamese history is replete with tales of fights to maintain sovereignty, particularly against their neighbor to the North.

The Vietnamese have a term, *nam tiến*, for their own southward drive of conquest of their neighbors. One of the most important periods of southern conquest from Đông Kinh, occurred in the fifteenth century when the Vietnamese conquered the Champa Kingdom by 1471, leading to the extinction of that culture. Today, all that remains of Champa can be found in relief scenes of battles between the Cham and the Khmer on

³ Jack A Yeager, *The Vietnamese novel in French: a literary response to colonialism* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1987), 13. The examination system was, like China, based on the Confucian Four Books (the *Analects*, *Mencius*, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, and the *Great Learning*) and the Five Classics (the *Classic of Songs*, the *Classic of Documents*, the *Classic of Changes*, the *Record of Rituals*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*).

⁴ David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925* (Berkeley: University of California, 1971; reprint, 1980), 17; Yeager, 12. Both Marr and Yeager mention the distinctive Vietnamese language. Vinh Chi Quan, an ethnic Chinese who was born and raised in Việt Nam, related the difference in ancestral worship to this author.

⁵ Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism*, 17.

Angkor temple walls, and in similar archaeological remnants of structures dotting central Việt Nam. The southern portion of what comprises modern Việt Nam was conquered from 1620s-1670s.⁶



Cavaliers d'Escorte du Gouverneur Général—postcard, Imp.Lib. Crébessac, Hanoi

By the turn of the twentieth century, however, this conqueror state had fallen under French colonial rule. In 1925, the top French official in Indochina⁷ provided this relatively straightforward explanation of French presence:

The French are in Indo-China by virtue of treaties which were not all imposed by force of arms. In some of the countries they were called in by the people, or at all events by their Chiefs. In others, preceded by sailors, traders, and missionaries, the French, being received first as friends and then treated as enemies, found themselves obliged to

⁶ See David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), 94 for a discussion of the Vietnamese conquest of the Khmer lands known as Prey Nokor. Some Cham people continue to live in Việt Nam.

⁷ French governors general of Indochina varied widely in style. They were often caught between an enlightened consciousness and an awareness of the indigenous populace on one side and the cacophonous voices of interests from the *métropole* and *colons* (French resident in Indochina). Some governors general, in rare circumstances, were supportive of the indigenous population while most were extremely nationalistic and ruled Indochina as a colony strictly to be exploited for the maximum benefit of the French.

establish themselves by force. In doing so they did no more than imitate the actions of all the other European nations which, during the last three centuries and under the lead and impulsion of navigators and discoverers, have colonized or conquered vast territories.

No one would venture to claim that the French came to Indo-China solely for the good of the people. But in working for their own profit and advantage they have, at the same time, worked for the benefit of the natives. They have established peace and order, have guaranteed the integrity of the territory, and have evolved a system of government which, while safeguarding the interest of the French trade and enterprise, has also taken into close association the indigenous peoples and their natural rulers. The native is now assured of peacefully reaping the fruit of his labour.

But peace and security are not sufficient. France recognizes her duty not only as the guardian and protector of her tropical subjects, but also as their leader in their moral and intellectual development. The sudden awakening of the peoples of the East and their rapid acquaintance with the democratic ideas which are governing, in an ever-growing degree, the destinies of the Western nations, are spreading a ferment in the minds of races which, in the past, have been characterized by almost immovable conservatism.⁸

The French involvement in Indochina can be traced back to the early seventeenth century when the Tokugawa were consolidating control over Japan. Christian missionaries acting as intermediaries in supplying muskets played a vital role in the unification of Japan, leading to the eventual establishment of the Tokugawa *bakufu* 幕府, or military government, in 1603. Fearing representatives of this foreign religion might pose a threat to the long-term stability of the new regime, the Tokugawa purged the Jesuits from Japan nine years later. Portuguese merchants at Melaka (Malacca) suggested that resident Jesuits redirect their efforts to Đại Việt 大越 of the Lê Dynasty (1428-1788) as an alternative to Japan.⁹ One of the Jesuits to arrive in Đại Việt a short

⁸ Sir Hesketh Bell, *Foreign Colonial Administration in the Far East* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1928), 234-35. Unfortunately the author does not identify the exact governor general or state his source of this text. There were two governors general who assumed office in 1925, Maurice Antoine François Montguillot in April, and Alexandre Varennes in November, so it is unclear whose words these are.

⁹ Mark W. McLeod, *The Vietnamese Response to French Intervention, 1862-1874* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991), 4-5. McLeod adds that the Asian missions were at this time under the direction of the Portuguese religious authorities in Malacca and Macao, and the missionaries had to swear allegiance to the Portuguese monarch before sailing to Asia in a Portuguese vessel. Pope Innocent X changed this structure in 1659 when, partially as a response to Alexander de Rhodes's appeal, Apostolic Vicars were established

while later was Alexandre de Rhodes. Believing that missionaries should speak the indigenous language of their flock, Rhodes refined a Romanized, phonetically based script for Vietnamese started by Portuguese missionaries now called *quốc ngữ*.¹⁰ He also helped convince Pope Innocent X to end the Portuguese religious authority over all missionaries active in Asia, who prior to the formation of the Société des Missions Étrangères (Society of Foreign Missions) under French ecclesiastics in 1664, were required to swear allegiance to the Portuguese monarch before departing on Portuguese ships to Asia.¹¹ Rhodes was rewarded for his phenomenal success of converting thousands of natives in a few short years by being expelled from Đại Việt in 1630. Still his brief experience in that country would have a monumental impact on the people of this area more than two and a half centuries later as *quốc ngữ* supplanted Chinese characters, and written Vietnamese spread from use by a narrow segment of society, officialdom, and the elite, to the masses.

Although the Lê Dynasty nominally controlled Đại Việt until 1788, its authority was increasingly restricted during the last two centuries of its reign. It shared power over the country with the Mac during the seventeenth century and only symbolically held power during much of the eighteenth century as the northern lands were under the hold of the Trịnh house, while the Nguyễn held sway over the southern regions. In 1771, three brothers from a hamlet, Tây Sơn, in Bình Định province led a success revolt against the

for the Asian mission that reported directly to the Holy See. Đại Việt, in *quốc ngữ*, or 大越 in the Chinese characters used during this period, means “Great Viet.” The term 越 (Việt) originally referred to all non-Chinese south of the Yangzi River and is now used by the Vietnamese people to refer to themselves.

¹⁰ Ibid; Milton E. Osborne, *The French Presence in Cochinchina and Cambodia: Rule and Response (1859-1905)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 90. Osborne states that Rhodes took phonetics based on earlier Portuguese work and added tone marks and diacritics, to indicate vowel pronunciation.

¹¹ McLeod, 4-5.

Nguyễn, Trịnh, and defeated a Chinese force sent to support the Lê Dynasty by the Qing emperor, Qianlong 乾隆.¹² Nguyễn Phúc Ánh, the last surviving member of the Nguyễn house, fled to Thailand in 1785 where he met with the Bishop of Adran, Pigneau de Behaine, a member of the Foreign Mission Society and an acquaintance since Nguyễn's childhood. Nguyễn told Behaine of his desire to solicit aid from the Dutch at Batavia (Jakarta), but Behaine, fearing the potential threat to his missions in Cambodia, and southern and northern Đại Việt to the Protestant Dutch, convinced Nguyễn to request help from the French instead. Though it is not clear why Nguyễn precluded help from the English at this time, in 1804 he obliquely indicated his awareness of their increasing control over India after the Battle of Plassey in 1757. In refusing to consider an English request to open a factory at Trà Sơn, Nguyễn evoked the saying "taking precautions before disaster arrives" and described the English as "cunning and deceitful."¹³

Having offered to negotiate with the French for military aid on Nguyễn's behalf, Behaine traveled to India to begin lengthy negotiations before proceeding to the court of Louis XVI in France where he concluded a ten-point treaty in November 28, 1787. France agreed to assist Nguyễn Phúc Ánh defeat the Tây Sơn in exchange for several concessions including exclusive commercial rights, freedom to practice and propagate Catholicism and grants of territory at Côn Sơn and "eventually" Đà Nẵng 峴港

¹² Thomas Hodgkin, *Vietnam: The Revolutionary Path* (New York: The MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1981), 68-95. During the early part of the Lê Dynasty, until the last decade of the sixteenth century, Lê rule only extended southward from Thanh Hoá while a challenger, the Mạc, controlled the northern region. Afterwards, the Mạc were relegated to Cao Bằng until 1677.

¹³ McLeod, 19.

(Tourane).¹⁴ There is debate concerning how crucial the abortive French military aid was to the successful defeat of the Tây Sơn, and Nguyễn, for his part, considered the treaty abrogated when the main French force, assembled at Pondicherry on the Coromandel Coast of India, withdrew before fulfilling its obligation.¹⁵

In 1802, the Nguyễn Dynasty was founded by Nguyễn Phúc Ánh, and three decades later, the country received a new name as well, Đại Nam 大南.¹⁶ Ánh, under the reign name Gia Long (r. 1802-1820), attempted to consolidate and ensure the stability of the dynasty using methods similar to those of the Qing in China and Tokugawa in Japan. He reestablished the Confucian-based civil service exam system and expanded it to the provincial level. He also promulgated a new penal code modeled on one in place in China. Trade with the West was severely restricted as well, an office of merchant

¹⁴ Ibid, 10. This discussion is taken from McLeod though the mention of specific territorial possessions changing hands comes from Arthur J. Dommen. *The Indochinese Experience of the French and Americans*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 4.

¹⁵ Ibid, 8-12; Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 17; and Hodgkin, 96. McLeod, Marr and Hodgkin reiterate the arguments from two separate French Works. McLeod goes into detail explaining Charles Maybon's argument in *Histoire moderne du Pays d'Annam, 1592-1820* (Paris: Plon, 1920), Marr uses Georges Taboulet, ed., *Geste Français en Indochine*, 2 vols. (Paris: A. Maisonneuve, 1955 and 1956), while Hodgkin utilizes both French works. McLeod explains that the French abrogated the agreement by withdrawing a force formed at Pondicherry on the Coromandel Coast of India for aiding Nguyễn Phúc Ánh who had recaptured control of the South without any such aid. He takes the position that the military aid (weapons, military advising for artillery, the building of an citadel in Saigon, fortifying naval vessels with bronze siding, and the supply of four officers and eighty soldiers) was insignificant compared to the force of 30,000 men and 1,200 vessels supplied by a modification of the traditional military frontier system of agricultural land management. He also stipulates that Nguyễn Phúc Ánh ignored the strategic advice of the French officers in his successful engagements. (see discussion pages 8-11). Marr states simply that the French provided "key technical and military assistance." While offering more than Marr, McLeod's evidence still falls short without a discussion of the military aid given as it relates to specific engagements. Hodgkin generally supports McLeod's position.

¹⁶ The name was initially changed to Việt Nam 越南 before reverting back to Đại Việt 大越, and then renamed Đại Nam 大南 in 1838. Đại Nam can be translated as the Great South, Greater South, or Imperial South. Both Đại Nam and Việt Nam 越南 seem like problematic choices since these terms reference, or orient, the country "South" of China. The colonial era term An Nam 安南, commonly translated as Pacified South though also read as Peaceful South, is seen as a derogatory reminder of the Chinese subjugation of the Vietnamese people. For a detailed discussion of the naming of Việt Nam, see Christopher E. Goscha, "Annam and Vietnam in the New Indochinese Space, 1887-1945," in *Asian Forms of the Nation*, ed. Stein Tønnesson and Hans Antlöv (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996), 93-130.

superintendent was established, trade was restricted to certain ports, Western merchants and sailors were refused the right to disembark, exports of certain commodities were banned, imports were taxed heavily, and the first right of purchase was reserved for the state. Mark McLeod, in his work examining the conquest of Đại Nam, argues that Gia Long's dealings with Pigneau de Behaine were a continuation of the Nguyễn policy during the previous Lê Dynasty of "expedient toleration" of Catholic missionaries as intermediaries in the acquisition of Western weaponry.¹⁷

Gia Long's chosen successor, Minh Mệnh (1820-1840), who felt the Catholic missionaries made "the people's hearts crooked, thus destroying our beautiful customs," issued a series of edicts in 1833, 1836 and 1838 banning the practice of Catholicism and calling for the execution of missionaries. His successor, Thiệu Trị (1841-1847), attempted to moderate the position of Minh Mệnh to execute missionaries, choosing to expel or imprison them instead. His position hardened though and he began to execute missionaries again after an incident in 1847 in which Rigault de Genouilly, in command of the French warships, *La Gloire* and *La Victorieuse*, plundered and eventually sunk five bronze-plated Vietnamese ships, killing as many as 10,000 Vietnamese at Đà Nẵng after parlaying with Catholic missionaries on shore. Following the death of Thiệu Trị, tensions between the French and the Nguyễn Dynasty soon came to a head.¹⁸

¹⁷ McLeod, 21.

¹⁸ Ibid, 18-19, 21, 28, 33, and 35-36; Hodgkin, 122-24, 128. Hodgkin argues that Minh Mệnh was restrained from suppressing Catholics until after the death of his viceroy in the South, Lê Văn Duyệt. According to figures of the Société des Missions Etrangères he cites, there were 350,000 Christian converts in the northern third of the country and 100,000 converts in the southern third. Furthermore, "these were organized for the most part in distinct Christian villages, *chrétientés* (*ho duong*),... who used the Romanised script, *quoc ngu*," and "rejected the cult of ancestors."

Napoleon III convened La Commission de la Cochinchine¹⁹ in 1857 to explore the possibility of establishing an empire in Đại Nam. The Commission advised the Emperor that the issue of religious persecution would be a good cover for the establishment of a civilizing mission and in better competing in the race for commercial empire directed at China.²⁰ France's greatest competitor in the region was Britain. The British had long since built their own "base for expansion eastwards" in India, had begun developing an entrepôt at Singapore since 1819, and acquired Hong Kong in 1842 after the First Opium War.²¹ In late 1847, a force of British and French arrived in China to demand more concessions from the Qing Chinese nominally in retribution for the execution of a French Catholic missionary. Tensions mounted over the subsequent nine years when in October 1856, the Chinese arrested crewmembers charged with piracy from a British vessel whose registry had expired leading to the "Arrow incident." The Second Opium War had started. Not coincidentally, in August 1858, a French force of 2,500 troops and 13

¹⁹ As early as 111 B.C.E., the Chinese applied the term 交趾 Jiao Zhi (in *pinyin* or modern Chinese transliteration), meaning "crossed toes" or "intertwined feet," to the area around the Red River Delta. 交趾, "kō shē" in the *on yomi*, or Chinese reading of the characters, which approximated the Chinese pronunciation at the time the Japanese adopted these characters around the Sui (581-618) or early Tang Dynastic (618-907) period. It seems likely that Kochen was a European corruption of an archaic pronunciation of Jiao Zhi, though it became applied to the Mekong Delta in the south. We know that "Chine" (China) was appended to "Cochin" by European traders to distinguish it from a similar name used in India. A third term that was applied to the lands inhabited by the ethnic Kinh (the lowland majority of Vietnam) was 安南 (An nan or Annam), or "pacified South." Reference to the earliest use of 交趾 is from *Ci Hai* 辞海 (Shanghai: Shanghai Ci Chu Chu Ban She 上海辞书出版社, 2000), translated and summarized by Vinh Chi Quan (hereafter Ci Hai/Quan).

²⁰ Ibid, 42.

²¹ Nicola Cooper, *France in Indochina: Colonial Encounters* (New York: Berg, 2001), 12 and 14; Robert Aldrich, *Greater France: A History of French Overseas Expansion* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 73.

warships, supported by a smaller Spanish force of 450 troops and one warship from the Philippines, arrived in Đà Nẵng.²²

The French force at Đà Nẵng was under the command of Rigault de Genouilly whose exploits eleven years earlier had undoubtedly earned him the commission. In addition to the fourteen warships of the Franco-Spanish force, French soldiers had been equipped with breech-loading Minié rifles since 1849.²³ These rifles were capable of hitting a target 100 yards distant 94.5 percent of the time, and 52.5 percent of the time at 400 yards. By contrast, the 32,000-man army of Đại Nam was equipped with 5,000 muzzle-loading muskets with a maximum range of 330 yards, which could hit a target less than 10 percent of the time. Moreover, they were allowed to practice shooting them only once per year, and were given just six projectiles for battle. Those not carrying these antique arms relied instead on spears and sharpened staves. In short, compared to the firearms used by the army of Đại Nam, French guns were lighter, more mobile, breech loading rather than muzzle loading, and about five times as accurate. After a five-month, inconclusive siege and an outbreak of cholera amongst his soldiers, the chief disadvantage he faced, Genouilly moved the bulk of his force south to lay siege on more vulnerable Cochinchina with near immediate success.²⁴ Then returning to Đà Nẵng, he achieved the victory that had earlier eluded him, but Genouilly fell ill and was replaced.

²² McLeod, 19; Lt. Col. H.R. Chakrabarty, *Vietnam, Kampuchea, Laos Bound in Comradeship: A Panoramic Study of Indochina from Ancient to Modern Times* (New Delhi: Patriot Publishers, 1988), 132. Spain became involved because Tự Đức's had the Spanish bishop of Tonkin killed the preceding year.

²³ Daniel R. Headrick, "The Tools of Imperialism: Technology and the Expansion of Colonial Empires in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Modern History* 51, 2, Technology and War (June 1979): 250. Presumably, the muzzle loading rifles were antique leftovers obtained by Gia Long through Pigneau de Behaine some seventy years earlier.

²⁴ McLeod, 43-44.

A large French force freed by the conclusion of the Second Opium War soon arrived and consolidated French positions in Cochinchina and Đà Nẵng, renamed Tourane by the French.

In 1862, Thiệu Trị's successor, Tự Đức, became the head of a state in crisis. In addition to the defeat of his troops at both Đà Nẵng and in Cochinchina, a Catholic Lê pretender had mounted a rebellion in Đông Kinh.²⁵ Added to these problems, French warships dominated the coastal waters (though they were too heavy to navigate the rivers inland) and they setup a naval blockade to make sure that rice from the fertile territory in the South would not reach the center of the country where it was needed. Realizing defeat, Tự Đức sent emissaries to negotiate a treaty with the French, giving France the beginnings of an empire in Southeast Asia. Under the terms of the treaty, Tự Đức consented to pay an indemnity of four million dollars, and ceded Côn Sơn, renamed Pulo Condore by the French, Sài Gòn, and the three eastern provinces of Cochinchina (Gia Định, Định Tường and Biên Hòa). He also agreed not to cede any territory to another power without the consent of France, and to open up three ports, including Đà Nẵng; granted Catholic missionaries the right to carry about their business without fear of abuse; and granted French warships the right of passage up the Mekong river.²⁶ Five years later, the governor of French-controlled portions of Cochinchina, Admiral La

²⁵ Ibid, 48-51; Osborne, 30.

²⁶ McLeod, 47-48, 54; Robert Aldrich, 77; and Dommen, 5. Mark McCleod provides interesting evidence to the effect that Tự Đức's two emissaries went beyond the mandate granted them because the emperor had stated emphatically that "Territory must absolutely not be granted; freedom to preach the heretical religion must absolutely not be granted."

Grandière, impatient for approval from Paris, seized Vĩnh Long, Châu Đốc and Hà Tiên without bloodshed to complete the French occupation of southern Đại Nam.²⁷

The British, meanwhile, had gained control of Arakan, Tenasserim, and Lower Burma after two wars with the Burmese (1824-1826 and 1852-1853). Intimating that the British were well on their way to controlling all of Burma, the governor of Cochinchina was advised in 1862 that France should “maintain influence” over the Indochinese Peninsula in its imperial race against Britain with a view to the prize of China.²⁸ Similar sentiments led the privately-endowed Paris Geographical Society, headed concurrently by the Minister of the Navy and Colonies, François de Chasseloup-Laubat, to sponsor an expedition from 1866-1867 exploring the viability of the Mekong River as a commercial route to Yunnan.²⁹ The expedition discovered that the Mekong was not navigable for much of its length, but the second-in-command of this expedition, Frances Garnier would still wager life on finding a commercial route from northern Đại Nam to China.

In 1873, the governor of Cochinchina, Admiral Jules-Marie Dupré, sent Garnier at the head of a French force to Hanoi the pretext of assisting a French trader, Jean Dupuis, and to open up the commerce of the Red River as a trade route to Yunnan. Dupuis had been involved in illegal trade with Yunnan (Southern China) conducted via the Red River in Đông Kinh. Tỵ Đức had intervened, since the arrest of a French national created an international incident, to request the French government in Cochinchina to help resolve the matter before it escalated.³⁰ Garnier, apparently under the orders of Admiral Dupré,

²⁷ Osborne, 62.

²⁸ McLeod, 98.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Chakrabarty, 139; Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 40.

who had ignored Tự Đức's plea, seized the citadel at Hà Nội and took control of Đông Kinh. Garnier was later killed by the bandit group, Cờ Đen (Pavillons Noir or Black Flags), headed by a former general of the Taiping Rebellion in China, Liu Yongfu 刘永福.³¹ The French force left Đông Kinh in exchange for recognition of their claim to the six provinces of Cochinchina they had been occupying.

Ten years later, French Prime Minister Jules Ferry decided to establish a "protectorate" over Đông Kinh and Annam³², and Captain Henri Rivière was sent to Đông Kinh at the head of two companies under the guise of suppressing the activities of pirates.³³ He succeeded in taking the citadel at Hà Nội as Garnier had done ten years earlier, but was also killed a short while later along with twenty-three of his men. His decapitated head was paraded through villages in the area.³⁴ Meanwhile, substantial reinforcements were on their way to help conquer Tự Đức's regime and impose protectorate status over Đông Kinh, renamed Tonkin by the French, and Annam. The French had widened the technological gap since the earlier conquest of Cochinchina and Đà Nẵng. They could now carry their battles inland much more effectively with river

³¹ McLeod, 98. Liu Yongfu had sought refuge with a small force in Đại Nam after the defeat of the Taiping. This force grew in size over time and came to include components of Chinese, Vietnamese and highland minority people. Marr also states that they were primarily brigands, but were extremely anti-Western if only because they realized firm French control of their areas they operated would mean their end.

³² Annam 安南, commonly translated as "Pacified South" was one of the names applied by the Chinese to the Vietnamese homeland. Although Đại Nam has regional differences, the French divided the country into three regions based exclusively on their conquests, applying the names Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina to the northern, central, and southern regions respectively. Although the first two names bore historic connotations to the Vietnamese, the French gave them new meaning. The Vietnamese resisted these terms under colonial rule and disposed of them altogether when they regain sovereignty.

³³ McLeod, 104, 108. Governor Dupré of Cochinchina, who initiated the attack on Tonkin, stated these limited aims in a letter distributed to the missionaries of the Tonkin Delta, but in personal letter dated October 19, 1873, he had made clear that he believed a "protectorate of France over the entire kingdom" was necessary.

³⁴ Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 42.



Guerre du Tonkin. Prise de Sontay. 16 et 17 Décembre 1883. Imagerie d'Epinal, No. 160.

French-press rendering of the French capture of Sơn Tây defended by "Black Flag, Annamites and Chinese." The French troops were composed of marine infantry and riflemen, the Foreign Legion and Algerian *tirailleurs*.



Guerre du Tonkin. Défense Héroïque de Tuyên-Quan, du 14 Février au 3 Mars 1885. Imagerie d'Epinal, No. 165.

Depiction the defense of the Garrison at Tuyên-Quan, after the capture of Lạng Sơn, by the Foreign Legion, Algerian *tirailleurs* and Tonkinese against a "a band of Chinese" numbering 15-20,000 men.

gunboats and had replaced the Minié rifle with a more accurate bolt-action Chassepot rifle having an effective range of 600 yards.³⁵ The reinforcements arrived a month after Tỵ Đức had passed away, and so he never lived to see his country fall entirely into the hands of the French.³⁶ A regency council deposed Tỵ Đức's successor, Đức Đức, after three days and a prince ascended the throne as Hiệp Hoà, who was forced to sign the final treaty ceding sovereignty over to the French. Hiệp Hoà was subsequently poisoned for having capitulated to the French and died after a reign of only four months.³⁷

Ignoring the fact that the Nguyễn were still entitled to some amount of self-rule under the protectorate status, the French placed a child of their choice on the throne. Regent Tôn Thất Thuyết then fled from Huế with the real emperor, the teenager Hàm Nghi, and they issued the Cần Vương or "loyalty to the king" edict in 1885 calling for resistance:

Our virtue being insufficient, amidst these events We did not have the strength to hold out and allowed the royal capital to fall, forcing the Empresses [Tỵ Đức's mother and Tỵ Đức's wife] to flee for their lives. The fault is Ours entirely, a matter of great shame. But traditional loyalties are strong. Hundred of mandarins and commanders of all levels, perhaps not having the heart to abandon Me, unite as never before, those with intellect helping to plan, those with strength willing to fight, those with riches contributing for supplies—all of one mind and body in seeking a way out of danger, a solution to all difficulties.³⁸

A court official, Phan Đình Phùng, led the most effective elements of the resistance movement, composed of both scholar-officials and peasants. The French captured Hàm

³⁵ Headrick, 254.

³⁶ McLeod, 29. Although the French would nominally rule Cochinchina as a colony, and Tonkin and Annam as protectorates, they continued to maintain the pretense of these divisions throughout their rule even though Cochinchina and Tonkin had been incorporated into the administration of Đại Nam in 1831 and 1832 respectively. Similarly, the French used the terms *Tonkinois* (Tonkinese), *Cochinchinois* (Cochinchinese) and Annamite, to refer to the inhabitants of these three divisions as if they were distinct ethnic groups.

³⁷ Chakrabarty, 143.

³⁸ Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 50-51.

Nghi in 1888 and exiled him to Algeria, but the resistance movement continued until Phan Đình Phùng's death of dysentery in 1896.³⁹ Direct resistance to French colonization on behalf of the Nguyễn Dynasty ended with the defeat of the Cần Vương resistance movement, but resistance to French rule was only temporarily suppressed.⁴⁰

The other two “protectorates” making up French Indochina (officially known as the Indochinese Union) by the end of the nineteenth century were Cambodia and Laos. In Cambodia, French public interest joined with pre-existing diplomatic efforts, and a burst of confidence gained from the conquest of Cochinchina. Naturalist Henri Mouhot's posthumously published *Voyages dans les royaumes du Siam du Cambodge et du Laos et autres parties Centrales de l'Indo-Chine* (Travels in Kingdoms of Siam, Cambodia, and Laos and the central parts of Indochina; 1863) expresses an exceedingly condescending view of the Cambodians who were, according to the author, “perhaps the most corrupted in all the East,” and “expected to find in us [French] men superior, morally, as well as

³⁹ William J. Duiker, William J. *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 26-27; Chakrabarty, 147; and Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 74; and Philip E. Catton, *Diem's Final Failure: Prelude to America's War in Vietnam* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002), 55-68.

⁴⁰ Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 74; Philip E. Catton, *Diem's Final Failure: Prelude to America's War in Vietnam* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002), 91; and Anne Blair, Review of *Diem's Final Failure* in *Diplomatic History* 28:3 (June, 2004): 465. French Colonel Joseph Gallieni applied what he called the “oil-spot approach” to capture Đê Thám, bandit-turned-nationalist-turned-bandit, in Tonkin. Although Philip Catton does not make this connection, he notes that the CIA instituted a “Strategic Hamlet program” utilizing “combat hamlet” as early as 1961 only that “it seems to have developed as an outgrowth of local experiments in several provinces.” “Like the proverbial ‘oil spot,’” adds Catton, “the edges of the secure zones would gradually push outward, intersecting with one another and expanding territory under the regime's control.” In her review of Catton's work, Anne Blair notes that Catton's work provides evidence that Sir Robert Thompson's ideas “fed into the developed” Strategic Hamlet program, “but Thompson was not its formative influence” (Thompson had led the British fight against Communist insurgency in colonial Malaya before becoming an advisor to the Americans in Việt Nam). Even Gallieni's “oil-spot approach” may have been derived from the successful Nguyễn tactic devised for the *nam tiến*.

intellectually and physically.”⁴¹ Citing numerous deficiencies in the administration of the country, which was threatened on both sides by the impositions of Siam and Đai Nam, Mouhot openly declared that “European conquest” alone would “effect the regeneration of this state.”⁴² Involved in dispute for the throne and hoping to play France against Siam, the new king of Cambodia, Norodom, signed a treaty with the French granting them commercial concessions and control over his country’s foreign affairs in exchange for a formal offer of permanent protection.⁴³

The French first laid claim to Laos as protector of Annam and Tonkin, which supposedly had prior claims of suzerainty over the territory though there was no basis to this claim. August Pavie, a former military officer and postal official in Cambodia turned explorer, who seems to have had a valid concern for protecting the Laotians from the Siamese, led the French drive that maneuvered the territory into French hands over a two-decade period. Having first attempted to use diplomacy, the French finally brought their troops into the Mekong Valley and concocted a reason to replace the Siamese as suzerains of Laos by 1899 when all Laotian territory was incorporated into the Indochinese Union as a protectorate.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Henri Mouhot, *Travels in Siam, Cambodia, Laos, and Annam* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: White Lotus Press, 2001), 172.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 149, 153, and 213.

⁴³ David P. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), 140; and Robert Aldrich, 79.

⁴⁴ David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 1984), 32-33; Robert Aldrich, 82; and Chakrabarty, 150. In 1897, Luang Prabang joined the Union, and in 1899, Lower Laos entered the Union as well. Both Cambodia and Laos were officially protectorates of France.

SCHOLAR-OFFICIAL RESISTANCE & REFORM

With the signing of a formal treaty in 1883 between the French and Emperor Hiệp Hoà, and the failure of the Cần Vương resistance movement, Đại Nam ceased to exist and the people became known as Annamites (often rendered Annamese in English) for the duration of French rule in that country. These highly symbolic name changes were matched by deep changes, which included the decline of Chinese cultural influence paralleled by a growing influence of French culture and the replacement of Chinese with *quốc ngữ*. Change occurred first in Cochinchina simply because the French conquered it earlier and it became a colony without the pretense of its protectorate status. Still, changes in Cochinchina were less significant, in their isolation, until the entire country was incorporated under one omnipotent Governor General who could erase the fictitious division between Cochinchina, Tonkin and Annam with his right to issue decrees.

There is a tendency among scholars to view two of the most influential Vietnamese nationalists of pre-World War I French Indochina, Phan Chu Trinh and Phan Bội Châu as “intellectual reformers,” in contrast to “nationalist movements of the 1930s (including the communist movement).”⁴⁵ This blurs important distinctions between the two individuals and leads to an oversimplification of the differences between them and

⁴⁵ See, for example, Peter Zinoman *The Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 159, and Mark Philip Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam & America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 14. This tendency, which conflates economic revolution with political revolution and reveals a marked influence of Vietnamese propaganda that promotes the uniqueness of the Vietnamese Communists, presupposes a sharp division between Vietnamese nationalists based on the influence of Communist ideology on later nationalists. Such an approach necessarily contextualizes Vietnamese history in an American-Western European framework pivoted around capitalism and its antithesis, communism, rather than nationalism, and unnecessarily leads to a blurring of the distinction between non-Communist nationalists such as Phan Chu Trinh and Phan Bội Châu.

the latter movements. Phan Chu Trinh primarily wanted to see Vietnamese Indochina reformed and hoped for independence after reform occurred. Hearing that a Russian fleet had anchored at Cam Ranh Bay on its way to take part in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), Phan Chu Trinh and a couple of compatriots rushed out to marvel at the “giant iron men-of-war,” symbols of Western technology and power he had hoped would transform Vietnamese society. The Japanese later sank thirty-two of the thirty-three vessels Phan Chu Trinh had seen.⁴⁶ The Japanese victory held more importance for Phan Bội Châu.

Having passed the regional level civil service exam, Châu belonged to the traditional scholar class.⁴⁸ He aspired to independence from the French first and came to see, through Chinese and Japanese influences, reform as the most effective path to obtain this goal. In his *Prison Notes*, Châu makes clear that his objective was independence and that the choice of Cường Để (a descendant of Gia Long’s eldest son, Cảnh) as



Phan Bội Châu⁴⁷

titular head was a convenience. Châu was convinced that support for the Nguyễn Dynasty was necessary to collect money for arms since the monarchy could gain the support of “large and wealthy families” and because the Nguyễn still represented a

⁴⁶ Chakrabartty, 158.

⁴⁷ William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life* (New York: Hyperion, 2000), fifth unnumbered page following 330.

⁴⁸ Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 33.

unifying symbol for all Vietnamese.⁴⁹ A few years later, after the Chinese Revolution of 1911 and the abdication by the Qing Emperor in 1912, Phan repudiated a monarchical form of government, and instead began supporting the idea of democracy.⁵⁰ His dedication to overthrowing the French, in contrast, would not change. Đại Nam “knew only a world of China, Châu would say, and “when the French arrived we only knew a world with France. But the world had changed after the Japanese victory.” The Japanese victory over the Russians was an emblematic victory of the Asians over the Europeans. “The only problem we still sought to overcome [in gaining independence from the French] was that of obtaining weapons.”⁵¹

Tradition led Châu to seek aid from China,⁵² but since he received no response, he went to Japan where he met the exiled Chinese reformist Liang Qichao 梁启超 (Ch’i-ch’ao). Liang introduced Châu to Inukai Tsuyoshi 犬養毅 and Ōkuma Shigenobu 大隈

⁴⁹ Phan Bội Châu. *Prison Notes (Ngục Trung Thư) in Reflections from Captivity*, translated by Christopher Jenkins, Trần Khanh Tuyết, and Huỳnh Sanh Thông (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1978), 16-17; and Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 198, and 135, Phan believed that “because of clashing ideas and contradictory activities we may end up opposing each other when the external enemy is still not eliminated.”

⁵⁰ Phan Bội Châu, *Overtaken Chariot: The Autobiography of Phan-Bội-Châu*, translated by Vinh Sinh and Nicholas Wickenden (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press Books, 1999), 190. In these memoirs, Phan clearly reveals that a choice of political system for his country was clearly subordinated to the need to oust the French. “I was fascinated by the theories of Rousseau, Montesquieu, and others. Rousseau’s *Contrat Social* and Montesquieu’s *De l’Esprit des Lois* I had read for the first time after I went overseas. Moreover, as a result of my many contacts with Chinese comrades, monarchism had been relegated to the back of my mind. But I had not yet dared to proclaim the fact, because at the time when I went abroad I had upheld the banner of monarchy, and I wished to keep faith with the people at home. Had circumstances not changed, our means would not have had to change; but now that circumstances had altered, I suddenly reached the point of making a proposal for democracy quite openly.” Phan also mentioned his *Prison Notes*, 32, the fact that Ōkuma and Inukai had been pleased with his support of the Nguyen Dynasty.

⁵¹ Phan Bội Châu, *Prison Notes*, 23.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 28-29; Chakrabarty, 145. Phan Bội Châu sent a letter to the Governor of Canton in which he made an allusion to the threat the French posed to China, that his two provinces, Guangdong 广东 (Kwangtung) and Guangxi 广西 (Kwangsi), and Vietnamese Indochina were “like lips and teeth; when lips open in a cry of suffering, the teeth are cold.” Chakrabarty notes that Qing China had recognized the French protectorate of Tonkin and Annam in a treaty signed in 1884.

重信, both leaders of Rikken Kaishintō 立憲改進黨 (Constitutional Reform Party).⁵³

When Châu solicited arms from the Japanese, they told him that the time was inopportune, but they encouraged him to bring Cường Đê to Japan as a move to increase the ties between the two countries.⁵⁴ Influenced by this and additional discussions with Liang Qichao and the members of Rikken Kaishintō in which he was encouraged to invest more in the education of his countrymen to strengthen their struggle, Châu penned *Khuyến Quốc Dân Tư trợ Du Học (An Appeal to My Fellow Countrymen to Provide Financial Support for Overseas Studies)* in 1906. In this work, he compared the weakness and ignorance of the Vietnamese with the strength of Meiji Japan by praising the Japanese warrior code, *bushidō* 武士道, the Japanese group ethic, and tried to facilitate interest in studying foreign customs and institutions to strengthen their own.⁵⁵ This appeal led to what is termed the Đông Du (Exodus to the East) movement which sent as many as 200 Vietnamese students to Japan from November 1907 to July 1908.⁵⁶

Châu also began promoting the idea of a constitutional monarchy and incorporated reformist ideas of Phan Chu Trinh in *Tân Việt Nam (New Việt Nam)*, a pamphlet he wrote in 1907.⁵⁷ Concurrently, Châu returned to the border area of Guangdong-Guangxi (China) and Tonkin to work on preparations for obtaining arms and

⁵³ Ibid, 31. Ōkuma was former member of the ruling oligarchy, or *genrō* 元老, of Meiji Japan.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 31-32.

⁵⁵ Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 43.

⁵⁶ Phan Bội Châu, *Prison Notes*, 140; Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 44. David Marr, in an introduction to Phan Bội Châu's *Prison Notes*, 6, compares Phan's autobiography, written around 1937, as more "more reflective, more carefully organized, more consistent and substantial in content," however, "a less precise reflection of the author's earlier predisposition for angry, passionate activist involvement."

⁵⁷ Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 137-39; Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 45.

in October 1907, set up the Việt Nam Công Hiến Hội (Việt Nam Constitutional Association) as a provisional government overseas. That same year, though, the French had signed a treaty with Japan in which the two countries mutually recognized each other's colonial possessions in Asia. The agreement, together with Japan's interest in obtaining loans from France, led them to capitulate in 1910 to the French request that they expel Phan Bội Châu, Cường Đê, and the Vietnamese students studying there.⁵⁸ Châu's importance to the resistance movement continued past this period, but he is most remembered for these earlier efforts.

Phan Chu Trinh presents a paradox. Although he was the leading Vietnamese scholar-official to propose extricating valuable lessons in science and industry from the Western imperialists, what drove him to the mission was, in large part, his disgust at the decadence of the scholar-official institution in the two protectorates *resulting* from French rule.⁵⁹ Trinh's father had joined the Cần Vương resistance movement, but was executed on suspicion of treason. This memory may have led Phan to forswear violence, a principle he maintained until his death, and some speculate it may be the source of his critical look at the scholar-official class. Like Phan Bội Châu, he had passed the traditional civil service exams, but Trinh became an official in the court of Huế, which in

⁵⁸Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 139, 163; Phan Bội Châu, *Prison Notes*, 44-45; and Chakrabarty, 155. Marr notes that Phan's famous appeal to Governor General Beau resembled Kang Youwei's reformist petitions to the Gwangsu Emperor, except for the fact that in realizing the political impotence of the Nguyễn emperor, he had to make his petition to the colonial leader.

⁵⁹This idea is borrowed from Samuel Popkin, *The Rational Peasant* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 134-35, who in turn cites as one of his sources on these ideas "a masterly work" on *quốc ngữ* in a senior thesis by John Perkin from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Though this bears no direct relation to Phan Chu Trinh, the acceptance of Western goods extricated from its conquest of Đại Nam, was necessary. Phan Chu Trinh's fame was based on leading the march toward "modernization," or stripped of the Western bias this connotes, development of science and industry.

the first years of the twentieth century still possessed a modicum of power and grew disgusted by the blatant corruption he witnessed.⁶⁰



Phan Chu Trinh⁶¹

Therefore, Trinh resembled more the non-revolutionary element of Chinese reformers, in sharp contrast to Châu's Japanese focus of self-strengthening to "repel the barbarian." Trinh's determination to gain independence from France seems as tenuous as Châu's commitment to restoring the Nguyễn Dynasty. Trinh's expressions of a belief in the viability of reform "under colonial aegis" gained him supporters in both the French colony and in the *métropole*.

Yet, the acerbic tone of his rhetoric was seen as a destabilizing factor by the colonial administration. Encouraged by many Vietnamese scholar-officials who had a vendetta against Phan, he was eventually sentenced to life in prison at Poulo Condore in 1908. In his writings that called for aping French ways, however, Phan had gained powerful French supporters. He was released in 1911, and eventually permitted to go to Paris where he was also provided a 5,400-franc per year stipend.⁶²

⁶⁰ Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 52; Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 87, 156-57. According to Marr, he graduated third in the regional exams in 1900 and passed the metropolitan exams the following year.

⁶¹ Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, ninth unnumbered page following 330.

⁶² Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 194 244; Zinoman, 268.

The philosophical meeting place for both Phan Bội Châu and Phan Chu Trinh was in the establishment of Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục (Tonkin Free School) in March 1907.⁶³ In Japan, a private citizen, Fukuzawa Yukichi 福澤諭吉, had opened Keiō Gijuku 慶応義塾 as an expression of the *bunmei kaika* 文明開化 (Civilization and Enlightenment movement). Vietnamese in Japan became aware of Fukuzawa, his school and *bunmei kaika* and attempted to translate it to the hope and aspirations in their besieged country by founding Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục.⁶⁴

Although short lived, Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục acted as an institutional leader within Vietnamese society to spread interest in learning Western science and industry and in fighting French rule. The curriculum seems to have been a modest attempt to incorporate Western education, but such attempts were influential.⁶⁵ *Quốc ngữ*, having been introduced in Cochinchina shortly after the conquest there, was used as the written text in the elementary levels at the school, helping to popularize it.⁶⁶ Songs composed at the school drew attention to French exploitation, textbooks valorized scholar-gentry who

⁶³ Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 164. Marr states: “in March 1907 the French granted permission to open the school.” Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 57, however, in providing a more complete explanation of the events surrounding the school’s opening reveals that the school began language instruction for “seventy or eight students of both sexes” about March, but the French were not prepared to give permission for the school to open and so two instructors were arrested while giving lectures. The government only granted permission for the school to open, according to Duiker in May, about a month after releasing the two teachers.

⁶⁴ *Bunmei Kaika* was a movement in 1870s’ Japan, encouraged by the government, to learn from the West, and Fukuzawa Yukichi was one of its biggest promoters amongst the private citizenry. Keiō Gijuku (or University) is one of Japan’s oldest and most prominent private universities. Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 56; Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 164. Duiker states that Lương Văn Can and Nguyễn Quyền were the founders, while Marr makes it clear that Phan Bội Châu’s efforts and promotion of Fukuzawa Yukichi were crucial to the school’s establishment.

⁶⁵ Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 165, 169. Marr also suggests that the fashion for Western ideas led to influential scholar-gentry adopting Western cloths and hairstyles.

⁶⁶ Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 60.

had resisted French colonialism, and students were encouraged to boycott French goods.⁶⁷

Yet Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục was more than a school. It served as a center for the self-strengthening movement, a public salon for discussions of current issues and debates between reformers and revolutionaries, and a publication house for books as well as an infrequent newspaper, *Đăng Cổ Tùng Báo* (*Old Lantern Miscellany*). The school sponsored debates between prominent speakers, including Phan Chu Trinh, examining issues such as whether or not Buddhism was an aid to nationalism, and whether or not Chinese learning and Chinese characters were a stimulus to Vietnamese society.⁶⁸ The school's publications included translations of French Enlightenment works, Phan Bội Châu's writings authored in Chinese while in exile, and works by the Chinese reformers like Liang Qichao. Among the political essays it published, the pamphlet, *Thiệt Tiền Ca* (*Iron Money Ballad*), critiqued French monetary policies and led to such a successful boycott of French iron money that the colonial administration was forced to withdraw the money from circulation.⁶⁹

The school's successful influence on Vietnamese society was its undoing, though, and the French retaliated against the distribution of publications like *Thiệt Tiền Ca* by closing the school around the end of 1907 and sending its leaders to Poulo Condore.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 166.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 169.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 171; Gail P. Kelly, "Colonial Schools in Vietnam: Policy and Practice," in *Education and Colonialism* (New York: Longman Inc., 1978): 96; and William J. Duiker. *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 61.

⁷⁰ Kelly: 97; Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 62; and Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 181-82. Kelly believes that this publication led to the closing of the school "in late 1907," whereas Duiker argues that the overall threat of an Vietnamese nationalist movement

Similarly, Phan Chu Trinh's iconoclasm could not have the effect that the May Fourth Movement had in a young would-be republican China, because he lived in a fully colonized country.⁷¹ The reform that could and would occur in French Indochina was largely directed from above by the besiegers.

CONCLUSION

The history of what became the Vietnamese state of Đại Nam, as outlined above, reveals a country that had grown through conquest before it was itself conquered by the French during the nineteenth century. The fall of the Vietnamese state through the capitulation of the Nguyễn Dynasty did not extinguish national aspirations of the Vietnamese people; rather, these evolved. Phan Chu Trinh led those who more or less recognized French rule over the Vietnamese, and merely sought reform, while Phan Bội Châu represented the “resisters” to French rule. The next generation of Vietnamese nationalists would weave together these two strains with additional influences.

fomented by—perhaps even directed by—the school led the French to close it in “December, 1907.” Marr states that the French authorities closed the school in “January 1908.”

⁷¹ The term “May Fourth Movement” is applied here in the broader sense to include the earlier influence of the *New Youth* magazine that challenged Confucian traditions, which were blamed for the decline of Qing China that was made apparent in the defeats to western powers during the nineteenth century. The Nguyễn Dynasty was not in a similar stage of decay when the French imposed their control over Đại Nam. Rather, Vietnamese intellectuals trained in the French curriculum during the 1920s and the Chinese reform movement inaccurately applied the lessons of China to a different situation in their home country (Recent Vietnamese scholars have maintained this erroneous correlation between Vietnam and China). The validity of their approach was based, rather, on the fact that they needed to embrace elements of a foreign tradition—if not repudiate their own adopted tradition—to overcome the foreign power.



EXPOSITION DE 1900
Pavillon de l'Indo-Chine

Supplement illustré de *Petit Journal*

Chapter 2 L'Indochine Française

The French colonial administration of Indochina, the repercussions upon the Vietnamese, and continued resistance to French rule are examined in this chapter. What distinguished French colonial rule from British or Dutch colonial rule in Southeast Asia? What were the social, political, and economic ramifications of French colonial rule on the Vietnamese? Did the French repress native dissent, and if so how? Did the Vietnamese continue to resist the French, and if so, what distinguished different resistance movements from each other? Though primary Vietnamese sources are not used in this

discussion, with the exception of a few novels, the purpose of pursuing such questions is to give some voice to the Vietnamese rather than rely exclusively on the French minority who ruled the region.

COLONIAL STATE APPARATUS, ECONOMICS, AND SOCIAL CHANGE

French conquest remained strikingly different from the Vietnamese *nam tiến*, or southward drive. The French population in Indochina was never large enough to change the identity of the land's demographic makeup the way the Vietnamese drive south had remade the lands they conquered intrinsically Vietnamese. Due to the nature of the French conquest, the French were always seen as outsiders and oppressors even when elements of their culture came to be appreciated and even adopted by the Vietnamese.

Few could better introduce us to the besieger's world than Sir Hesketh Bell. Bell had served in the British Empire as Governor of Uganda, Northern Nigeria, Dominica, and Mauritius before he traveled to the Dutch colony on Java and French Indochina in 1926 and subsequently penned a comparative study of their colonial administrations for the benefit of his "colleagues, and their successors in the African Service."¹

Bell dissected the French colonial administration. A *gouverneur général* (Governor General) presided over the entirety of Indochina, followed in a successive tier by a *gouverneur* for the colony of Cochinchina, and *résidents supérieur* (residents superior) for the individual protectorates of Annam and Tonkin.² Below these top two tiers of

¹ Sir Henry Hesketh Joudou Bell, *Foreign Colonial Administration in the Far East* (London: E. Arnold, 1928), vii.

² *Ibid.*, vii, 185-86. Having served the British Empire as Governor of Uganda, Northern Nigeria, Dominica and Mauritius, Sir Hesketh Bell traveled to the Dutch colony on Java and French Indochina in 1926 before

colonial administrators, a third tier of French officials helped maintain a firm grip on the administration of Indochina.³ The *École Coloniale* was established in Paris in 1889 for training these officials, mostly Frenchmen but in some cases natives, for the administration of the French Empire. The vast majority of the *École Coloniale*'s graduates, according to Bell, chose Indochina because of the higher pay and "higher standard that prevails there in every respect."⁴ The school maintained twenty-five lecturers and professors who either possessed direct experience in colonial administration as former governors or were experts on colonial affairs in some manner. The program was two years in length, training sixty to eighty students at a time in one of its four divisions: Administration Section, Judicial Section, Preparatory Division, and Native Division.⁵

A much larger bureaucracy was needed than the number of graduates the school produced. There were, according to Anthony Short, three times as many Frenchmen in the bureaucracy of Indochina than there were British officials in similar positions in India where there was ten times the number of inhabitants.⁶ Bell provides an explanation for the strategy the French employed:

Instead of utilizing, as British "indirect rulers" usually do, the more or less reactionary chiefs of the old *régime*, as intermediaries between them and the village communities, they have preferred to place their trust in a body of progressive and suitably trained natives, selected by themselves, and who clearly realize that their power and authority

penning a comparative study of their colonial administrations for the benefit of his "colleagues, and their successors in the African Civil Service." Bell tells us that the principal distinction between a governor and a Residents Superior was that the latter could not issue decrees, but only *arrêtés*, which were orders that could carry punishments as severe as imprisonment or fines.

³ Lt. Col. H.R. Chakrabarty, *Vietnam, Kampuchea, Laos Bound in Comradeship: A Panoramic Study of Indochina from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Patriot Publishers, 1988), 152.

⁴ Bell, 165, 173.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 165-66.

⁶ Anthony Short, *The Origins of the Vietnam War* (New York: Longman, Inc., 1989), 23-24.

rest solely on their loyalty to the protecting Power and their devotion to duty. Those men, being drawn from all ranks of the indigenous race, understand thoroughly the idiosyncracies of their compatriots, appropriately supply the connecting link between the native masses and the foreign rulers, and are able gradually to fuse into an acceptable compromise interests that are often discordant and troublesome.⁷

It is easy to forget that, when talking in relatively broad historical terms, state politics are not an immediate concern of the average person, especially when regime changes take place far above the average peasant in an overwhelmingly rural society. Politics have ramifications that filter down over time though, usually long after a regime change has taken place. Resistance amongst the rank and file, as well as those affected earlier by the shifting of power, was mitigated by an organized state apparatus, which was able to shift the power balance in favor of the French who were outnumbered *four hundred-to-one* by



Annamite (Vietnamese) *tirailleurs*, Tonkin, postcard, Collection Pujade de Ladevèze

⁷ Bell, 294-95. Kate Frieson, "Sentimental Education: Les Sages Femmes and Colonial Cambodia," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 1, no. 1 (Spring, 2000): 2 and 6-7. The grand irony was that the French, who had persuaded King Norodom to relinquish his country's sovereignty in exchange in part for protection from Đai Nam, widely used Vietnamese, in preference to Khmer, in the administration of Cambodia as well. Kate Frieson explains that Vietnamese migrants were encouraged to take teaching positions in Cambodia, were favored as applicants as midwives, and dominated the upper echelon of civil service positions in Cambodia; and Chandler, 151 and 164. Chandler argues that Vietnamese domination of Cambodian civil service exacerbated nationalist sentiment in Cambodia.

Vietnamese in Indochina.⁸ Notably, Catholicism, which played an important role as a subversive element utilized against the Nguyễn Dynasty in the conquest of Đại Nam, lost its importance after the French gained control. In addition to a political administration, the French used censorship, the Sûreté Général (colonial intelligence and police service), a military composed largely of French officers and native soldiers (called *tirailleurs*), and a prison system sufficiently altered to suit political objectives. The *sûreté* was vital in suppressing resistance movements before they gathered momentum. Louis Marty, a founder of Sûreté Général, was fluent in both Chinese and Vietnamese, skills necessary for recruiting Vietnamese to spy for the French.

These Vietnamese agents were essential for French infiltration of Phan Bội Châu's Đông Du movement, as well as other organizations for more immediate plans to use violence to overthrow the French regime. The *sûreté* employed agents to pose as prisoners and used torture to gather intelligence.⁹

⁸ Jack A. Yeager, *The Vietnamese novel in French: a literary response to colonialism* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1987), 45.

⁹ David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 145, 213, 225, 260, 265-66; David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 329; Arthur J. Dommen, *The Indochinese Experience of the French and the Americans: Nationalism and Communism in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 38; and Peter Zinoman, *The Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 235. Although only formally established in 1917, Sûreté Général acted to consolidate previous policing efforts under one organization. Thomas Hodgkin, *Vietnam: The Revolutionary Path* (New York: The MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1981), 151-53. The Vietnamese *tirailleurs* had evolved from Vietnamese militia units formed by the French as early as the 1860s (though were not unique to Indochina) and were composed, according to Hodgkin, largely of Catholics "and the most notable Vietnamese military leaders fighting for the French" at this time, "were either Catholics or converts." A small collaborating elite emerged from the "Catholic Vietnamese in Cochinchina in particular, and its members: intermarried, met socially, enjoyed France and French culture, sent their children to study there, maintained friendly relations with senior French administrators, belonged to the Société des Etudes Indochinoises and on occasions contributed to its *Bulletin*, provided the Vietnamese representatives (from 1880 on) for Conseil Colonial. Though overlapping with the class of rich landed proprietors this collaborating *élite* was distinct from them, including men of no great wealth, like Truong Vin Ky [a Catholic Vietnamese who was employed first by the French conquerors as an

Over the first three decades of the twentieth century, several interconnected themes dominated in the Vietnamese lands of French Indochina. The indigenous people were increasingly integrated into French colonial administration, economic and social changes occurred at a phenomenal rate, and a concomitant dispersion of nationalist sentiment took place. It was not consciously necessary to make French men and women out of Vietnamese, only to make Indochina serve *métropole* and *colon* interests at minimal cost to colonial administration.¹⁰ The process, however, required that institutions be rationalized to fit French perceptions, and when the changes were not welcomed, the “modern” French way invariably won out over Chinese-influenced traditions. Chinese characters and Confucian precepts were at the core of traditional Vietnamese education, which served primarily to fill the ranks of bureaucracy. When the French conquered and began ruling Cochinchina as a colony, Chinese characters were seen as an impediment, and Confucian ideas were seen as superfluous for the lower levels of colonial ranks filled by Vietnamese.¹¹ Chinese influences were also seen as an insidious element in the resistance movement.

interpreter before working in the French colonial administration]—*while the men of wealth during the twentieth century in Cochinchina were the descendants, in the main, of figures who were historically anonymous in the nineteenth century.*” (italics added)

¹⁰ Samuel L. Popkin, *The Rational Peasant* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 135. The influence *colons* came to exert on colonial administration was directly proportional to “the general instability of the colonial bureaucracy—twenty-three governors-general for Indochina between 1892 and 1930.”

¹¹ Milton E. Osborn, *The French Presence in Cochinchina and Cambodia: Rule and Response (1859-1905)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 38-39. One governor of Cochinchina, Admiral Bonard, presaged the change that would occur in the Vietnamese mind by the early twentieth century when he said in 1862, that Chinese was “incompatible with all progress,” and *quốc ngữ* was a “language that all the Franco-Annamite people will understand.” By the 1870’s the French were increasing efforts to stamp out the use of Chinese characters in all official documents.

In this regard, teachers had acted as a conduit between villages and pre-colonial Vietnamese governments by instilling Confucian values, preparing children for state exams, and helping to implement government policy. However, informal networks established during their own training were utilized to organize against governments deemed to have lost the “mandate of heaven,” or right to rule, under Confucian doctrine. This tradition continued as a form of resistance to the French invasion of Cochinchina in 1858 and in resistance campaigns against colonial rule. Gail Kelly, who has studied education in Indochina during the early twentieth century, argues that even after even after the defeat of the Cần Vương, Vietnamese teachers continued to resist the French for 20 years, using village schools to recruit soldiers.¹²

French efforts to move away from a reliance in Vietnamese society on Chinese influenced institutions occurred much more rapidly in Cochinchina, which was administered as a colony directly after its subjugation in the early 1860s, while their approach to the protectorates was gradual, reflecting a desire, initially at least, to maintain the pretense of Vietnamese sovereignty over domestic issues. Confucian-based civil service exams using Chinese characters ended with French control in Cochinchina, and there were increasing moves to abolish Chinese characters in all official documents there in the 1870s.¹³ The French began a nascent public education system by 1906 based on the vernacular and use of textbooks written in *quốc ngữ*.¹⁴ *Quốc ngữ* did not begin to flourish until Confucian exams were eliminated in the protectorate areas of Tonkin, at

¹² Gail P. Kelly. “Colonial Schools in Vietnam: Policy and Practice,” in *Education and Colonialism* (New York: Longman Inc., 1978), 96-97.

¹³ Osborn, 39.

¹⁴ Recall this is the Romanized script for spoken Vietnamese improved and promoted by Alexandre de Rhodes three centuries earlier.

Nam Định in 1915, and Annam, at Huế in 1919. Although a newspaper printed in *quốc ngữ* was published in Cochinchina as early as 1865, the first all *quốc ngữ* periodical to appear in Tonkin was not published until 1913.¹⁵ In 1930, authorities authorized publication of 132 newspapers and periodicals, and the number increased progressively through 1935 to 267, falling slightly the next year to 230.¹⁶ From 1936-1939, the nine most popular periodicals published in *quốc ngữ* had an aggregate circulation of 80,000 copies.¹⁷ *Quốc ngữ* was also used in 10,000 books and pamphlets published from 1923-1944.¹⁸

Although rationalizing the Vietnamese school system to fit French perceptions was the initial goal, fears generated by the goals of Phan Bội Châu's Đông Du movement, and clear connections between Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục to resistance movements appear to have convinced French officials "to preempt any independent formulations of Western, or modern, education."¹⁹ The colonial administration had established a new school system, beginning in 1917, which created a distinct differentiation between French and Vietnamese education and put strictures in the way of Vietnamese gaining entry into schools with French curriculum, though education in France remained open for those few who possessed the wealth to consider such an option. From 1924-25 alone, 1,835 private

¹⁵ William J. Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 112; Dommen, 33.

¹⁶ Dommen, 33.

¹⁷ Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945*, 47.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁹ Kelly, 96, 99. Gail Kelly came to this conclusion after examining proceedings of the Council for the Improvement of Native Education, which met for seven years beginning in 1906, Franco-Vietnamese school textbooks from 1918 to 1936 and education journals published in Việt Nam. Sir Hesketh Bell, 197-98, in his 1926 study offers a different view. He states that textbooks had been "unsuitable and absurd" because "a great part of their contents are utterly incomprehensible to children who are almost entirely unacquainted with civilized life on Western lines." He then adds that the "school readers" had been replaced with books "suitable to the mentality and experience of Indo-Chinese children."

schools were closed shortly after the government required all private schools adhere to the government prescribed curriculum and hire only government-certified teachers.²⁰

There was also an explicit attempt to divert Vietnamese's attention from an interest in science and industry to support a macro economic emphasis on the export of raw materials to the *métropole*. School textbooks depicted technology as something to be feared. Trains, for example, were likened to a "monster" with "eyes of fire" sobbing "out a breath of steam," taking "the form of a beast, massive and thickset."²¹ The French colonial educational materials made little mention of the urban industrial society that served as a basis for the technological superiority in the French conquest of Cochinchina, Tonkin, and Annam. Instead, even French-language educational texts portrayed France as a "country of small hamlets."²² Regardless of the content, formal education for Vietnamese in the pre-World War II colonial years remained minimal since ninety percent of all children never went beyond the third grade, even after enrollment had increased 128 percent from 1920 to 1938.²³

French colonial official promotion of *quốc ngữ* served other purposes than to undermine Chinese influences on Vietnamese society. *Quốc ngữ* shared more with written French than Chinese did, so it was much easier for the French to learn, facilitating the monitoring of the indigenous press and books. Sir Hesketh Bell informs us that the French realized "the immense harm that can be done among ignorant and impressionable

²⁰ Ibid, 101; Hue-Tam Ho Tai, *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 35, 134. These closures were instituted under Governor General Martial Merlin who was recalled in April 1925.

²¹ Ibid, 110.

²² Ibid, 113.

²³ Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945*, 35.

natives by campaigns of mendacious malevolence waged by an unbridled vernacular Press.” As a result, they maintained a strict control over all native publications “far in excess of anything practiced in a British territory, and, arbitrary though it may sometimes seem to be, there can be no doubt as to the effect it has in preventing the spread of subversive and dangerous doctrines.”²⁴

Censorship of Vietnamese publications was a fact that may have led some to choose to write in French rather than *quốc ngữ*, which was more heavily censored. In his study of Vietnamese-Francophone literature, however, Jack Yeager sees reasons that are more complex at work as well. Because the Vietnamese often included explanations of vocabulary and culture in the literary works, he believes that their audience was French. Yeager interprets the use of French as a device employed by the Vietnamese for “educating and persuading the French, in their colony and at home, of the integrity and validity of both the Vietnamese people and their culture.”²⁵ This represents a form of literary resistance of a most ironic form.

For example, in Nguyễn Phan Long’s 1921 novel, *Le Roman le Mademoiselle Lys*, which notably devotes thirty pages to the Vietnamese festival of Tết, the central character, Hải’s pride in her knowledge of the language and attitudes of the French causes her to reject the traditional role assigned Vietnamese women.²⁶ Minh, a Vietnamese man who has just returned from France where he fought on behalf of the colonial ruler in World War I, becomes interested in Hải, until he realizes that she has developed a liking for

²⁴ Bell, 296.

²⁵ Yeager, 183, 53, 57, and 60.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 63-67.

things French to the detriment of traditional Vietnamese culture.²⁷ Hài falls in love with a Frenchman, but in discovering that he actually loves her French tutor, she realizes he was only interested in her money. Emotionally crushed by this experience, Hài resolves to commit suicide, but a reminder of her native culture alters her convictions full circle. She accepts traditional Vietnamese culture, and Minh marries her.²⁸

In the 1930 novel entitled *Bà-Đằm*, the Vietnamese rendering of “Madame,” the Vietnamese Trường Đình Trì collaborated with French writer Albert de Teneuille. *Bà-Đằm*, is the tale of a *colon*’s (Janine) conquest of a Vietnamese man (Sao) metaphorically representing the colonial conquest of Indochina.²⁹ A series of cultural conflicts follow:

Her French woman’s impetuosity, her keen desire of kindness thrust her forward. All of her new relatives, hands joined at the chest, bowed slightly several times. A sort of solemnity and awkwardness hung over the gathering. Neither embraces nor handshakes were exchanged by the family members.³⁰

Upon being introduced to Sao’s parents, “Janine kisses them on the cheeks as she would her own relatives in France,” summarizes Yeager, “Sao’s parents are speechless but are plainly shocked when Janine then kisses everyone else as well, including Sao’s brother Kha.” In Sao’s family’s eyes, Janine is ““*un étrangère, une intruse qui n’avait rien à faire là*” (p. 202) (an outsider, an intruder who had nothing to do there),” and so she “stands for all the French in Viet Nam, invading and superfluous.” Janine becomes

²⁷ Ibid, 126.

²⁸ Ibid, 127.

²⁹ Ibid, 74-75.

³⁰ Ibid

controlled by the criticism and resentment thrown at her, until she “no longer dominates the colonial relationship,” and they eventually divorce.³¹

These and similar stories emphasize the irreconcilability of Vietnamese and French cultures under colonial rule. French domination has altered Vietnamese culture, but in the end, it cannot make Vietnamese French. Annamese culture will always remain separate, and at odds with French culture. Ultimately, Confucian values may be an inadequate basis for explaining the conflict. After all, Vietnamese successfully fought Chinese domination after several centuries. If we recognize the profound influence of Confucian values on Việt Nam over many centuries, however, they may have been the most obvious basis for resistance.

A trend towards articulating the gulf between French and Vietnamese access to power and affluence in terms of race became apparent in an episodic event in the Thái Nguyên Rebellion of 1917 (see below). Sergeant Dương Văn Gia, who had admitted to heading the force of rebels that killed a French warden and bludgeoned his Vietnamese wife to death with a hammer, explained that he had killed the woman because “she had mothered Western not Annamese offspring.”³² In colonial era literature, whether written by Vietnamese or the French, race was often used to explain the deeper cultural conflicts that arose as the social structure was altered to accommodate shifting realities. Already in the first decade of the twentieth century, Phan Bội Châu had evoked colonial disparity in racist terms when in his *Tân Việt Nam*, he wrote “the prestige of 100 mandarins is less

³¹ Ibid, 74-75.

³² Zinoman, 161 and 172.

than that of one French female. How is it that those blue-eyed, yellow-bearded people, who are not our fathers or elder brothers, can squat on our heads, defecate on us?"³³

Similarly, the *métis* (mixed-blood, French-Vietnamese) symbolized the internal conflicts over a hybridized culture that could be neither entirely French nor what it once was prior to the imposition of French colonial rule. In her semi-autobiographical novel, *The Lover* (L'amant), former *colon*, Marguerite Duras's character is one of only two white girls in the state boarding school in Sài Gòn, but there are many *métis* in the school, "abandoned by their fathers, soldiers or sailors or minor officials in the customs, post, or public works departments. There are a few quadroons too."³⁴ We know that Duras never attended such a boarding school, but her depiction of abandoned *métis* is well documented.³⁵ Charles Robequain, for example, commented in 1939 that many of the *métis*, "both recognized and unrecognized, are the children of soldiers and Indo-Chinese women."³⁶ *Métis* offspring of liaisons such as this rarely fared well. Subsequent native lovers of native mothers would force *métisse* girls into prostitution.³⁷ Bell observed that

³³ Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 137-39.

³⁴ Marguerite Duras, *The Lover*, translated by Barbara Bray (New York: Random House, Inc., 1985), 70. Unfortunately Gail Kelly's study, above, does not explain where *métis* fit into schemes for French and Vietnamese education. In her study of French colonial education and Khmer women, Frieson, 6, notes that the term *métisse* (feminine form) appears to have been applied to French-Vietnamese exclusive of French-Khmer.

³⁵ Laure Adler, *Marguerite Duras: A Life*, translated by Anne-Marie Glasheen (London: Victor Gollancz, 1998), 52.

³⁶ Charles Robequain. *The Economic Development of French Indo-China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944), 29. According to 1937 census figures provided by Robequain, the largest proportions of "Europeans and Assimilés" (the latter being people who enjoy the legal status of Europeans, though they are not necessarily Europeans) were in the army and navy (10,779 or 52.6 percent) and government officials (3,873 or 18.9 percent).

³⁷ Laura Ann Stoler, "Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34, no. 3 (July 1992): 522-23, 527. This article by Stoler includes the interesting trial case of a *métis*. Stoler's focus in the case is on the legal boundaries of what it means to be French in French Indochina. The *métis* is named in the court documents "Nguyen van Thinh dit Lucien" (called Lucien)," the son of a French minor naval employee and

the *métis* were a “class apart, scorned by one parent and often despising the other,” leading him to conclude that it was no surprise that they were “to be found at the head of disturbing movements.”³⁸

Although the Vietnamese had a solid basis upon which to develop an understanding of the French and their rule over Indochina, the French public had a very limited view of their colonial subjects. There were never many French in Indochina. In 1929, there were only 38,500, and the vast majority of these were soldiers or administrators.³⁹ Perhaps the most tangible conception of Indochina acquired by many French was based on l’Exposition Coloniale de Paris of 1931. Similar expositions had been held over the years either in Paris or Marseille (an ancient Greek colony), but this particular exposition was the most successful. Fortuitously for the French, the British had declined to exhibit their own imperial majesty, claiming they were still paying for their own exhibition held seven years earlier. Although other colonial powers such as Denmark, Portugal, Belgium, the Netherlands, and the U.S. joined in the spectacle, French colonial reconstructions dominated the physical space.⁴⁰

A road ran from Lac Daumesnil past French Indochina in miniature. The visitor could see representations of Laos, Annam, Cambodia, a diorama of Cochinchina and Tonkin on the path that, after crossing Grande Avenue des Colonies Françaises (a

an Vietnamese concubine, for she could be no more than this under the law. Stoler makes the point that his name is listed in the court documents with the “called Lucien” appended on as a more than symbolic gesture that he is considered to be an Vietnamese, not a Frenchman.

³⁸ Bell, 154.

³⁹ Jean-Yves le Branchu, “The French Colonial Empire and the Popular Front Government,” *Pacific Affairs* 10, no. 2 (June, 1937): 132. Jacques Dalloz, *The War in Indo-China 1945-1954*, translated by Josephine Bacon (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan Ltd., 1990), 10. Amongst the French employed in Indochina in 1939, fifty-nine percent were soldiers and nineteen percent were colonial administrators.

⁴⁰ Nicola Cooper, *France in Indochina: Colonial Encounters* (New York: Berg, 2001), 66.

thoroughfare in size and shape unique to the French section of the exposition) led to the grand edifice of a reconstructed Angkor Wat.⁴¹ Conquest and pacification had become a distant memory, and so, while Exposition representations of Indochina were a sanitized glorification of the majesty of empire, these representations inspired national pride.

Economic considerations exacerbated differences between the French and the Vietnamese, while increasing the hardships the latter had to bear. France had mandated that Indochina's budget be self-sufficient in 1900, so the colonial government had to pay the *métropole* for expenses incurred in areas such as defense preparedness.⁴² In response, Governor General Paul Doumer (1897-1902) set up a general budget funded largely by customs duties and excise taxes on opium, alcohol, salt, and other items, registry dues and stamp duties.⁴³ Opium, according to Alfred McCoy, was illegal under the Nguyễn, but their efforts to stem the tide of its importation from British India via southern China were insufficient. The French permitted its importation beginning with Cochinchina and the protectorates as they came to control them. Doumer had an opium refinery constructed where a method was developed to make opium burn quicker, thereby encouraging Vietnamese consumers to smoke more. Doumer's achievements can be measured in opium's contribution to the budget. Opium revenues grew by "fifty percent during his four years in office, accounting for over one-third of all colonial revenues."⁴⁴

⁴¹ Supplement A, "Plan de l'Exposition Coloniale de Paris," *L'Illustration* (27 June 1931).

⁴² Robequain, 150. According to the 1936 census figures provided by Robequain, there were thirty thousand French and twelve million Vietnamese.

⁴³ Ibid, 9, 155. Robequain provides figures for three years demonstrating that Customs duties and excise taxes contributed 79.6% to the general budget in 1938, 82.1% in 1935, and 82.3% in 1933.

⁴⁴ Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1991), 111. Robequain, 155, who published his study in 1939, states that "During recent years, receipts from opium excise tax have decreased," but McCoy, 112, citing Naval Intelligence

The broad despair that Vietnamese felt from colonial suppression and societal problems connected with opium use are expressed in *Tôi Kéo Xe (I Pulled a Rickshaw)*, written by Tam Lang for the *Hà Thành Ngộ Báo (Hà Nội Midday News)* in 1932.⁴⁵ *I Pulled a Rickshaw* is a chronicle of Tư, a veteran “horse” of twelve years, who descends from the life of a Confucian scholar through a series of misfortunes to become something lower even than a rickshaw puller—an opium addict, a blackmailer, and a pimp.⁴⁶

A traditional Vietnamese proverb held that “the law of the Emperor yields to the custom of the village,” but this was no longer true after the Vietnamese lost their sovereignty to the French.⁴⁷ Pre-colonial administration of Đại Nam was decentralized, with public works projects typically designed and funded on a local basis through taxes levied largely in rice or other products. “Taxes, corvée labor, and military service were obligations to the state,” writes Jack Yeager, “but the amounts required were based on lists written solely by the village oligarchy.”⁴⁸ This relative autonomy of the village

Division, *Indochina*, Handbook Series (Cambridge, England, December 1943), 361, argues that “opium revenues accounted for fifteen percent of all colonial revenues” by 1938. In his study conducted in 1926, Bell, 223, also stated that “the authorities appear to be honestly desirous of stamping out the smoking of heroin,” then goes on to reveal that state revenues from opium exceeded 15 million *piastres* compared with 5 million *piastres* from excise duties and liquor licenses and 4 million *piastres* from export duties on rice.

⁴⁵ *The Light of the Capital: Three Modern Vietnamese Classics*, translated by Greg Lockhart and Monique Lockhart (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 52. Tam Lang (‘Third Man’) is the pen-name of Vũ Đình Chi.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 102-03.

⁴⁷ John T. McAlister, Jr. and Paul Mus. *The Vietnamese and Their Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row; 1970), 55. Raised in French Indochina, schooled at the École Française d’Extreme-Orient (The French School of the Far East), student of Khmer ruins in Annam and author of a study on Borobudur on Java, Paul Mus, served as an adviser to General Philippe Leclerc beginning in September 1945, but found his advice unheeded and soon resigned before being fired. This latter experience undoubtedly led him to make his most important intellectual “mistake” when as a scholar at Yale University in the 1950s he ignored the chance to have his work on Việt Nam, *Viet-Nam: Sociologie d’une guerre* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952) translated. John McAlister, Jr., a one-time student of Paul Mus, worked with a translator to have portions of this book translated into English, which he edited and then asked Mus for his approval before this book was published in 1970, after he had passed away. (See also pages 4 and 18)

⁴⁸ Jack A. Yeager. *The Vietnamese Novel in French* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1987), 68.

economy allowed for the maintenance of a local reserve, which was available for general welfare and emergencies.⁴⁹ Before the French arrived, one-fourth of village head taxes were paid in kind, mostly in rice, while four-fifths were paid in *corvée* labor (and food was provided to the peasants while working).

Under colonial rule, traditional methods for selecting the village oligarchy were replaced with a system that created leaders answerable only to the French, leading to a breakdown in pre-colonial village autonomy and the emphasis on “obligation and mutual support.”⁵⁰ The French converted taxes paid in *corvée* to a money tax amounting to .165 *piastres* per person in the 1880s, but rising to 2.5 *piastres* by 1920 in Tonkin, and 1928 in Annam.⁵¹ Problems resulting from the breakdown in the village autonomy coupled with the rapidly rising money-tax burden were further exacerbated by the linkage money created between villages and the city with usury loans provided by manufacturers and Chinese exporters in the ethnic enclave of Chợ Lớn 堤岸.⁵² The French recruited

⁴⁹ McAlister, *The Vietnamese and Their Revolution*, 35, 37. Popkin, 149-153. Popkin challenges a favored argument, taken here from McAlister and Mus, arguing that there were important distinctions between Cochinchina and the protectorates of Annam and Tonkin. In the protectorates, Popkin argues that there was no breakdown in the village oligarchy, and that French colonial rule offered a basis for the oligarchy to further enrich themselves at the expense of the poor peasants. Even “French credit programs, some of which were designed to maintain land ownership by small peasants,” writes Popkin, “merely exacerbated the growing inequality” because large landholders monopolized these loans and used them to further increase the gap the held over average peasants. We cannot, however, ignore the fact that the peasantry were impoverished under French colonialism through a process that was not solely dependent upon increased taxes, as Popkin acknowledges. Popkin succumbs to a belief that since political forms, the traditional oligarchy and native mandarin state were maintained at the lower levels for some time, the politics remained relatively stable. But the mandarin state ceased to exist in its traditional form as the Confucian civil service exams were ended in the protectorates, and higher taxes, usury and higher tenancy were the direct result of French colonialism that was directed from above as the quote by Bell so vividly relates.

⁵⁰ Popkin, 137.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 147.

⁵² Robequain, 33, 168. Chợ Lớn was established by Chinese traders around 1778 and combined with Sài Gòn in 1932 by the French. Although Chợ Lớn means “big market” in Vietnamese, the Chinese characters that have been historically used to identify this area, 堤岸, do not mean “big market” (堤, “an

Chinese as rice purchasing agents Although farmers paid the loans in kind, the interest rates were so high as to leave the Vietnamese forever in debt “and every year the larger part of the crop goes to the Chinese as interest payment.”⁵³

Imperial powers were quick to point out the infrastructure projects they had completed, but they were quiet on how these were financed and who built them. During French colonial rule 2,000 miles of railroad, and 20,000 miles of highway were constructed, but since most travel by Vietnamese was circumscribed, they were not the direct beneficiaries of these developments they built and financed through taxes.⁵⁴ Having failed to realize the riches believed to be gained in China through the commercial routes using the Mekong River or the Red River, the French began to exploit Indochina directly and these infrastructure projects were designed to facilitate this exploitation.

The weakening of village autonomy and development of infrastructure projects were part of a process that redirected the traditional, self-sufficient rural economy to one of, in the words of an observer in 1941, “dependence on the world market.”⁵⁵ Rice, corn, tea, rubber, and kapok, for example, were increasingly produced on Vietnamese lands for export. In pre-colonial Đại Nam, there was a ban on exports of rice.⁵⁶ By the mid-1930s, France imported forty-one percent of Indochina’s rice, the majority of its corn harvest, and nearly all of its rubber. By 1939, Indochina was responsible for twenty-five percent

embankment” and 岸, “a bank of a river”). Sài Gòn is in fact a corruption of the Cantonese pronunciation of these characters. Source: *Cí Hãi /Quan*.

⁵³ Ibid, 38-39.

⁵⁴ Popkin, 134.

⁵⁵ Andrew Roth, *Japan Strikes South* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1941), 7.

⁵⁶ Roth, 7.

of the world's rice exports.⁵⁷ Grain exports grew from 170 tons around 1900 to 575,000 tons in 1937. Rubber exports were only about 160 tons in 1913, but production took off after World War I and so did exports, growing to 59,450 tons in 1938.⁵⁸ French exports, mostly manufactured items such as textiles, comprised fifty-three percent of all Indochinese imports by 1938.⁵⁹

Another characteristic of the French colonial economy was consolidation of business control and ownership. The 1937 publication, *Bulletin économique de l'Indochine* listed 1005 plantations in Indochina, 304 of which held more than 100 acres (forty hectares), and were responsible for ninety-four percent of the total plantations being worked. Big joint stock companies often owned several plantations, and the companies themselves were either financially interrelated or dominated by holding companies.⁶⁰ One of the most influential organizations in the Indochinese economy was the Banque de l'Indo-Chine (Bank of Indochina). The French government had a twenty percent stake in the Bank, which through a series of interlocking directorates, held either directly or through its branches, invested in the leading companies in Indochina doing business in industries, such as, electric power, transportation, rubber, mining and metallurgy, and cement.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Ibid, 4.

⁵⁸ Robert Aldrich, *Greater France* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 189-90; Robequain, 187.

⁵⁹ Robert Aldrich, 191. Textiles represented two-thirds of exports from France, according to Aldrich, followed by metallurgical goods, other manufactured items, and foodstuffs.

⁶⁰ Robequain, 207. In comparing the level of consolidation of plantation land, Robequain tells us that thirty-nine percent of plantations in British Malaya were less than 40 hectares in size and that Chinese, Indians or Malays held fifty-four percent of such plantations.

⁶¹ Roth, 8.

First rubber, then tea, were the largest European managed crops in Indochina, and both were concentrated in the south, largely because they could not thrive in the comparatively cool environs north of Hué.⁶² In Cochinchina, French hydraulic engineers had opened up new tracts of land for cultivation, but rather than make these available in small plots to individual peasant producers, as was done under the traditional system of land tenure, land was sold to large landowners as a means of rapidly recouping the cost of engineering work.⁶³ Land grants were also a way of promoting French colonization. Throughout Indochina only “citizens, subjects or protégés of France” were permitted to hold concessions, the same applying to the majority shareholders, the managers and directors, and members of the various governing boards of companies. In this way, policies were designed to restrict non-French outsiders from owning land. Also, landholdings were much more concentrated than in British Malay or the Dutch East Indies.⁶⁴

A summary comparison of differing French and Vietnamese accounts of rubber plantation operations offers a revealing testimony on colonialism in the interwar period. Charles Robequain’s 1939 economic study of Indochina was prefaced with an acknowledgement that his journey to Indochina was made with the “cooperation of the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of the Colonies and the Government-General of Indochina,” although he claimed: “I can show them no better evidence of my

⁶² Robequain, 187.

⁶³ McAlister, *The Vietnamese and Their Revolution*, 80.

⁶⁴ Robequain, 183.

gratitude than by striving for impartiality.”⁶⁵ In the portion of his study concerning rubber plantations, he informs his readers that a contract system for “coolies recruited from the north” was instituted in 1924 since recruitment had “entailed some abuses.” After intimating that such abuses were a response to plantation coolies “running off with a cash advance,” he downplays the fact that “until recently the red lands coolies lived in long buildings called *traj*, dozens of them sleeping side by side in stalls.”⁶⁶ He also expresses surprise that more than thirty-one percent of the contract laborers did not renew contracts when living conditions on the plantations, in Robequain’s estimation, were “very much improved and sometimes even seem excellent when compared to the standard of the Tonkinese peasant in his village.”⁶⁷ “Sometimes there is also a well-built and equipped hospital, with a maternity ward,” adds Robequain, “under the supervision of a European Doctor.”⁶⁸

Robequain’s depiction of life on the Rubber plantations differs markedly from an account written in 1964 by Trần Từ Bình of his experiences at Michelin’s Phú Riềng plantation in Cochinchina from 1926 to 1930.⁶⁹ The theme of Trần’s account is one of

⁶⁵ Ibid, vii. M.M. Knight, in his review of Robequain’s book in *The Journal of Economy History*, 5, no. 2 (Nov. 1945), 265-267, wrote “the best general discussion of Indo-Chinese economy, this book goes beyond the specific promise of its title in exposing the basic problems of Indo-Chinese society.”

⁶⁶ Ibid, 217. Red lands were rich soil areas resulting from old lava flows; gray lands were alluvial areas.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 215.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Tran Tu Binh. *The Red Earth: A Vietnamese Memoir of Life on a Colonial Plantation*, translated by John Spragens, Jr., and edited by David G. Marr (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1985), 23. Given the year of Trần’s publication, it might seem a late response to Robequain’s depiction of plantation life. In his evaluation of the account, David Marr, believes that Trần Từ Bình was “entirely in control” even though there was a ghostwriter engaged to assist in writing the memoir. Having crosschecked many of the facts with records in the *Archives Nationales de France (Section Oute-Mer)*, he also provides the assessment that it “as exaggerated in tone, yet essentially reliable in substance.” Trần Từ Bình was a Communist Party official who became Ambassador to China in 1959, became a member of the Central Committee the following year. See David Marr’s introduction, particularly pages viii, x and xi.

oppression. Illiterate laborers fall victim to deception, violence, and other inequities from a *mélange* of colonial characters: including labor recruiters and contractors, a French ship captain, French sailors, *métis* gendarmes, police inspectors, Vietnamese and French foremen (French, Vietnamese and *métis* overseers, French chief overseers, “black-skinned soldiers” (African *tirailleurs*), and the French plantation manager.⁷⁰

The plantation was divided into “villages” with barracks and a general merchandise store. Unaccustomed to the heat of the south, laborers had to sleep on the wooden floors of windowless barracks with low steel roofs, partitioned into five-meter sections for five workers each where “sanitary conditions were extremely poor.”⁷¹ The general store held a monopoly on goods sold to the laborers because they were not permitted to leave the plantation, and so the prices were extremely high, but the quality of items, such as rice and salt fish, was the lowest imaginable.⁷² Trần tells how he and the group of laborers he worked with were called demeaning and foul names, constantly beaten, and intimidated by “black-skinned soldiers holding guns fixed with bayonets.” Women were raped, and many workers were killed when they attempted to flee the harsh conditions at the plantation.⁷³ Trần also provides evidence of three distinct attempts to

⁷⁰ Ibid, 24.

⁷¹ Ibid, 23.

⁷² Ibid, 27.

⁷³ Ibid, 19-20, 24, 27, 30, 34, 39, and 47. One particularly horrific scene Trần describes occurred before a general mutiny. The manager ordered the soldiers in, then forced the escapees down on the ground and let the soldiers tramp on their ribs with their nail-studded boots. Standing outside I could hear the sound of bones snapping. When they had finished trampling them with their boots, they beat them another round with canes, then shackled them in a darkened building.

appeal for an end to the injustices at the plantation—to a government official, to the criminal court, and to a representative of the court at Huế--but none were effective.⁷⁴

Anthracite (mineral coal) production increased from 200,000 tons around 1900 to about 2.5 million tons by 1939. Nearly seventy-five percent of Indochina's mineral wealth was located in Tonkin, and two French companies controlled all but three percent of Indochinese coal mining: *La Société Française des Charbonnages du Tonkin* (seventy-two percent) and *La Société des Charbonnages du Dong Trieu* (twenty-five percent). Mining companies built villages similar to those found on rubber plantations in an effort to stabilize labor that fluctuated with the rice harvest season. Though we lack the vivid details provided in Trần Tự Bình's account of the rubber plantations, the name Vietnamese used for the chief mines of the Quang Yen Basin, "the hell of Hòn Gay," suggests the quality of life there.⁷⁵

No longer insulated from world market fluctuations, the once self-sufficient Vietnamese suffered tremendously from the Great Depression from 1929-1933. Coal exports fell by thirty-eight percent, the price of rubber fell by nearly eighty-two percent,

⁷⁴ Ibid, 36-38, 41-42, and 44-45. The first was an appeal to an official of the Inspectorate who dutifully recorded the atrocities occurring at the plantation, but no action was taken. Trần, who had pointed out all the issues to the official surmised that the official had used the information as extortion against the plantation's management and did not reveal his source so that he could use the same device in the future. In the second attempt detailed by Trần, the laborer who had complained to the representative of the court at Huế was found dead, hanging from a tree several days later. The third complaint was made to a court at Bien Hoa, but the court sided with the French chief overseer who had beaten to death an Vietnamese laborer, ruling it was an accident.

⁷⁵ E. Willard Miller. "Mineral Resources of Indo-China," *Economic Geography* 22, no. 4 (Oct., 1946): 270-71, 277. Horrific conditions were apparently not limited to coal mining since the Nam Patene tin region was termed "death valley." In describing the shifting labor composition, Miller provides an interesting comparison of Chinese and Vietnamese laborers: "Chinese were originally used in largest numbers for they are more energetic and exhibit greater skills. However, in recent years Annamites have been replacing them so that by 1939 they formed 90 per cent of labor in the mines. The Annamites are less skilled and sturdy than the Chinese, but they work for lower wages and are now more easily disciplined."

and while grades of rice vary, the price of one higher-grade type of rice fell by nearly seventy-one percent from April 1930 to April 1933. In tying their colony to the *métropole*, the French had pegged the *piastre* to the *franc*. Shortly afterward, wages for male laborers in the coal mines fell by fifty percent and those for the already lower paid female laborers by about thirty percent. Adding to impact on an overwhelmingly rural, rice-growing populace was a famine in 1929 and 1930 in Northern Annam and Tonkin.⁷⁶

An American correspondent visiting Sài Gòn in late 1945 would summed up the French record in Indochina based on contrasting figures found in the French records he perused:

The Indochina budget...provided a sum of 15 million piasters for some 30,000 Annamite employes and functionaries of the government. The same budget provided 40 million piasters for 5,000 French functionaries. In 1943, the colonial government spent 30,000 piastres for libraries, 71,000 piasters for hospitals, 748,000 piasters for schools...and 4,473,000 piasters for the purchase of opium distributed in the country through the official opium monopoly. In their time, the French build thirty-one hospitals in the colony and eighty-one prisons, not including concentration camps. In the prewar years, the manual laborer in the colony earned an average of 50 piasters a month. The rare Annamite able to go through the polytechnical school and graduates as a modestly equipped engineer could earn 400 piasters a month. The French concierge of the University of Hanoi—a slightly glorified sort of janitor—earned 1,404 piasters per month.... Forty years after the conquest, there was elementary education of a crude kind available for two per cent of the population and secondary education available for one-half of one per cent. Three libraries and one so-called “university” were established in the country.⁷⁷

RESISTANCE AND THE EVOLUTION OF NATIONALIST SENTIMENT

In his study of colonial prisons in Indochina, Peter Zinoman has culled together a valuable narrative of the Thái Nguyên Rebellion (1917) in which he points out potential

⁷⁶ All figures taken from J. Chesneaux, “Stages in the Development of the Vietnam National Movement,” *Past and Present*, 7 (April, 1955): 72.

⁷⁷ Harold R. Isaacs, *No Peace for Asia* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1947), 143-44.

weaknesses in the apparatus of French colonial control.⁷⁸ The *sûreté* was caught by complete surprise when Vietnamese *tirailleurs*, led by Sergeant Trịnh Văn Cấn, staged an uprising involving several dozen Vietnamese soldiers in the town of Thái Nguyên, fifty miles north of Hà Nội.⁷⁹ The rebellion was initiated when the provincial brigade commander, M. Noel, and two loyal Vietnamese officers, a sergeant and a deputy supervisor, were murdered and decapitated under the direction of Sergeant Cấn. While Sergeant Cấn delivered a speech to 150 Vietnamese soldiers of the brigade standing astride the three heads, different contingents of his rebellious group of soldiers attacked the *résident's* office, raided the provincial treasury, ransacked the homes of European residents in town, and freed political and common prisoners from Thái Nguyên Penitentiary.⁸⁰

The release of the penitentiary's prisoners was no doubt an attempt to strengthen the rebellion with more manpower, but political prisoners altered the direction of the rebellion and the influence it would have. These important prisoners were former lieutenants to Đê Thám, a minor rebel leader whose fame is based on the longevity of his battle with the French, and Lương Lập Nham, son of Lương Ngọc Quyến, principal of the

⁷⁸ Zinoman, 159-168. The account that follows is based on Zinoman's narrative, which is based, in part, on Trần Huy Liệu's work written from interviews with participants of the rebellion whom he served in prison with and French documents. Liệu was a successful journalist who joined the Indochinese Communist Party while serving a five-year sentence at Poulo Condore in which he came into contact with the convicts from the rebellion and communists (see Chapter 10).

⁷⁹ Zinoman does not give a number for those initially involved in the rebellion, but does enumerate the group which appears to have been the largest—thirty soldiers who took the penitentiary.

⁸⁰ Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 234-35. Resident Darles happened to be safely away when the rebellion broke out. Zinoman contradicts the claim made by Marr that the rebels ignored the telegraph "enabling several French soldiers to leave their posts and send a wire to Hanoi," offering the alternative version that the rebels "smashed the telegraph equipment to prevent communication with Hanoi." David G. Marr, *Vietnam 1945: the Quest for Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 47. Marr notes in a later work that "by the early 1940s the French had only permitted about twenty Indochinese to become officers, out of a total officer corps of fourteen hundred."

doomed Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục.⁸¹ Lương Lập Nham, who had been under solitary confinement because of his political influence, convinced Sergeant Cán to dig in at Thái Nguyên, and await reinforcements from different quarters which both he and the former members of Đê Thám's band believed they could deliver.

This new turn in the rebellion led to the release of a proclamation aimed at gathering public support, and apparently authored by Lương, a portion of which follows:

The French do not hesitate to transgress their own laws in order to eliminate our race. They pronounce excessively severe penalties, commit the most detestable acts of barbarity, and cover everything up with lies. Compounding their tyranny, they have violated our dynastic tombs in search of treasure and dethroned and exiled our kings to a desert island. During the thirty years since they seized Hanoi, they have made and unmade kings three times without ever consulting the will of the people. Every day our taxes increase and our compatriots succumb under their weight. Each of us is strangled at the neck by a double noose which grows progressively tighter; nine of every ten families live in dire poverty. At this moment, our enemy is under attack in Europe. They requisition our men and use them like a high wall to protect them from bullets. They take our goods to provision their troops. Over there, our compatriots are overwhelmed with work and those who die are not given decent burials. Our widows and orphans cry in their homes; our old fathers cry along the road. The situation of our country is so deplorable it baffles the imagination; our sufferings are innumerable. We cannot tolerate this state of things any longer. Our country has become poor and powerless, like a broken thread. Suffering has taken away our final breath. This time we begin anew the struggle for independence and if we are not fated to succeed, we no longer desire to live.⁸²

The rebellious force, which came to include 300 civilians, 200 ex-prisoners, and 130 Vietnamese *tirailleurs*, was no match for a French-led attack of local militiamen, 500 regular troops, and heavy artillery. After several days, the surviving elements of Cán's rebellion retreated. The French chased the rebels and employed the effective stratagem

⁸¹ Ibid, 73-75, 194. True name Hoàng Hoa Thám, Đê Thám, the Tiger of Yên Thế, was killed by a paid assassin in 1913 after he led a campaign of harassment against the French in northern Tonkin for more than two decades. French difficulties in suppressing his nuisance attempted to pay him off; when this failed they eventually had someone kill him for bounty.

⁸² Zinoman, 165.

of arresting their parents, wives, and children until they had killed Cán, and killed or captured all but a handful of his followers.⁸³ Although the rebels' goals were not achieved, the Thái Nguyên Rebellion was a watershed event because it was the first joining together of the indigenous military force with townspeople, and imprisoned political prisoners under a nationalist message that captured the imagination of Vietnamese far beyond Thái Nguyên itself.

Artillery unit on maneuvers, Tonkin,
postcard, Imp. Libr. Crébessac, Hanoi



Many Vietnamese urban intellectuals had found employment in the colonial administration since other economic opportunities were largely denied them. Yet Joseph Buttinger explains that many of “the educated never found employment, and all of them resented deeply that the majority of the colonials continued to treat them as inferior to every Frenchman.”⁸⁴ Not only were Vietnamese clerks often better educated than their French superiors, the latter were often detached from their subordinates. Writing about

⁸³ See also Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*, 236.

⁸⁴ Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, 2 vols. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967): 198-199. Buttinger tends to overstate the importance of wealthy Vietnamese landowner relationships with Vietnamese administrators and the importance of French education to create a growing intellectual disenchantment with French colonial rule. Similar threads of western-inspired Asian nationalism, found in an education in France, dominates the scholarship of western scholars who examine Asia, ignoring the reality that Asians who were colonized continuously fought colonial oppression in various ways. The idea that western colonials had to teach Asians to want independence is nothing short of cultural arrogance.

the average French colonial administrator in Indochina, John McAlister and Paul Mus wrote of French officials in Indochina:

With such limited resources for social life, professional tasks took on great importance in proportion to the responsibility involved. "In Europe I was only a number, here I am somebody," said the postman who was improvising a provincial telegraphic network after the big typhoon of 1909. But such increase in status did not bring French men closer to the Vietnamese environment in which they lived and worked. Instead their heightened sense of superiority served to increase their distance from the Vietnamese milieu and encouraged them to withdraw into French-built enclaves.⁸⁵

"The appearance of the automobile," they add, "contributed substantially to this withdrawal."⁸⁶

In the 1920s, urban intellectuals inherited the leadership of reformist and resistance movements from the scholar-officials of old in Annam and Tonkin, while in this and the subsequent decade two new religious movements turned increasingly nationalist in tone in Cochinchina. Social dislocations caused by French colonial rule and the increasing availability of periodicals and books in *quốc ngữ* assured the growth of numerous organizations in the Vietnamese protectorates. In Annam and Tonkin, revolutionary organizations were of course illegal, so were organized clandestinely into "cells," but usually *sûreté* infiltrated them before they could pose much harm to French authority in Indochina. Two exceptional resistance movements of this period in Annam and Tonkin were the Việt Nam Revolutionary Youth League and the Việt Nam Nationalist Party.⁸⁷ In Cochinchina, where direct administration had cut off Vietnamese

⁸⁵ John T. McAlister, Jr. and Paul Mus, *The Vietnamese and Their Revolution* (NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1970), 106.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ The Tân Việt Cách Mệnh Đảng (New Viet Nam Revolutionary Party) was initially a moderate nationalist organization that evolved into a Marxist organization over its brief, five year life in Annam. Information

society from the *tam giáo* (three schools of thought or religions—centered in Huế) earlier, and colonial economics in the form of plantations may have cut more deeply into society, two influential religious movements emerged, Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo.⁸⁸

A Bernard Fall study based on French sources informs us that Cao Đài had its origins in a séance on December 25, 1925 when Cao Đài manifested itself to a group of Vietnamese officials. According to French sources cited by Fall, the movement gained 20,000 followers in Cochinchina within a year's time, including many mid-level Vietnamese officials (the highest positions they could attain) in the French colonial administration. Cao Đài was a syncretic movement revealed in its cathedral (inaugurated on the anniversary of Victor Hugo's death, and housing statues of Confucius, Jesus Christ, Buddha, Lao Zi), and in its terminology and hierarchy which were taken from the Catholic Church. In seeking to become a state religion, Cao Đài's structure resembled that of a theocratic state, and came to include its own paramilitary units.⁸⁹

In 1939 the leader of Cao Đài, Phạm Công Tắc, announced his support of Cường Để, who had returned to Japan during World War I. Letters and money from Cao Đài were sent to Cường Để, who was residing in Japan, through a Japanese businessman in Sài Gòn, Matsushita Mitsuhiro 松下光広 (Tùng Hạ in Vietnamese). By 1940, the French became concerned that the millenarian element of the Cao Đài posed a threat when

on the New Viet Nam Revolutionary Party can be found in Isaac Milton Sacks, *Communism and Nationalism in Viet Nam 1918-1946* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1960).

⁸⁸ Đảng Lập Hiến (Constitutionalist Party), a reformist group, also emerged in and was confined to Cochinchina. For information on the Constitutionalist Party, see Sacks, 49-50; William J. Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), 11; and Huỳnh Kim Khánh, *Vietnamese Communism, 1925-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 43-44.

⁸⁹ Bernard B. Fall. "The Political-Religious Sects of Viet-Nam," *Pacific Affairs* 28, 3 (September, 1955): 237-39; Tran My-Van, Tran, "Japan and Vietnam's Caodaists: a wartime relationship (1939-45)," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27,1 (March, 1996): 187.

“oracles and prophesies announced the early return of Cuong De from Japan and the eventual liquidation of French rule,” according to Bernard Fall. While not disputing that such beliefs were held by the followers of Cao Đài, Tran My-Van, who relies on Vietnamese sources, suggests the members of Cao Đài were using “spirit messages” spread by word of mouth to avoid detection by the French. Matsushita was subsequently deported, and the principal Cao Đài temple at Tây Ninh was raided in August 1940.⁹⁰

Hòa Hảo was a Buddhist reform movement founded by the mystic, Huỳnh Phú Sổ, in 1939. Huỳnh Phú Sổ’s moniker, the “mad bonze” (monk), appears to have been an invention of the French colonial regime since his philosophy, which he sums up here in a quote from Fall’s study, seems quite sane:

The cult must stem much more from internal faith than from a pompous appearance. It is better to pray with a pure heart before the family altar than to perform gaudy ceremonies in a pagoda, clad in the robes of an unworthy bonze.⁹¹

In less than one year, Huỳnh Phú Sổ’s Hòa Hảo had as many as 100,000 followers.

After France’s fall to Nazi Germany, Huỳnh Phú Sổ began to predict a Franco-Japanese War and evoked millenarian responses from many of his followers. Colonial authorities tried first to move him from one locale in Cochinchina to another, but this only increased his following in new areas. The authorities were finally able to impede his further influence on the public by committing him to psychiatric care at Chợ Quán

⁹⁰ My-Van Tran, “Japan and Vietnam’s Caodaists: a wartime relationship (1939-45)”: 181, 183; Sachiko Murakami, “Japan’s Thrust into French Indochina, 1940-1945” (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1981), 83; Fall, “The Political-Religious Sects of Viet-Nam,” 237-39; and David G. Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 83.

⁹¹ Fall, “The Political-Religious Sects of Viet-Nam,” 243-44.

hospital, but even then they did not manage to completely arrest his influence as he converted his Vietnamese psychiatrist, Nguyễn Văn Tâm.⁹²

In December 1927, a group of students and teachers in Tonkin established Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng (Việt Nam Nationalist Party or VNQDD) with Nguyễn Thái Học as its chairman. They agreed upon their purpose: “to make a national revolution, to use military force to overthrow the feudal colonial system, to set up a democratic republic of [Việt Nam]. At the same time we will help all oppressed nationalities in the work of struggling to achieve independence, in particular such neighboring countries as Laos and Cambodia.”⁹³ The VNQDD was influenced by China’s Sun Yat-sen’s (孫中山) nationalism, and its organization was modeled on Sun’s Chinese Nationalist Party (Guomindang 国民党, or Kuomintang) with which it had clandestine contacts.⁹⁴ The VNQDD was in the tradition of teacher rebels and Phan Bội Châu, though scholar-officials had long since been discredited, and urban intellectuals had taken their place at the vanguard of nationalist movements. The *sûreté* estimated that the party had 1,500 members, including 120 Vietnamese *tirailleurs* in 120 cells in 1929, mostly in Tonkin.

A group of workers approached VNQDD’s leadership to suggest the assassination of Hervé Bazin, a graduate of École Coloniale in Paris, director of an office that hired Vietnamese recruiters to find laborers for rubber and tea plantations in Cochinchina or distant French colonies. The party leadership rejected the idea, but one individual decided to act without the Party’s support. On February 9, 1929, Bazin was assassinated

⁹² Ibid, 244-45.

⁹³ Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 156; McAlister, *The Vietnamese and Their Revolution*, 8; and Zinoman, 203.

⁹⁴ Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 156; Sacks, 68; and Chakrabarty, 158.

outside the home of his mistress in Hanoi.⁹⁵ The *sûreté* responded by arresting from 300 to 400 individuals, including most of the VNQDD leadership, seventy-eight of whom were convicted, and given sentences from two to twenty years in prison.⁹⁶

Nguyễn Thái Học and Nguyễn Khắc Nhu, who had replaced the former as chairman in late 1928, were among the few members of the VNQDD leadership not caught by the French. They soon set out to stage several simultaneous uprisings throughout Tonkin in February 1930. At the last moment Nguyễn Thái Học decided to postpone the uprising, but his message never reached Nguyễn Khắc Nhu, who was in charge of actions planned for the upper Delta. The centerpiece of the plan Nguyễn Khắc Nhu directed was aimed at a garrison in Yên Bái, where some six hundred Vietnamese *tirailleurs* commanded by twenty French officers and Vietnamese non-commissioned officers were stationed. The attack plan was critically reliant upon large numbers of Vietnamese *tirailleurs* staging a mutiny. It was a massive failure, as were other attempts in the region under Nguyễn Khắc Nhu's command.

Five days after the failed attack on Yên Bái, apparently unaware of the massive failures of the uprisings carried out by Nguyễn's group, attacks were launched in the village of Cồ Am. This was the first stage of an attack that was planned to take the

⁹⁵ Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 157, 160; Sacks, 70; Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945*, 377; and Zinoman, 203. Zinoman credits a Nationalist assassination team with the murder, while Duiker's explanation implies a belief in Leon Sanh's confession, though later retracted, and his implication of an alleged accomplice, Nguyễn Văn Viên. Within a week or two of Bazin's killing, according to Marr, the *sûreté* had believed that the murder was not motivated by politics, but by a rivalry between gangs of coolie recruiters. They merely used this event as an excuse to attempt to destroy the NVQDD.

⁹⁶ Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 161; Zinoman, 203. Zinoman provides a figure of 73 sentenced, but Duiker provides a breakdown by profession. Duiker states that sentences ranged from five to 20 years, but Zinoman states they ranged from two to fifteen years. Duiker's sources include French primary sources related to these matters whereas Zinoman's appear to be secondary sources in Vietnamese and English.

district of Vĩnh Bảo and ultimately Hải Phòng, the second most important city in Tonkin after Hà Nội. The detested sub-prefect was seized after he went to Cổ Am to assess the situation and was executed by the rebels.⁹⁷ French authorities responded with the extreme measure of ordering an aerial bombardment on Cổ Am and other villages as part of its successful efforts to suppress the rebellion.⁹⁸ The VNQDĐ in Indochina did not survive the demise of Nguyễn Thái Học, who from under the blade of the guillotine shouted the final words of his life “Việt Nam! Việt Nam!”⁹⁹ This second major failure for the *sûreté’s* intelligence network, after the Thái Nguyên Rebellion, led to the formation of a formal alliance between that group and the military, and military officers were subsequently authorized to assume surveillance responsibilities which were previously restricted to civilian authorities.¹⁰⁰

In his 1926 study introduced earlier, Sir Hesketh Bell warned of the threat posed by Marxist-Leninist nationalist movements like the Hội Việt Nam Cách Mệnh Thanh Niên (Việt Nam Revolutionary Youth League) whose leadership would later spearhead the successful decades-long war for independence:

The French realized, long ago, the unfortunate results which, too often, have attended the sending of young Indo-Chinese to France for the completion of their studies. Like other Oriental students, these young men have, in many cases, become corrupted by the subversive ideas of communist and Bolshevic [sic] circles into which they were introduced in France. There are already in Paris a considerable number of Indo-Chinese students who are adopting the tactics of revolutionaries and whose slogan is “Indo-China for the Indo-Chinese.” They have become affiliated to the Pan-Asiatic movement, and on their return to their country they try to stir up national feeling, of an exaggerated type,

⁹⁷ This account of the Yên Bái uprising is derived from Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 161-64.

⁹⁸ Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*, 164; Cooper, 93-94; and Zinoman, 203.

⁹⁹ McAlister, *The Vietnamese and Their Revolution*, 8. Several member of the VNQDĐ fled to China.

¹⁰⁰ Dommen, 40

among their people. While the propaganda conducted by these men has not, so far, been sufficient to cause serious anxiety to the French administration, there can be no doubt that, aided by Chinese and Russian agitators, the movement will become a serious one.¹⁰¹

Bell's insightful commentary is impressive given the fact that communist organizations had only begun to sprout a year earlier, and even by the end of the decade the largest amongst them could only count a membership of about 1000.¹⁰²

The Youth League was founded in June 1925 by Nguyễn Ái Quốc (see Chapter 10), who had been educated in Marxist-Leninist doctrine in France and Moscow. He was in Guangzhou 广州(Canton) under a false identity and as a cover for his work was an interpreter for Mikhail Borodin, the Soviet Union's Politburo and Comintern political adviser to the leadership of the Guomindang. It is widely believed this cover had been provided for him by the Comintern as part of their sponsorship of a new Indochinese communist organization to be set up by Nguyễn in Guangzhou. Guangzhou would eventually prove an insecure location for the young communist group when in 1927, Chiang Kai-shek 蒋介石 (*pinyin*: Jiang Jieshi) repudiated the United Front by slaughtering Chinese Communist Party 中国共产党 members in Shanghai. Nguyễn Ái Quốc fled Guangzhou in April for Moscow via Hangzhou 杭州 (Hankow), and the League's headquarters were eventually moved to Hong Kong in 1929.¹⁰³

Placing the headquarters in Southern China had helped protect the leadership from the ever watchful eye of the *sûreté*, and support from Moscow helped pave the way for approximately 250 of its members to receive modern military training at the Huangpu

¹⁰¹ Bell, 205. In fact, Paris was a school for budding communist leaders like China's Zhou Enlai 周恩来 (Chao En-lai) and Cambodia's Pol Pot, not just Vietnamese revolutionaries like Hồ Chí Minh.

¹⁰² Sacks, 66.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 65.

黃埔 (Whampoa) Military Academy, established in 1924 with Russian assistance to aid Chinese Communists and the Guomindang in strengthening their military capabilities while the two sides were maintaining a united front.¹⁰⁴ Upon graduation from the Academy, Youth League members were taken to the grave of Phạm Hồng Thái, a member of a nationalist organization named Tâm Tâm Xã (Society of Like Hearts), who in June 1924 attempted to assassinate Governor General Martial Henri Merlin while on a state visit in Hong Kong, then drowned while attempting to evade pursuing policemen. At the gravesite, the graduates would make an oath to fulfill the hero's aspirations for a united and free Việt Nam.¹⁰⁵

Meanwhile, the Youth League's membership grew in direct proportion to the effectiveness of the French colonial actions to decapitate the heads of the alternative resistance movements remaining in Tonkin and Annam. This created its own problems for the once seemingly resilient organization. At a party congress held in Hong Kong in 1929, three individuals, at least one of whom had come from a rival party critical of the League's leadership for not being more militantly Marxist-Leninist, proposed a new independent party in Indochina to be named "Đông Dương Cộng Sản Đảng" (Indochina Communist Party). The Congress rejected their idea. After returning to Indochina, these

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 62, 65-65. In 1924, Sun Yat-sen had chosen Chiang Kai-shek, who had just returned from military training in Russia, to be the first commandant for the newly established Huangpu Military Academy, and Zhou Enlai was made director of the political department there.

¹⁰⁵ Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, 18; Huỳnh, 65. The great irony in this act of the young graduates is that one of the seven elementary-school founders of Tâm Tâm Xã (1923), Nguyễn Công Viên (alias Lâm Đức Thọ), later became the most effective agent for *sûreté* within the Youth League. Hue-Tam Ho Tai, 180-81, quotes from Nguyễn Ái Quốc to explain that he supported Phạm Hồng Thái's patriotic spirit, but not his tactics: "Assassination is reckless, and yields little result, because if you kill someone, there is always someone else, how can you get rid of them all? Revolution means uniting all the oppressed people to overthrow the oppressing class, it does not consist of asking a couple of people to assassinate two or three kings, nine or ten officials."

three individuals put the same proposal before the Youth League's organizations in Annam and Tonkin. Winning support, they established an independent organization under the same name earlier introduced in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, fearing that the organization would be lost to the militant dissidents, the leadership in Hong Kong secretly renamed the League: Annam Cộng Sản Đảng (Annam Communist Party). At this time, Nguyễn Ái Quốc, who had earlier fled China to Moscow, was now in Siam trying to organize the roughly 20,000 Vietnamese there. He went to Guangzhou where he convened a meeting as the Comintern's representative, and on February 10 reunified the Vietnamese Communists in the new Việt Nam Cộng Sản Đảng (Việt Nam Communist Party).¹⁰⁶ The suppression of the VNQDD uprising made the newly formulated party stronger by largely eliminating a rival organization.

The VNQDD uprising in Tonkin and the general rebellion at Phú Riêng in February 1930 were followed a month later by a strike of 4,000 workers at a textile mill also in Cochinchina. By May, factory strikes had spread to Tonkin and Annam where they were particularly strong in the province of Nghệ An and Hà Tĩnh. Most writers on the subject of the emerging Nghệ-Tĩnh uprising, as it has come to be called, agree that the Communists were fomenting protests and tried with various degrees of success to control them. In this time of world economic depression, peasants in Nghệ An and Hà Tĩnh had suffered flooding followed by drought, and in the uprisings that followed effectively replaced colonial control with peasant associations. Communist provincial leaders

¹⁰⁶ Sacks 82-85; Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, 30-31. Duiker's version is similar to Sacks, except it lacks the emphasis on independence from Russia and the Hong Kong leadership, and emphasizes the role of Tonkin members.

attempted to direct the activities of these associations. The peasants' aims were immediate, exclusively economic in nature, and often much too radical for the Communists. The Communists had apparently developed some level of pragmatism by this period, and in recognizing the superior force the French had at their disposal, were much more cautious than the peasants.¹⁰⁷

The French authorities were slow to act, but when they did in September, they employed airplanes to bomb and strafe peasant protestors just as they had done earlier in the year while suppressing the VNQDD uprising.¹⁰⁸ One account of this process appeared in the periodical *L'Asie française*, describing the aerial attack upon a crowd of 8,000 peasant demonstrators marching towards Vinh:

The planes, by way of warning, dropped a few bombs ahead of the column [of marchers]. It continued to advance. The three planes then bombed the column itself. The effect was immediate: the rebels fled in disorder, leaving behind the dead and the wounded. A few groups tried to reform, but they were chased by [the] guns of the flyers.¹⁰⁹

Several villages were burned to the ground. Numerous military posts were constructed throughout the region. Vietnamese *tirailleurs* were replaced with *montagnard* (highlander) soldiers, and the French Foreign Legion was called in with orders to “kill 9

¹⁰⁷ Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945*, 378-387; Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, 33-45; Sacks, 93-95; and Huynh, 151-171. Sacks, who appears to rely exclusively on French sources for this event, takes the view that the Communists directed the peasant protests (French colonial sources would have hoped that the uprising was fomented by one source rather than having disparate sources angry at their lack of effective rule). Marr stands out as the dissident amongst the group that use both Vietnamese and French sources in arguing that the Communists attempted to incorporate the peasant protests and then direct them, though largely unsuccessfully. Their varying degrees of success seems most likely while the limited aims of the peasants, as opposed to nationalism, suggests that the influence of the Communists was less important than either French or Communist Vietnamese sources would have liked them to be.

¹⁰⁸ Marr, 383.

¹⁰⁹ Huynh, 156.

out of 10 of the Communists, the prisons being too small to incarcerate the accused.”¹¹⁰ When the uprisings were over, it was estimated that peasant riots had claimed the lives of 130 people, while French forces had taken the lives of about 3,000 Vietnamese and imprisoned another 3,000-4,000 during their campaign of suppression.¹¹¹

Suppression of the ICP¹¹² was perhaps more thorough. More than 1000 suspected Communists were arrested, 400 of whom were sentenced to long prison terms, and eighty were executed. All told, as much as ninety percent of the ICP leadership was imprisoned or executed.¹¹³ The French were able to seize documents during their suppression efforts, which revealed links outside of Indochina, and subsequent cooperative raids conducted by the British on communists in Singapore and Hong Kong, including the arrest of Nguyễn Ái Quốc in June 1931, all but destroyed the ICP.¹¹⁴ In 1932, attempts to rebuild the ICP were effectively thwarted by the *sûreté* through additional arrests.¹¹⁵

In 1936, the Front Populaire won the French national elections by a landslide, and shortly thereafter breathed new life into Vietnamese communism. Front Populaire was a “united front” of the Communist Party, the Socialist Party and the Radical Party inspired by the Comintern’s call for an anti-fascist alliance to respond to the rising threat of the Nazis in Germany. In Indochina, Front Populaire’s victory translated into 4,056 prison

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 156-7.

¹¹¹ Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945*, 384-5.

¹¹² Việt Nam Communist Party was renamed the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) again in the Summer of 1930 at the behest of the Comintern and in criticism of the importance placed on nationalism, in the earlier name, over Marxism-Leninism.

¹¹³ Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, 42-43.

¹¹⁴ Sacks, 96.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 108.

amnesties and sentence reductions, and a freer press.¹¹⁶ Released political prisoners were often subject to administrative surveillance, which meant they were forbidden to reside or visit certain places, and were restricted to residences in specific areas where they were required to make weekly visits to the local *sûreté* office.¹¹⁷ Peter Zinoman argues that restrictions on residence, often to rural areas where education was of little value in economic terms, strengthened the anti-colonial movement by stiffening the resolve of the released prisoners to fight French rule. Administrative surveillance effectively spread groups of political prisoners out over larger areas, where they congregated based on a feeling of alienation to the unfamiliar social environment and shared prison experiences.¹¹⁸ The Nghệ-Tĩnh uprising, the subsequent massive arrests and imprisonment of communists, an unconscious spreading of communist agents through Front Populaire era administrative surveillance offered no immediate benefit to the nationalist movement, however. What the 1930s provided rather, was a foundation for a stronger movement later when opportunities would arise in the next decade.

CONCLUSION

The French conquest of Đại Nam was politically motivated by a desire for prestige in a community of Western European countries where empire was a key measure of importance. There were also commercial interests, but these were initially directed

¹¹⁶ Zinoman, 277. The “amnesties and sentence reductions figure” represents political and common-law prisoners, at least 556 political prisoners were released from the largest warehouse of political prisoners, Poulo Condore.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 281-84. Phan Bội Châu’s home in Huế—himself being an ex-prisoner—became a gathering, and living space, for many ex-prisoners.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 286-92.

towards China, and a larger Indochina was seen as a conduit to that land, first through the Mekong River then through the Red River. Beginning in the 1910s, and particularly after the First World War, the French began to exploit the resources of Indochina directly, and this exploitation had significant repercussions on Vietnamese society. Consequently, Vietnamese resistance changed from one led by Confucian scholar-officials of the old, Nguyễn Dynasty regime to urban intellectual movements given birth by the Westernization of elements of Vietnamese society, particularly educators and administrators, and a reorientation of its economy from one of independence to dependence on international trade.

Modern scholars, who in their rush to support the success of Vietnamese self-determination, have unwittingly devalued the earlier nationalist movement while giving too much credence to Communist Vietnamese claims of exceptionalism. Although the French introduced revolutionary social changes into Vietnamese, seemingly rendering reform an anachronism, such issues were overshadowed in the Vietnamese mind by their desire to resist colonial rule. Followers of the Cần Vương resistance movement, Đề Thám's band, the Thái Nguyên Rebellion, the Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo, the Nghệ-Tĩnh uprising, the VNQDĐ, and Communist Vietnamese were all nationalists first and foremost, though over time, as the French-instituted social changes in Indochina took root, their responses became more radical. There was necessarily a corresponding increase in the degree required to respond to changes initiated by the French colonial administration. However, the Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo were millenarian not revolutionary movements per se. Although the Communists tried to direct the Nghệ-Tĩnh uprising, the peasants' goals

were immediate, not revolutionary. The Communists will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters 10 and 11, but suffice to say here that the revolutionary ideology did not enjoy broad support. Indeed, their leader avoided propagating revolutionary economic propaganda during the period under study in this work.



French soldiers with Japanese prostitutes in Indochina early twentieth century, and Japanese troops during World War II.¹

Chapter 3

Dai Nippon 大日本 and French Indochina

In the introduction to their collection of essays on *The Japanese in Colonial Southeast Asia*, Saya Shiraishi and Takashi Shiraishi explain that at the beginning of the early twentieth century, many native Southeast Asians had difficulty reconciling “imagined realities of Japan as an imperial power and the reality of those of its

¹ Composite image from postcard, publisher unknown, and photograph of Japanese soldiers during World War II from the collection of the author.

nationals,” who were typically prostitutes, “one saw in daily life.”² The Japanese population of Southeast Asia began changing in the late 1910s, and by the 1940s the faces of soldiers replaced the faces of prostitutes as the symbol of Japanese in the region. Yet change is never immediate and all encompassing.

Japan was never faced with the total colonial conquest that overtook Đai Nam. This was due in some part to the effectiveness of its response, as well as a relatively moderate course of action taken by western powers in the former country. Japan’s drive into Southeast Asia took place during the period in Japanese history when the country moved from inward-looking, extreme isolationism before the Meiji Restoration (1868) to the height of aggressive imperialism in the Pacific War.³ For Southeast Asians like the Vietnamese, who lived under the yoke of Western European colonialism, Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War over a western power engendered hope and despair at the same time. The defeat of a western power gave many Southeast Asians new hope that they could one day overcome their colonial oppressors, yet the beginnings of Japan’s own colonial quest also bred fear that it had become just another colonial power.

Japanese military involvement in Indochina was precipitated by the German attack on France, and was initially aimed at stopping the flow of supplies to China in mid-1940. Within a short time, though, Indochina was also conceived of as an additional base for bombing in China and as a source of natural resources for Japan’s war. By mid-1941 concerns about the growing economic war spearheaded by the U.S. induced the

² Saya Shiraishi and Takashi Shiraishi, “The Japanese in Colonial Southeast Asia: An Overview,” in *The Japanese in Colonial Southeast Asia*, edited by Saya Shiraishi and Takashi Shiraishi, translated by EDS, Tokyo (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1993), 5-20.

³ The Pacific War was not distinct from World War II, but merely refers to the distinctiveness of two separate theaters, Atlantic and Pacific.

Japanese to embark on a plan of conquest in Southeast Asia through southern Indochina. The discovery of those secret plans through code breaking led the U.S. to heighten its economic war on Japan, and after several months of fruitless negotiations, the Japanese launched a surprise attack on the U.S.. The American war effort in mainland eastern Asia first focused on China, although circumstances limited its scope. American activities directed towards the Japanese in Indochina were carried out from within China, and made use of the fact that there were French colonials who were willing to resist the Japanese military occupation.

DAI NIPPON

In forcing Japan to abandon its two-century long policy of national seclusion, *sakoku* 鎖国, beginning with the threatening entrance into Edo Bay by Commodore Matthew Perry's "black ships" in 1853, western powers forced the Japanese to search for security in strength against the danger of colonization that threatened the entirety of eastern Asia. European colonial powers were just beginning to menace China following the first Opium War, and would claim all of Southeast Asia except for Siam by the end of the century. The several samurai from Satsuma 薩摩 and Chōshū 徴収 who led the overthrow of the dynastic Tokugawa *bakufu* 徳川幕府 attempted to establish legitimacy in the name of restoring the emperor, thus the Meiji Restoration 明治維新 (1868). After establishing a conscript army, colonizing Hokkaido 北海度 from 1873-1883, modernizing its navy, and establishing a new political system, the Japanese began to

create an empire by acquiring Taiwan after the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and Korea after the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905).

Historians who have examined Dai Nippon's 大日本 (Great, or Imperial Japan) path to instigating the Pacific War often focus on an international system, tracking Japan's move away from this system as the war approached. British historian W.G. Beasley, for example, emphasizes the treaty port system initiated by the British in China after the Opium Wars, and then by the Americans who "transplanted the treaty port system from China to Japan."⁴ Japanese-American historian, Akira Iriye, places a greater emphasis on the Washington Conference system, arguing that Japan accepted this international system during the 1920s, but abrogated it in the 1930s.⁵ Peter Duus, however, argues more convincingly that Japan began its path of imperialism when it decided to "open Korea" in a "more-or-less conscious imitation of the Western example," and that "ironically, the Japanese imposed on the Koreans the same kind of unequal treaty system that they sought to shed themselves."⁶ Similarly, Mark R. Peattie argues that Japanese imperialism was pieced together with methods "which were accepted means of imperial expansion of the time."⁷

Duus' argument, that Japan was only interested in colonizing for "strategic and political considerations," rings only half true.⁸ Taiwan, Japan's Shanghai concession,

⁴ W.G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 20-26.

⁵ Akira Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War in Asian and the Pacific* (New York: Longman Inc., 1987), 1-20.

⁶ Peter Duus, *The Rise of Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 122.

⁷ Mark R. Peattie, "Japanese Colonialism: Discarding the Stereotypes," in *Japan Examined: Perspectives on Modern Japanese History*, edited by Harry Wray and Hilary Conroy (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 209.

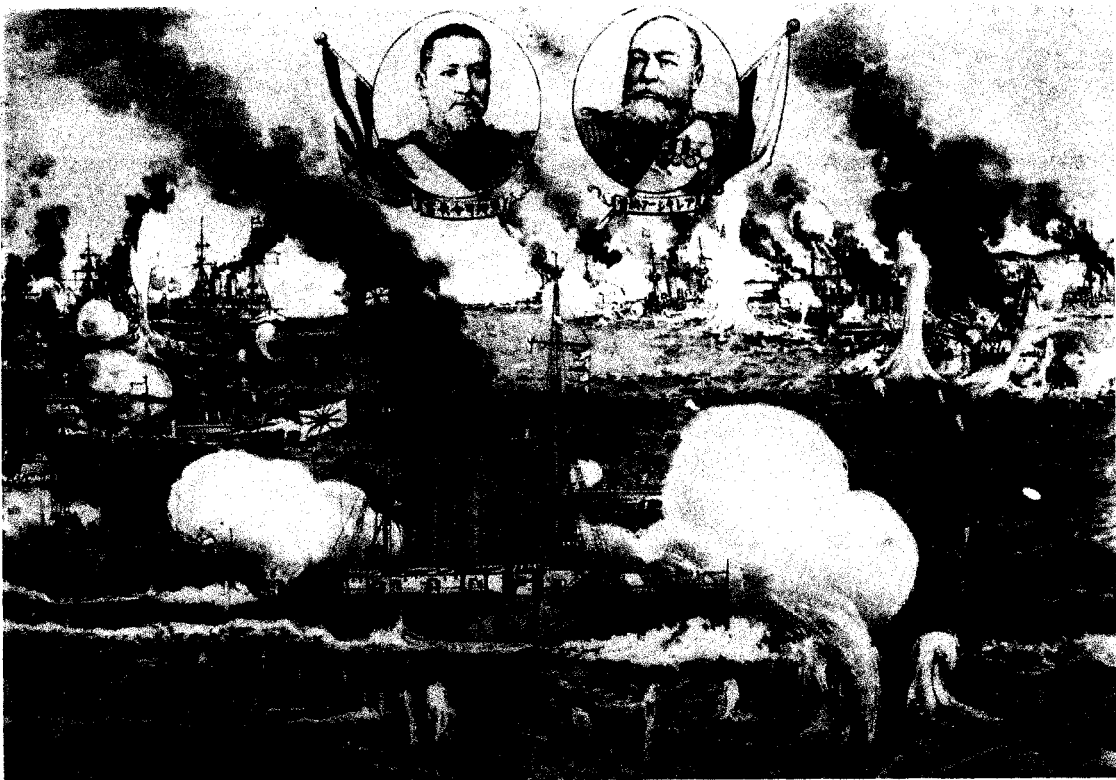
⁸ Duus, 125.

and German possessions gained after World War I, such as Qingdao 青岛 (Tsingtao) on the Shandong 山东 (Shantung) Peninsula clearly offered economic benefits even before the Great Depression of 1929 led it to rely upon its imperial possessions as more stable sources of supplies (in the same manner Western European imperial powers would). Still, colonial possessions obtained in the first two decades of the nineteenth century were, like the victory in the Russo-Japanese War, probably most valued for the sense of pride they generated and the extent to which they led the western powers to recognize Japan as an equal. The 1920s may have been an interregnum period for Japan's western-inspired gunboat diplomacy, but it also marked significant growth in the economic importance of its colonial possessions.⁹

The military's dominance of the Japanese government in the 1930s resulted in irrationally adventurous expansionism which forced those who had the most to lose, Western European colonial powers and America, to slowly form an opposition. Japan's colonial ambitions had first forced a coalition of western powers (Russia, Germany and France) in the Triple Intervention of 1895 which forced Japan to relinquish the Liaodong 辽东 (Liaotung) Peninsula it had gained from the Chinese in the Sino-Japanese War. Japan reasserted its claim to this area ten years later with its victory over the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War. This defeat of a western power by an Asian country was both a

⁹ Samuel Pao-San Ho, "Colonialism and Development: Korea, Taiwan, and Kwangtung," in *Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945*, edited by Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984): 368-71. By 1910, seventy percent of Taiwan's trade and eighty-ninety percent of Korea's trade was with Japan, ninety percent of Taiwan's sugar went to Japan, and by the 1920s, between one-quarter and one-half of both Taiwan and Korea's rice went to Japan. In the 1930s, Japan began replacing imports of agricultural goods with raw industrial resources of metals, coal and chemicals from Korea and Manchuria, where soybeans and derivatives had previously been important.

source of pride for Asians, having fallen victim to Western European imperialism, and a source of fear for those who recognized Japan was itself becoming indistinguishable from Western European imperial powers. In the 1930s, Japanese military adventurism aimed at colonial expansion in China grew at a rapid pace, having been encouraged first by constitutional peculiarities that permitted the military to circumvent the cabinet through its direct responsibility to the emperor, the Peace Preservation Law of 1925 which restricted the range of political discussion, party corruption connected to the *zaibatsu* 財閥 (large family holding companies) and local politics, and finally the Great Depression of 1929.¹⁰



Japanese postcard (publisher unknown) commemorating the Battle of Tsushima Straits
(*invets.* Admiral Tōgō Heihachirō and Admiral Z.P. Rozhdestvensky).

¹⁰ Duus, 113-16, 130, 171, 203, and 207-08.

The rise of the militarists to power in the 1930s was carried out through assassination (including the assassination of Phan Bội Châu's one time protégé, Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi, on May 13, 1932), and through the adventures of junior officers. Japanese imperial expansion had abated from 1915 until the Manchurian Incident of 1931 when elements of the Japanese Kwangtung 広東 Army stationed there, under the orders of a colonel and lieutenant colonel, secretly blew up a small section of the South Manchuria Railway they were responsible for protecting, blamed the staged event on the Chinese, and used the incident as the basis for the seizure of Mukden (now called Shenyang 沈阳) and Changchun 长春. Iriye argues that mass journalism garnered public support for the Manchurian Incident through its valorization of the Kwangtung Army's activities as a means to sell more papers. Over the long term, the Kwangtung Army's success backed by broad public support and the weak international response led to the consolidation of Japanese gains, and incorporation of Manchuria into Japan's colonial empire as the puppet state of Manchukuo (Japanese: Manshūkoku 満州国) in 1932.¹¹

That same year, Japanese naval forces off Shanghai escalated a minor conflict involving an attack on a group of Japanese in their international settlement by a group of Chinese that left a Japanese dead. Before a truce was reached, the Japanese conducted an aerial bombardment of Zhabei 闸北 (Chapei) district adjacent to the Japanese concession, and 50,000 Japanese troops arrived in the area of Shanghai with a flotilla of cruisers and destroyers. On July 7, 1937 a relatively minor skirmish between Japanese and Chinese

¹¹ Iriye, 8-9, 14-15.

troops near Lugouqiao 芦沟桥 (also known as Marco Polo Bridge) southwest of Beijing 北京 escalated after a Japanese soldier went missing (he was later found) because leaders of both countries refused to back down. This marked the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War though war was never officially declared. In August, the conflict spread to Shanghai. In December, the Japanese captured the capital of Nanjing where they commenced a widely publicized rampage of atrocities against the Chinese populace. Ultimately Chiang Kai-shek's Guomindang government fled behind natural defenses to Chongqing 重庆 (Chungking) in Sichuan 四川 (Szechwan).¹²

In the 1930s, Japanese expansion in East Asia was paralleled by German expansion in Europe. For the Japanese, Germany was as natural an ally as the Soviet Union was an enemy. While the oligarchy of the Meiji Restoration used elements of various Western European and American institutions, they modeled Japan's constitution and army on Prussia's. The Prussian government had a strong monarchy and executive, and a weak assembly, a perfect fit for these leaders who would rule in the emperor's name.¹³ Katsura Tarō 桂太郎, Kawakami Sōroku 川上操六, and especially Yamagata Aritomo 山県有朋, considered chief architect of the modern Japanese army, had all spent time in Europe studying modern military practices, and were obviously impressed with Prussian successes in the campaigns of 1866 and 1870-71 which led to a unified

¹² Iriye, 42-43; Ranbir Vohra *China's Path to Modernization* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992), 141, 162-63; and Jonathan Spence, *In Search for Modern China* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1990), 444-45.

¹³ Duus, 100.

Germany in 1871.¹⁴ The Russians, however, were seen as a threat that increased in parallel with Japan's imperial ambitions in East Asia. As Japanese imperial ambitions in Manchuria escalated in the 1930s, so did the rate of border incidents with Russia (now the Soviet Union), numbering some 152 from late 1931 until 1934, increasing to 136 in 1935, and 203 in 1936.¹⁵

The historic relationship with Germany and Japanese fear of the Soviet Union provided the impetus for an alliance that would continue to evolve between the two countries, from the mid-1930s through World War II. In November 1936, Germany and Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact and a secret supplementary agreement, a defense arrangement aimed at the Communist Soviet Union. It had been negotiated by the Japanese military attaché in Germany, Ōshima Hiroshi 王島博, who reported directly to the Army General Staff and acted independently of the Japanese ambassador, and Joachim von Ribbentrop, Adolf Hitler's ambassador-at-large. Hoping to add signatories to the Pact, Japanese Foreign Minister Arita Hachirō 有田八郎 approached Britain and Holland without success. Rather than favorably impressing the Western European and American governments, the agreement elevated concern about Japanese and German ambitions. German aggression in Eastern Europe led to the invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, a week after the Germans secretly signed a non-aggression pact, a

¹⁴ W.G. Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 63-64, 73; Beasley (1987), 36. Yamagata studied military affairs in France and Germany for a year in 1869-1870. Beasley explains that "while training at the lower levels remained French in character, staff work and command became largely German," and a German major was recruited to teach at the staff college and advise the General Staff which Yamagata controlled

¹⁵ Hata Ikuhiko, "The Japanese-Soviet Confrontation, 1935-1939," in *Deterrent Diplomacy: Japan, Germany, and the USSR, 1935-1940*, translated by Hans H. Baerwald, edited by James William Morley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 131, 133, 142, 157, 162, 164 and 178.

temporary expedient, with the Soviet Union.¹⁶ As a result of severe losses in the Changkufeng (1938) and Nomonhan (1939) border incidents with the Soviet Union and the secret German pact, Japan also began to pursue a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union.

Concerned it would miss the chance to get “on the omnibus” of German victory in Western Europe (only Britain was still holding out while Sweden, Switzerland and Spain remained neutral) to share in the redistribution of the colonies in Asia, Japan signed the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy on September 27, 1940.¹⁷ The wording of the pact, pledging the signatories to “assist one another with all political, economic and military means when 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,” was intended to dissuade the Americans from actively siding with the British or the Chinese.¹⁸ Japan was anxious to conclude the war with China which had dragged on since 1937.

As the war progressed, China’s last major port, Canton, fell to the Japanese on October 1938. Cut off from the international supply lines on the coast, aid could only reach the Guomindang through four land routes: the Indochina-Yunnan Railroad running from the port of Hải Phòng to Kunming 昆明, its branch line from Hà Nội to Lạng Sơn on the Chinese border connected by truck route on the China side of the border, overland through the Soviet Union and the (British) Burma Road running from Mandalay to

¹⁶ Carl Boyd, “The Berlin-Tokyo Axis and Japanese Military Initiative,” *Modern Asian Studies* 15, no. 2 (1981): 311-323.

¹⁷ Sachiko Murakami, “Japan’s Thrust into French Indochina, 1940-1945” (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1981), 43; Boyd: 323-338; and Iriye, 83, 95.

¹⁸ “Three-Power Pact Between Germany, Italy, and Japan, Signed at Berlin, September 27, 1940,” www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/wwii/triparti.htm (accessed June 11, 2003).

Yunnan 云南 via Lashio. As a result, Indochina was increasingly viewed as a strategic area in the war against the Chinese. In February 1939, Japanese forces landed on the Chinese island of Hainan 海南 in the Bay of Tonkin about 125 miles east of Hải Phòng. Then on March 31, the Japanese occupied the nominally Chinese Spratly Islands, 300 miles southeast of Indochina. In September, the Japanese issued an *aide-mémoire* to the French and British envoys in China to withdraw their forces from that country, leaving the protection of their interests and nationals to the Japanese. The French responded in November by announcing that they would reduce their garrisons in North China to a “skeleton force,” yet maintained that they were not relinquishing the French right to extraterritoriality in China. The Japanese Army attacked Nanning 南宁 near the Indochina border in November in an attempt to halt the supplies entering China from Lạng Sơn. The following month, the Japanese began their first direct attack on the Indochina-Yunnan Railroad by bombarding the line at Mengzi 蒙自 (Mencius), the first customs station within the Chinese border.¹⁹

The day after France’s leader Marshal Philippe Pétain sued for peace with the Germans (June 17, 1940), Japanese Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Tani Masayuki presented a demand directed at Indochina (Futsuin 仏印 or Indoshina インドシナ in Japanese) to French Ambassador Charles Arsène-Henri, requesting a reply in twenty-four hours. The Japanese wanted “(1) transit to China of all war material indefinitely suspended, and (2) a Japanese military mission on the scene to verify the strict

¹⁹ Andrew Roth, *Japan Strikes South; The Story of French Indo-China Passing Under Japanese Domination*. (San Francisco: American council, Institute of Pacific relations, 1941), 1, 15, and 41-42.

enforcement of the suspension of transit.” To add pressure to the demand, units of the South China Army captured the Chinese frontier town of Longzhou 龙州 (Lung-chou), a division was moved closer to the border facing Lạng Sơn from Nanning, and units of the Japanese Navy maneuvered near Hải Phòng. Arsène-Henri agreed to the Japanese request, and Governor General Georges Catroux also accepted the Japanese demands due to the superior Japanese forces in Chinese provinces of Guangdong 广东 (Kwantung) and Guangxi 广西 (Kwangsi) near Tonkin, and after Under-Secretary of State Sumner Welles responded to his query making it clear that the U.S. would not go to war with Japan over Indochina.²⁰

Further negotiations over Indochina were held between Arsène-Henri, who sought direction from new French Foreign Minister Paul Baudouin, and Japanese Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yōsuke 松岡洋右, in July and August. While every effort was made to stall the negotiations, Baudouin unsuccessfully appealed to the Germans for help on racial grounds, claiming “it would be in the general European interest to prevent any further setback in the influence of the white race in East Asia.” The Americans responded to French appeals saying that they supported the status quo, but did “not envisage any practical measure of defending this position.” The British simply ignored the Vichy French appeal. Consequently the French relented to the Japanese, and an agreement marking the next stage of Japanese involvement in Indochina during the Pacific War was signed on August 30 between Arsène-Henri and Matsuoka. No longer was the aim of the

²⁰ Murakami, 99; Jacques Dalloz, *The War in Indo-China 1945-1954*, translated by Josephine Bacon (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan Ltd., 1990), 32; and Roth, 52. Petain sued for peace on June 17th from France, but it was the 18th in Japan due to the international dateline.

Japanese simply to arrest the transit of foreign supplies to the Chinese; now it had expanded to commercial privileges for the Japanese and to the stationing of Japanese troops in Tonkin. During the long negotiations, Arsène-Henri had resisted as much as he felt was prudent. He had after all, only agreed to investigate how to improve Japanese commercial opportunities above third powers, and had attempted to limit the Japanese need to military facilities within Indochina specifically to the duration of the “China Incident.” Such concessions were only considered to avoid losing the colony itself.²¹

Constantly employing such delaying tactics and attempts to moderate Japanese demands, the French were able, under the Arsène-Henri-Matsuoka Agreement, to have military questions at the heart of the negotiations be decided by the French commander of forces in Indochina, General Maurice Martin, and Major General Nishihara Issaku 西原一作. This time the Japanese set a deadline of September 22 at 10:00 p.m. for conclusion of the agreement. Not surprisingly, the Martin-Nishihara Agreement was not concluded until the final day of the deadline. A limited number of Japanese troops were permitted to be stationed in Tonkin, but these troops were not permitted south of the Red River or in Hà Nội. Much larger numbers of Japanese troops were permitted to pass through Tonkin to Yunnan for military operations, but limits were set on these as well. A division of the South China Army was to be permitted to pass through Tonkin to embark at Hải

²¹ Murakami, 137, 140-143; Roth, 69. One French appeal to the U.S. arrived on July 28 in the form of a \$12,000,000 certified check accompanied by a request for 150 planes, stocks of anti-aircraft guns, and WWI rifles and ammunition. In refusing the request, the State Department told the Indochinese Military Mission that they had to first cut their ties with the Vichy government. Governor General Catroux had been replaced by Vichy with Admiral Jean Decoux on July 19, and there was reasonable concern that weapons given to the colonial government answerable to Vichy might end up in the hands of the Germans.

Phông. Finally, three air bases, at Gia Lâm, Lào Cai and Phù Tho, were made available to Japanese forces.²²

Claiming not to have learned that the agreement was concluded in time, the commander of Japan's 5th Division of the South China Army, General Nakamura Aketo 中村明戸, started an attack on the French fort at Đông Đăng but was ordered to stop only a half hour into the engagement. He then made a successful appeal to his commanders in the 22nd Army (a command separate from General Nishihara's) to continue and was told the following morning "you don't have to feel obliged to stop at Dong Dang because we consider Lang Son to be within the areas of localized battle."²³ General Nakamura ignored messages from the South China Army dropped by air in tubes informing him that only forces under General Nishihara were permitted under the signed agreement to enter Tonkin, and instructing him to stop the attack. He captured Đông Đăng on the 23rd, and went on to defeat the French garrison at Lạng Sơn on the 25th. On October 5, however, parallels one could draw between General Nakamura's aggression and the Manchurian Incident nine years earlier ended when he was forced to read an imperial rescript to an assembly of Indochinese prisoners of war apologizing for the attack on Lạng Sơn, and informing the prisoners that they would be released, the Japanese soldiers would evacuate Tonkin quickly, and that Japan would respect the sovereignty of Indochina.²⁴ As a result,

²² Murakami, 179.

²³ Ibid, 185-87.

²⁴ Ibid, 187-202.

Vichy French aims to maintain their sovereignty over Indochina had remained largely intact through the granting of only the most necessary concessions to the Japanese.²⁵

According to Tran My-Van, two Vietnamese paramilitary units of the Cao Đài, organized as part of the Việt Nam Phục Quốc Đồng Minh Hội (Phục Quốc, or League for the National Restoration of Vietnam) by the adopted son of Cường Để and stationed in southern China, joined in the Japanese attack on Lạng Sơn. In addition to apologizing for the attack, the Japanese ordered the two Vietnamese units to withdraw. One of these units refused, continued to fight, and was defeated by the French. The leader and many of the soldiers of this unit were captured and executed.²⁶

The French faced another challenge from the west. In constructing the colony of Indochina in the last decade of the nineteenth and first decade of the twentieth centuries, the French had seized portions of Siam. In his study of Thailand (Siam was renamed in 1939) during World War II, E. Bruce Reynolds points out that Thai Prime Minister Phibun Songkhram recognized the opportunity to retrieve “lost territory” from the French after their defeat by Germany in Europe, and understood that Japanese cooperation was vital in pursuit of this goal after the Japanese military moved into Northern Indochina on September 22. In subsequent dialogue with the Japanese military attaché, Phibun agreed to the Japanese desire for passage of their troops through Thai territory for a plan to attack Singapore in exchange for support of Thai irredentism. Apparently the talks with

²⁵ Roth, 72. On the 26th, the Japanese also dropped four bombs on a Vietnamese residential area behind the Hải Phòng railroad station “by mistake.”

²⁶ Tran My-Van, “Japan and Vietnam’s Cao daists: a wartime relationship (1939–45),” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27,1 (March, 1996): 183, and “Japan through Vietnamese Eyes (1905–1945),” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 30,1 (March, 1999): 135; Isaac Milton Sacks, “Communism and Nationalism in Viet Nam 1918–1946” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1960), 174.

the Japanese emboldened Phibun, and the Vichy French reported that Thai planes had bombed and strafed French troops on the 28th. The French responded by substantially increasing its force of troops on the border. Phibun ordered Thai troops to invade certain Indochinese border areas on January 6, 1941, and the French mounted an unsuccessful counterattack ten days later. Then on the 17th, the French colonial navy decimated the Thai fleet in the Gulf of Thailand. Stunned by the naval victory, the Japanese took up mediation of the dispute with more urgency, and by March 11, Japan pressured the French into signing a lopsided agreement giving a portion of the “lost territories” back to Thailand, which were to be demilitarized, and French residents on the lands were to be granted equal status with Thai citizens. The Japanese also forbade the two parties to the agreement it had brokered from making any treaty detrimental to Japan’s interests.²⁷

Although there had been high levels of policy discussions on a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere 大東亜共栄圏, with its philosophical origins dating back to at least 1918, divisions between the Army, Navy, and Foreign Ministry and fear of reprisals from the western powers had restrained the Japanese from actually carrying these ideas into action.²⁸ The seizure of Manchuria and the outbreak of war with China had dramatically

²⁷ E. Bruce Reynolds, *Thailand and Japan’s Southern Advance: 1940-1945* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 31-51; Roth, 74-79. Thai claims to the “lost territories” were dubious, particularly in the Cambodian case, being only recently acquired. Laos and Thailand have strong cultural ties and it might be argued have as strong, or stronger, historic connection as Bangkok does to Chiang Mai in the North. Huỳnh Kim Khánh, *Vietnamese Communism, 1925-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 239. The “lost territories” represented 70,000 square kilometers of territory including the Cambodian province of Battambang and Laotian territory west of the Mekong River.

²⁸ Beasley (1987), 178-79, 201-02, 226; Murakami, 53-54; and Peter Duus, “Introduction” to *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931-1945*, edited by Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), xxii. Kita Ikki 北一輝, who had been influenced by his experiences in China after the 1911 Revolution and by the ideas of Social Darwinism, wrote *A Plan for the Reorganization of Japan* 日本改造法案大綱, a work highly influential in military circles, where he envisaged a Japan aiding colonized Asians aspirations of independence through its “guidance and

worsened Japan's relations with the West. On October 5, 1937 President Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered a speech which included an allusion to aggressions such as those committed by Japan against China. Seeming to articulate a change in policy, Roosevelt told his audience that "the epidemic of world lawlessness is spreading," and "when an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community against the spread of the disease."²⁹

This may have been a hint at the possibility of an economic quarantine, or sanctions, but such measures were tentative and slow in coming, largely because mood of the American public remained isolationist.³⁰ It was not until July 1938 that the U.S.

protection." In 1936, according to the Beasley, the cabinet of Hirota Kōki 広田弘毅 attempted to reconcile differences between the Army, Navy and Foreign Ministry in a statement of principles called the Fundamentals of National Policy. This document enunciated the aim of economic expansion through "a strong coalition between Japan, Manchukuo, and China" and extending interests into Southeast Asia through "gradual and peaceful" means. In 1938, Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro 近衛文麿, who had railed against western imperialists as early as 1918 for trying to keep down late-comers like Japan, established the "New Order 新秩序 in East Asia" policy providing the strong implication that Anglo-American presence in East Asia was to be terminated. Inspired no doubt by the rapid successes of Hitler's Germany in Europe, in May 1940, the Military Affairs Section of the War Ministry distributed "A Draft of the Direction of a War in the South Seas." Though calling for contradictory approaches as enumerated by Murakami, it seems to have essentially called for the buildup of air bases in French Indochina and Thailand for offensive operations, a surprise attack on the Netherlands East Indies, but an avoidance of conflict with Great Britain, and an attack on Hong Kong ("at the opportune moment"), Singapore ("if the British should intervene"), and the Philippines (only if absolutely necessary"). Foreign Minister Arita gave a radio speech in June 1940 where he said that that "the most natural step that peoples are closely related to one another geographically, racially, and economically should first form a sphere of their own for coexistence and co-prosperity." In August, Arita's successor, Matsuoka Yōsuke dubbed Arita's vision the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere."

²⁹ *Franklin D. Roosevelt: Selected Speeches, Messages, Press Conferences, and Letters*, edited by Basil Rauch (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), 191. To listen to a recording of the speech see President Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Quarantine Speech" at Chicago, Illinois, 5 October 1937, *Digital History*, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/resource_guides/content_av.cfm?tpc=24 (accessed June 1, 2003). Iriye, 46, correctly points out that the "Quarantine Speech" was not only a reference to Japan, but Germany and Italy as well.

³⁰ Sumner Welles, *The Seven Decisions that Shaped History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), 73, 91-92. Sumner Welles stated that the "quarantine" speech was only supported by Harold Ickes, Henry Morgenthau and Henry Wallace, Cordell Hull and a "majority of the President's spokesmen in Congress"

began imposing “moral embargoes” on Japan. These “moral embargoes” lacked the authority of law, but were effectively applied against aircraft exports, plans and processes for the manufacture of high-octane, aviation fuel, loans and credit sales to Japan. Abrogation of a 1911 commercial treaty with Japan following a six-month notice of termination was necessary before export embargoes could be legally applied against Japan, and such a notice was issued in July 1939. In 1940, Congress granted the president the authority to declare items vital to national security, and consequently eligible for export licensing controls. On July 6, a presidential proclamation placed a group of items, including machine tools used in the armaments industry, on the list requiring export licenses. Then on the 26th, aviation gasoline, tetraethyl lead and iron, and steel scrap of Number I grade were added to the export licensing system. Equipment and processes for the production of high-octane, aviation fuel, aircraft and aircraft engines were placed under the export licensing system on September 13. On the same day, President Roosevelt ordered an embargo placed on the export of all grades of scrap steel and scrap iron, except to Western Hemisphere countries and Great Britain. Americans moved to limit copper shipments to Japan from the U.S. and the other major exporter, Chile, by the end of the year as well.³¹

were “vehemently critical of the speech.” He also believed that “the decision of the American people to reject the recommendation their President made to them in his “quarantine” speech lost this nation its best chance to avoid war with Japan.”

³¹ Jonathan G. Utley, *Going to War with Japan, 1937-1941* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee, 1985), 37, 63, 78, 95-100, 120-22 and Roth 54, 58, 73. Utley is primarily concerned with providing evidence to show what government officials favored a more aggressive response to Japanese imperialism like Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Stanley Hornbeck, the ranking Asian specialist in the State Department, and Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson, and who favored a more cautious approach like Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Roth, who wrote his book in the middle of 1941, is necessarily more concerned with showing the evolution of events and reactions as they were reported in the public domain.

Japan's signing of a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union in April 1941 followed by the German invasion of the Soviet Union rapidly lessened the northern threat Japan had faced for so long, but the threat from the U.S. was rapidly increasing. In May, the Japanese negotiated guaranteed access to French Indochinese resources such as rice, rubber, zinc, tungsten manganese, tin, chromium and coal, but the threat of embargoes on goods from other colonial empires in Southeast Asia loomed large in the minds of the Japanese. Japan imported seventy percent of its tin, rubber, bauxite, chrome ore, plus up to fifty percent of manganese, tungsten, nickel, copper, and oil from Southeast Asia.³² However, sixty percent of Japan's oil came from the U.S., whose interests in Southeast Asia had grown rapidly since the 1920s.³³

The U.S. obtained about ninety percent of its crude rubber and seventy-five percent of its tin from Southeast Asia by the 1930s, primarily from British Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies. During this decade, the American share of the Netherlands East Indies' exports jumped from less than one percent to 12.1 percent, based primarily on raw rubber imports. Nearly forty percent of British Malayan exports, mostly tin and rubber, went to the U.S.. In addition to these commercial concerns, the U.S. had strategic interests in Southeast Asia as well. By mid-1941, Great Britain was the last defense in Western Europe against Nazi military expansion. If the British lost their colonial possessions in Southeast Asia, their ability to continue the fight would be

³² Beasley (1987), 225.

³³ David Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1937-41* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 234.

undermined.³⁴ Learning of Japan's intention of occupying southern Indochina, a clear signal of an intent to forcibly secure more resources in Southeast Asia, the U.S. decided in July to protect its commercial and strategic interests by freezing Japanese assets and imposing a *de facto* oil embargo.³⁵

The American embargo gave the besieged British and the Dutch government-in-exile in Britain, which the Netherlands East Indies government still obeyed, encouragement to resist the Japanese. In late July, the British abrogated the commercial treaties its colonies, India and Burma, had with Japan. By late August, the Netherlands East Indies had imposed a total ban on oil and bauxite exports to Japan. Though most Americans did not recognize it at the time, their action was—to the Japanese—all but a formal declaration of war. These embargoes made it imperative for the Japanese either to negotiate to have the embargoes lifted or move militarily. The Japanese realized in early September they would have to start a campaign in Southeast Asia no later than December to take oil and other resources forcibly before seasonal weather conditions turned unfavorable, and their naval oil reserves were depleted.³⁶

When the negotiations failed, the Pacific War began on December 7, 1941 with a Japanese surprise attack on the American naval fleet anchored at Honolulu, Hawaii.

³⁴ Gary R. Hess, *The United States' Emergence as a Southeast Asian Power, 1940-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 10, 13-14, and 24.

³⁵ Iriye 148; Sumner Welles (1951), 82; *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes*, vol. III (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), 545, 549; and David Reynolds, 234. Utley points out that Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson tightened the noose on exports of oil to Japan much more than President Roosevelt had intended, but when the president did learn, in September, what had occurred, nothing was done to hamper Acheson's career and he made no moves to grant the Japanese oil. Harold Ickes, the Secretary of Interior and Petroleum Administrator, had stopped a shipment of oil to Japan a month earlier without consulting the State Department, but told Acheson of his desire to have all oil shipments banned in a conversation on 28 June 1941. The Netherlands East Indies along with the Caribbean supplied 30 percent of Japan's oil.

³⁶ Beasley (1987), 231-32; Iriye 146-50.

Over the next several months Japan overturned European and American colonial domination of Southeast Asia by taking Hong Kong, the Philippines, the Malay peninsula including Singapore, Burma, the Netherlands East Indies, and numerous islands in the central and southwest Pacific.

Distinct from its military occupation throughout the rest of colonial Southeast Asia, the Japanese left the French to rule in Indochina until March 1945, while in the other colonies they proclaimed they were liberating the Asians from European colonial rule. The former European colonies were now exploited by the Japanese for military purposes. By leaving a cooperative French administration in place, Japanese personnel were left free, so long as the French did not pose a threat to the Japanese. They were also permitted to maintain their colonial army though it had seemingly lost all purpose other than to quell “domestic disturbances.” The Vietnamese suffered more than most due to the privations forced on the colonial subjects of an empire under foreign military occupation, but the French authorities did take some measures aimed at co-opting Vietnamese nationalist sentiment.³⁷

Governor General Jean Decoux began using the previously taboo term “Việt Nam” and promoted the Vietnamese language. He also initiated the hiring of Vietnamese for middle and upper ranks in the administration from which they had previously been excluded. Under his administration the Hai Bà Trưng (Trung sisters), Vietnamese national heroines who led a revolt against the Chinese in the first century, were

³⁷ Dalloz, 35. Martin Shipway, *The Road to War: France and Vietnam, 1944-1947* (Providence, RI: Berhahn Books, 1996), 18, asserts that “the Japanese garrison was never numerous enough to constitute an occupying force (until the March 1945 coup). While Shipway is perhaps technically correct, there was always an imminent danger that Japanese forces in Indochina could be strengthened from neighboring areas to exert force on the French as did indeed happen in 1945.

celebrated on St. Joan of Arc's Day. Young Vietnamese were permitted to enroll in new youth athletic organizations, and the Vietnamese flag was honored alongside the French flag in their parades. The number of village schools nearly tripled under the Decoux Administration, rising from 3,143 in 1941 to 9,070 three years later.³⁸



Generals Decoux and Nishihara³⁹

Decoux's liberal policies were not, however, instituted to promote ideas of independence among the Vietnamese, though they were aimed at mollifying those who might be enticed by Japan's propaganda of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. He was simply trying to hold onto Indochina for the French at a difficult time. As he made clear in his memoirs: "If I thus recognized, even encouraged particular

'patriotism,' I formally condemned 'nationalism' of all kinds, because it had a xenophobic and anti-French tendency and received its instructions from abroad."⁴⁰

Decoux realized he needed the Vietnamese more than they needed him, and brutally

³⁸ Ibid; Huynh, 247. Huynh argues that this was mostly a propaganda ploy as the number of Vietnamese in positions of the Administration in which they earned as much as their European counterparts increased from 171 to merely 304 over the two year period, 1941-1943.

³⁹ J. Legrand, *L'Indochine à l'heure japonaise* (Cannes: l'Imprimerie Ægitna: 1963), opposite 33.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Huynh, 246.

applied the stick to suppress nationalists while deploying the carrot to pacify and keep the tacit allegiance of the masses. When Japanese troops began arriving in Cochinchina, in mid-1941, Decoux clamped down on Cao Đài by ransacking its temples and arresting the leader, Phạm Công Tắc, along with five other subordinate leaders. They were sent to Poulo Condore before being exiled to the Comoros Islands off Madagascar.⁴¹

A broadening of opportunities within the colonial administration was not a move towards compassionate rule, but a necessity to fill the ranks since no new French administrators had arrived from the *métropole* due to the war. At the same time that he allowed for symbolic gestures appealing to Vietnamese pride, Decoux imposed restrictions on French citizenship in the colony, and vigorously persecuted Vietnamese nationalists, communists, and de Gaullists (supporters of Charles de Gaulle's resistance to Nazi Germany whom Decoux referred to as "traitors, mercenaries, and flunkies in the service of the Russo-Anglo-American coalition"⁴²). In his study of Vichy colonial administration in the colonies, Eric Jennings reveals that the Decoux administration enacted a series of legislative actions which by July 1943 had further excluded *métis* from French citizenship through legal definitions with wording such as: "any functionary who cannot trace his ancestry to two European grandparents is to be considered Asian." Decoux also rescinded local administrative measures instituted by his predecessor in favor of his authoritarian rule, and carried out similar changes at higher levels. Similarly,

⁴¹ Marr, *Vietnam 1945: the Quest for Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 83; Tran My-Van, "Japan and Vietnam's Cao daists: a wartime relationship (1939-45)": 184.

⁴² Huỳnh, 237. A distinction is made here between French patriots in general, "Gaullists," and French patriots who supported de Gaulle, "de Gaullists."

the athletic associations were designed to instill loyalty to the colonial regime, rather than to promote the natives.⁴³

An American secret intelligence report from September 1944 citing volumes of the *Journal Officiel de l'Indochine Française* from July 11 and 15, stated that “the principal targets” in the government’s campaign to suppress “subversive” activities “were persons aiding the Allies (Fighting French and other organizations) or promoting the Annamite nationalist movement.” Together these two volumes of the *Journal* listed 48 ethnic Chinese and 180 Vietnamese sentenced to labor camps, eight Vietnamese confined to their villages, and another restricted from several cities or towns. By comparison, there were only three Frenchmen forbidden to enter Sài Gòn, and a fourth, “M. Paul Sans, a senior government official at the Yersin high school” in Đà Lạt who was transferred to the Institute des Recherches Agronomiques et Forestières, “for a malaria-infected post in the hinterland.”⁴⁴

“On the whole the Japanese were even deferential,” recollected the commander of French forces in Indochina, General Eugène Mordant in his memoirs, “at least they appeared so towards the French. Conversely, to the native Annamese the Japanese acted awkwardly.”⁴⁵ In May 1943, for example, Japanese Prime Minister, Tōjō Hideki 東条英機, announced at an imperial conference “A drastic policy, such as forcing Indochina to

⁴³ Dalloz, 34; Shipway, 18; and Eric T. Jennings, *Vichy in the tropics: Pétain's national revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina, 1940-1944* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 166-198. Decoux, whose rule has been widely characterized as dictatorial is pictured in Jennings, 199, with assembled onlookers giving him the “fascist salute” more commonly seen in Mussolini’s Italy or Nazi Germany.

⁴⁴ Intelligence Summary, 23 September 1944, Folder YH/KM-125, Box 381, Entry 108, Record Group (hereafter RG) 226, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland (hereafter NARA)

⁴⁵ Quoted in Murakami, 380.

secede from metropolitan France, must not be taken at the present state of the Greater East Asian War,” confirming his desire to maintain French administration of Indochina.⁴⁶ Less than two months later, though, the first Japanese public challenge to French sovereignty was made by retired General Matsui Iwane 松井石根 when he delivered a speech to Vietnamese journalists in Sài Gòn declaring the Japanese would liberate Asia from the Americans and European colonial powers.⁴⁷

As part of their cultural program in Southeast Asia, the Japanese established the Nihon Bunka Kaikan 日本文化会館 (Japanese Cultural Center) in July to “soften the hostilities between the Japanese, French and Vietnamese communities” in the form of “Japanese language lessons, free film viewings, and other cultural program.” Behind these claims, however, it served as a meeting place for Vietnamese nationalists and their Japanese intellectuals and diplomats who supported them. General Tsuchihashi Yūichi 土橋有一, who arrived in Indochina on November 14, 1944, seemingly ignored such contradictions when several years later he said, “since the Japanese government had a principle to avoid helping the independence movement, the high rank officials avoided having any contact with the nationals. However, it was impossible to stop the young

⁴⁶ Ibid, 496; Kiyoko Kurusu Nitz, “Independence without Nationalists? The Japanese and Vietnamese Nationalism during the Japanese Period, 1940-45,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 15,1 (March, 1984), 115.

⁴⁷ Murakami, 429. General Matsui was the commanding officer of the Japanese troops responsible for the Nanjing Massacre (1937). Though he was not directly involved in the massacre due to an illness, he was convicted of war crimes and hanged in 1948.

people of both countries who were driven by youthful ardor, from becoming friends and helping each other.”⁴⁸

Thus, Japanese support for the nationalists was not extended officially, but discreetly, in a fragmentary, uncoordinated manner through Japanese diplomats, businessmen, intellectuals, and the *kempeitai* 憲兵隊 (military police) which certainly required the tacit support of the military, though it was consistently subordinated to military goals. Japanese Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru 重光葵, who took office in 1943, supported the principle of *minzoku kaihō* 民族解放 (liberation of people), though not all diplomats in Indochina did. Ambassador Yoshizawa Kenkichi 芳沢謙吉 claims to have never considered Vietnamese independence, but the assistant consul in Huế went to great lengths to hide nationalist Ngô Đình Diệm from the French.⁴⁹ Under pressure from the French who were demanding the arrest of Vietnamese involved in anti-French agitation, the Japanese sent nationalists Trần Văn Ân to Formosa (Taiwan) in October, and Trần Trọng Kim with Nguyễn Văn Sâm to Singapore in November.⁵⁰

Other Vietnamese nationalists were hidden from the French by two Japanese intellectuals and an officer in the *kempeitai* headquarters in Hà Nội.⁵¹ After learning in 1942 of the Decoux Administration’s plans to exile Huỳnh Phú Sổ to Laos, the *kempeitai*

⁴⁸ Nitz, 116-18. Quote is from an interview Kiyoko Kuruusu Nitz conducted with General Tsuchihashi in 1962.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 116-17. Ironically, Yoshizawa was the son-in-law of Inukai Tsuyoshi who had met with Phan Bội Châu. The assistant consul hid Ngô Đình Diệm from the French in his residence before arranging for him to be driven to Tourane, dressed in a Japanese military uniform for a flight to Sài Gòn where he was given sanctuary in a Japanese military hospital. Ngô Đình Diệm became the first leader of South Việt Nam after the Geneva Conference of 1954.

⁵⁰ Murakami, 440; Sacks, 173-74.

⁵¹ Nitz, 115-16.

intervened to force the release of the Hòa Hảo founder and offered him protection.⁵² After returning to Japan from Indochina in February 1944, businessman Matsushita Mitsuhiro 松下光広 acted as a liaison for Cao Đài in helping gain the *kempeitai*'s aid in rebuilding the Tây Ninh sect in Sài Gòn and offered help to other nationalists.⁵³ Japanese support of Cao Đài was rewarded, according to Tran My-Van, by the dispatch of thousands of volunteers to build wooden ships for the Japanese at in the Sài Gòn shipyards. They stayed on even after heavy bombing by Allied planes. More than 3000 of these shipbuilders were organized into two paramilitary groups armed with bamboo staves.⁵⁴ Assisted by the *kempeitai*, the Tây Ninh sect joined with other sects, followers of the Hòa Hảo, and others in May 1943 to form the Việt Nam Phục Quốc Đồng Minh Hội (League for the National Restoration of Vietnam).⁵⁵ The *kempeitai* began giving military training to Vietnamese volunteers in December, though they did not issue firearms. These so-called “Japanese locals” wore Japanese uniforms, and were often seen in bloody fights with the French police. By January 1944, however, the *kempeitai* were pressured to purge these Vietnamese volunteers.⁵⁶

⁵² Huỳnh, 244.

⁵³ Murakami, 436. Matsushita's business was named Dainan Kōshi 大南公司 (Đại Nam Công Ty in Vietnamese), making use of the name for Việt Nam before the French conquest followed by term for “company,” apparently as a declaration of support for Vietnamese nationalism.

⁵⁴ Tran My-Van, “Japan and Vietnam's Cao daists: a wartime relationship (1939-45)”: 186-87.

⁵⁵ Huỳnh, 243.

⁵⁶ Murakami, 439-40.

CONCLUSION

Japan was forced out of a self-imposed isolationism by the Americans and European colonial powers. The leaders of the Meiji Restoration charted a course for learning from the foreigners that often entailed mimicry of European and American practices. Japanese imperial expansion collided with preexisting Western European colonial interests. The conquest of Taiwan and Korea were of little concern to the Western European colonial powers and America, and the conquest of Manchuria was met with rhetoric only. As Akira Iriye argues, it really was only when Southeast Asia was threatened and Japan aligned with Germany that the U.S. became confrontational. Although the resources of the Philippines held relatively little value to Japan, the tin, rubber and oil of the Netherlands East Indies, British Malaya, and French Indochina were vital.⁵⁷

Japan was unable to complete its conquest of China before launching the Pacific War with the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. As a result of its overextension of its personnel, collaborationist French were permitted to continue running the daily affairs of Indochina so long as they did not interfere with Japanese military goals. This led to a continuation of colonialism in Indochina in modified form under Decoux, who attempted to co-opt the majority of Vietnamese with concessions, while acting aggressively against nationalists. The Japanese also attempted a balancing act that relied on official support of

⁵⁷ Akira Iriye, *Across the Pacific*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1967), 201.

French administration of Indochina, while unofficially offering minimal support to Vietnamese nationalists in exchange for aiding Japanese military designs.

By the eve of the Pacific War, the European colonial powers were more focused on the survival of their respective metropolitan centers, the various *métropoles*, and were reliant upon the U.S. to lead a response to Japan in the Pacific. The Americans did lead this effort, ultimately, focusing predominantly on a strategy of island-hopping in the Pacific until it reached Japan itself. The Japanese in Indochina were, however, an object of attack by the Americans as well. The story that unfolds in the successive chapters will examine American activities towards Indochina, while focusing on Việt Nam, unveiling shifting alliances with French, Vietnamese, and other elements both inside and outside Việt Nam. Part of this examination will entail a look at American division over what priorities to give the seemingly contradictory efforts to end colonialism, which was recognized in some quarters as being responsible for the war, and support allies with colonial interests at stake.



OSS Director William B. Donovan¹

Chapter 4

U.S. Intelligence Operations Aimed at Indochina: The Vichy Period, 1941-1945

American involvement in French Indochina during World War II, especially while Decoux led the Vichy government in the colony from 1941-1945, was increasingly divorced from broader foreign policy concerns, and peripheral from a military strategic standpoint. The two intelligence operations connected with it were either reliant on, or planned to be reliant, on allied networks. The fight against the Germans in North Africa and Europe took precedence over the fight against Japan, which proved to be largely an insular war bypassing the Asian mainland. Nonetheless, despite the relative

¹ Wikipedia, William B. Donovan, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:William_Donovan.jpg (accessed April 24, 2005).

insignificance the region played in the effort against the Japanese, America's involvement in Indochina began during this period, albeit slowly, tentatively and with little hint at what would transpire between Americans and Vietnamese some two decades later.

American involvement in Indochina during the first part of the Pacific War, the Vichy period, reflected a distinct French bias, one that would reemerge later as well. Americans, both in policymaking positions and in the field, were constantly forced to articulate and act upon perspectives of the Vietnamese, the French, and Indochina which often reflected their own preconceptions more than actual reality. Though American policymakers' views about colonialism, and French colonialism in Indochina in particular, will be explored in subsequent chapters, the following statements by Captain R. P. Leonard in a document entitled "Determinating [sic] a Policy of MO Operations in Indochina" for the newly organized Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the precursor to the CIA, serves as an introduction to understanding attitudes which affected America's approach to fighting the war in Indochina:

The French have more at stake in Indochina than do the natives. The French can be displaced from the country and so are certainly disposed to do whatever is necessary to protect their stake. They are realists.

Another reason for cooperating with the French rather than with the Annamites is that the French have a basic psychology similar to ours. They have lived among the natives of Indochina for many years and consequently understand their mental process better than we do. The reality is the same for us, for the French, and for the natives. The stimuli from the reality can and do produce stereotypes in the minds of the natives quite different from those produced in our own minds or those of the French. Thus it is the French who are better qualified to determine the most effective means of energizing the natives.²

² R.P. Leonard, "MO Theme for Indochina," [no date given], Folder 1863, Box 138, Entry 139, RG 226, NARA.

Leonard might have argued that his stance was simply realistic, yet today we might view his ideas as crudely ethnocentric. Whether in hiring individuals in the work place or fighting an enemy to the death, people tend to form alliances based on an ability to understand others, leading them to naturally favor those who are similar—because we believe we can anticipate their way of thinking—over others, even when this is done at a detriment to longer range strategy. On the societal level, this tendency is reflected in the motivation to preserve and, when possible, expand one's culture, but on the organizational level, this tendency can lead to bitter infighting among allies supposedly joined in a fight against a common enemy.

Leonard's arguments ultimately prevailed in Indochina simply because the French were more like the Americans. In reports of the damage exacted by the 14th Air Force bombing raids, Vietnamese deaths were often listed next to Japanese under the title "coolies," reflecting a tendency to dehumanize them similar to the way the enemy was dehumanized.³ Leonard provided a historical explanation for the lowly position of these coolies and their presumed uselessness as allies:

The position of the natives is subordinate since no function of importance is left to them. The extent of native initiative is confined to small commercial enterprises and small farming operations. The natives lived in these circumstances for so long at a time, first

³ "Allied Air Raids and Japan Activities at Fort-Bayard," 12 October 1944, Folder 273, Box 135, Entry 140, RG 226, NARA. 16 January 1945, 2; No. 1060, 18 February 1945, 4, *Intercepted Japanese messages: Operation "Magic."* Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., [1979?]. Hereafter cited as *Operation "Magic."* Vietnamese victims of American bombing raids are easy to overlook because reports, for obvious reasons, emphasized the successes of such strikes. Two *Magic* summaries, however, provide a hint that the Vietnamese consistently suffered the brunt of fatalities from such attacks. In an attack by four B-29 of the 20th Bomber Command on the Sài Gòn Navy Yard and Arsenal, 104 Vietnamese were killed along with 40 Europeans and 8 Japanese. A B-24 attack on Sài Gòn harbor on May 5, 1945 destroyed houses and killed over 200 Vietnamese, while wounding over 350.

under the Chinese and then under the French, that they have lost the spirit of initiative and independence. They have been exploited to such a degree, that they have become mercenary to an extraordinary extent.⁴

They are quite incapable of developing an organization of any kind, certainly not an underground. Being suspicious of each other [sic] and practicing trickery among themselves, any organization they have ever attempted to create, has always broken down from the incapacity of its members to pull together. An underground organization would fall apart before it ever got started.⁵

The American war effort in Indochina would be led by the 14th Air Force and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The U.S. Navy also played a crucial, though indirect role, in its destruction of the Japanese merchant marine and navy throughout the Pacific. Overall, though, Indochina played a small role in the Allied strategy for the Pacific War. As early as mid-January 1941, President Roosevelt had accepted Plan *D* (or Plan *Dog*) as proposed by the Chief of Naval Operations Admiral R. Stark and Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall to concentrate on the Atlantic Theater. This strategy was reiterated in two conferences between the British and Americans, the "Arcadia" Conference held in Washington in December 1941 and January 1942, and the Casablanca Conference held in French Morocco in January 1943. While agreeing to the strategy giving priority to saving Britain by concentrating on the Germans first, the Americans insisted on keeping China in the war to hold the Japanese in check, and to preserve the mainland for Allied airbases from which to carry out bombing raids on Japan.⁶

⁴ "MO Theme for Indochina."

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Akira Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific* (New York: Longman Inc., 1987.), 122; Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 134-35; and John Miller, Jr., "The Casablanca Conference and Pacific Strategy," *Military Affairs* 13, no. 4 (Winter 1949): 209-15.



Chennault with Madam Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Kai-shek⁷.

Madame Chiang Kai-shek (Song Qingling 宋庆龄, or Soong Ch'ingling) brought retired U.S. Army Captain, Claire Chennault, to China in 1937 to evaluate the Chinese Air Force being built to defend the country against the Japanese. A pilot friend in China and pilots he had recommended to this friend had sent him letters telling him that the fledgling Chinese Air Force was being “torn between American and Italian influence and local graft.” By the time Chennault arrived the Italians seemed to have won. Mussolini had financed Italian lobbying efforts with funds due Italy from the Boxer Rebellion indemnity, and was using sales of Italian planes to China help “finance expansion of Italy’s aircraft industry, which was already preparing for war,” according to Chennault. Apparently Chennault’s blunt report to Chiang Kai-shek about the sorry state of China’s Air Force so impressed the leader of the Guomindang, that he was hired indefinitely as an “advisor” while he later, with Washington’s backing, helped to build up

⁷ Home of Heroes, homeofheroes.com/wings/part2/14_chennault_kaishek.jpg (accessed April 24, 2005).

and command the American Volunteer Group (AVG), better known as the Flying Tigers, from early 1941 to defend China against the Japanese.⁸

Chennault, whose passport listed his occupation as “farmer,” was officially hired to advise the Central Bank of China, while the volunteers were recruited from the U.S. military to work for the Central Aircraft Manufacturing Company to “manufacture, repair, and operate aircraft.” After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Flying Tigers, who had a “combat record that was never equaled by a Regular Army or Navy fighter group of similar size,” were forcibly decommissioned by U.S. officials who had threatened to cut off support if Chennault did not agree to the unit’s wholesale induction into the U.S. military. Chennault was made a brigadier general, but “only 5 pilots and 22 ground men out of the 250” of the Flying Tigers stayed on in the formation of the 14th Air Force.⁹

The OSS had pre-war origins in the Office of Coordinator of Information (COI) which was established by executive order on July 11, 1941, and placed directly under the President. Proposed to Roosevelt by William J. Donovan, a World War I hero, a Republican lawyer who served in the Coolidge Administration, and as an adviser to Herbert Hoover, the COI was at least in part the idea of British officials, particularly

⁸ Clair Lee Chennault, *Way of a Fighter*, edited by Robert Hotz (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1949), 31, 37, 52, 99, 100, 102, and 135. Chennault credits the successful formation of the Flying Tigers to “a powerful circle of friends in the White House and cabinet”: Dr. Lauchlin Currie, President Roosevelt’s special adviser who helped with general support, Thomas Corcoran, who was crucial for support of personnel recruitment, and Frank Knox, Secretary of the Navy, and Henry Morgenthau, Secretary of the Treasury, who were both friends of T.V. Soong (Madame Chiang Kai-shek’s brother) and helped with funding issues. Soong and Morgenthau had engineered a swap in January with the British for newly manufactured P-40Bs that were destined for Burma and President Roosevelt signed an unpublicized executive order on April 15 authorizing reserve officers and enlisted men to resign from the American services for the purpose of joining the AVG.

⁹ *Ibid*, 103, 135, 170-72, and 205. Ironically, the “Flying Tigers” design originated with the German Air Force: “Our pilots copied the shark-tooth design on their P-40’s noses from a colored illustration in the *India Illustrated Weekly* depicting an R.A.F. squadron in the Libyan desert with shark-nosed P-40’s. Even before that the German Air Force painted shark’s teeth on some of its Messerschmitt 210 fighters.”

William Stephenson of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). Stephenson cultivated Donovan with the support of other influential British in the belief his access to the inner circle of the Roosevelt Administration, particularly through his close friendship with fellow Republican, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, would help Great Britain in the fight for survival against the Germans. He did in fact aid British officials in obtaining numerous destroyers and other items they had requested, in exchange, they gave him access to individuals such as Director of Naval Intelligence John H. Godfrey, the head of SIS Colonel Steward Menzies, and Prime Minister Winston Churchill which aided in the President's approval of COI, and Donovan's appointment as its head.¹⁰ The COI was assigned to collect and analyze information pertinent to national security, and distribute it to various departments and officials as directed by the President. The OSS was formed out of the COI on June 13, 1942 with Donovan as its director, and placed under the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but white, or "truth-based" propaganda was taken away from it and given to the newly formed Office of War Information (OWI).¹¹

Competition from OWI was one of several sources of challenge to the OSS. Before COI was created, intelligence activities had been parceled out to the State Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Navy (in the Office of Naval Intelligence), and the Army (in the Military Intelligence Division). Each of these agencies resisted the threat to their domain by the COI and then OSS. The commanders

¹⁰ Thomas F. Troy, *Wild Bill and Intrepid: Donovan, Stephenson, and the Origin of CIA* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 46, 51, 53-55, 67 and 80-81. See Anthony Cave Brown, *The Last Hero: Wild Bill Donovan* (New York: Times Books, 1982), 1-143, for Donovan's early biographical data.

¹¹ "Chronological History of the OSS as it Applies to the CBI Theater," 24 September 1943, Folder 4, Box 229, Entry 210, RG 226, NARA; Michael Warner, *The Office of Strategic Services: America's First Intelligence Agency* (Langley: Central Intelligence Agency, 2000), 2.

in the Pacific, the Army's General Douglas MacArthur and the Navy's Admiral Chester Nimitz, prohibited the OSS from operating in their areas of activity.¹² Fighting for the survival of his organization, Donovan struggled to expand the OSS activities.

From June 16 through 22, 1942 representatives from the OSS and British Secret Operations Executive (SOE) met in London, and concluded oral agreements to divide world areas of responsibility for their clandestine operations. The British received priority in India, and the Americans in China. OSS and SOE were accorded equal right to operate in Indochina and Thailand, both of which had been assigned previously to the China Theater where Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek served as the supreme allied commander.¹³ In late August 1943 Admiral Louis Mountbatten was appointed supreme allied commander of the newly created Southeast Asia Command (SEAC), and Lieutenant General Joseph (Vinegar Joe) Stilwell, the commander of American forces in the China-India-Burma (CBI) Theater and Chiang's chief of staff, was concurrently named his deputy.¹⁴ Chiang and Mountbatten verbally agreed to place Thailand under the SEAC command, but Indochina was excluded with the proviso that boundaries

¹² Bradley F. Smith, *The Shadow Warriors: O.S.S. and the Origins of the C.I.A.* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1983), 26, 69-70, 117, 165-68. The Army was responsible for the area designated as the Southwest Pacific and the Navy was responsible for the area designated as the Central Pacific.

¹³ "Chronological History of the OSS as it Applies to the CBI Theater," 24 September 1943, Folder 4, Box 229, Entry 210, RG 226, NARA; Richard J. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan: Britain, America and the politics of secret service* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 142. The "Chronological History of the OSS" states that the conference was held in Washington, but Aldrich, who relies on the papers of a key participant states that it was in London.

¹⁴ Bradley F. Smith, 257; and Maochun Yu, *OSS in China: Prelude to Cold War*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 118.

between the Southeast Asia Command and the China Theater were to be decided “at the time, in accordance with the progress of advances made by the respective forces.”¹⁵

Meanwhile, a U.S.-China intelligence project was initiated by Captain Willis A. “Ching” Lee, director of fleet training, who recognized in Captain Milton “Mary” Miles, a navy man with several years experience in China, a valuable ally. Lee utilized a convenient promotion to assistant chief of staff of Admiral Ernest J. King, the commander in chief of the U.S. Fleet, to gain important support for his project. Admiral King saw in this project, in part, a way to respond to the British plan for the “Europe First, Asia Second” policy he saw as foisted on the Americans and readily agreed. Miles, who was friends with the Chinese military attaché in Washington, D.C., was sent to China where he cultivated a relationship with General Dai Li 戴笠 (Tai Li) Deputy Director of the Jun Tong (the short form for Junshi Weiyuanhui Tiaocha Tongji Ju, 军事委员会调查统计局), or Bureau of Investigation and Statistics (BIS) under the Chinese National Military Council. In a chance meeting, Alghan Lusey of COI met Miles and learned of the talks to establish joint U.S.-Chinese intelligence. Donovan saw this as a vehicle for extending the scope of his organization’s operations and negotiated a joint intelligence agreement, the *Friendship* Plan with the Navy’s Rear Admiral W.R. Purnell that Captain Miles would be the Coordinator of U.S. Strategic Services, China. On April 15, 1943 a formal agreement was signed with China termed the “Sino American Special Technical

¹⁵ A.J. McFarland, G.S.C., Secretary, Memorandum for Director of Strategic Services, 22 July 1944, Reel 90, M1642, NARA. M1642 is a microfilmed database of the OSS Washington Director, William Donovan’s office files created by a team of volunteers working with Sidney Shapiro. (See Patricia Eames, editor, “The Record—May 1998: Volunteer Ventures,” http://www.archives.gov/publications/the_record/may_1998/oss_project.html (accessed June 17, 2003).

Cooperation Agreement” (SACO, pronounced “Socko”) with Miles acting as the head of U.S. intelligence, joint OSS-Navy, in China under Dai Li.¹⁶

Morale Operations¹⁷ (MO) was one of several areas of OSS activity that would reveal philosophical differences in operational strategy between the OSS’s head in China, Captain Miles, and Director William Donovan. In late 1943, Dai Li wrote a letter to Miles explaining “Personally I think it is better for the Chinese to contact the Chinese official propaganda organization in case it is necessary to do it for SACO,” and advising him to let him know what propaganda material he needed for Indochina (and Thailand) and Dai would arrange it. A month later, Major Carl O. Hoffman cabled Miles from Washington, D.C. a carefully edited version of an earlier draft aimed not to “do any violence to our relations to Merry [sic].” Miles was notified of the creation of an MO unit “probably numbering twelve” in southern China under an OSS officer to coordinate both Secret Operations and Morale Operation, who was to report to Miles as “head of the MO unit for Indo-China.”¹⁸

Miles had a close relationship with Dai Li reflected in the deference he showed his Chinese “boss.” In his posthumously published memoirs, this close relationship is

¹⁶ Yu 50-51, 69, 73, 75; “Chronological History of the OSS as it Applies to the CBI Theater”; and Cí Hài /Quan. Miles, USN, Vice Admiral Milton E. *A Different Kind of War: The little-known story of the combined guerilla forces created in China by the U.S. Navy and the Chinese during World War II* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967), 2, explained his nickname “Mary” was given to him by an upperclassman in the Naval Academy who had asked Miles if he was any relation to the silent film star, Mary Miles Minter.

¹⁷ Morale Operations conducted psychological warfare against the enemy. Its work was primarily “black propaganda” aimed at influencing enemy morale and operations in deceptive undercover means using such propaganda media as leaflets, newspapers, magazines, radio broadcasts, and rumors.

¹⁸ Tai Li to Captain Miles, 30 September 1943, Hoffman to Miles, Draft Official Dispatch, 26 October 1943, Major Little to Major Hoffman, 27 October 1943, and Hoffman to Miles via Navy, 27 October 1943, Folder 1864, Box 138, Entry 139, RG 226, NARA. Because the cable states “it may be unnecessary to disturb the liaison position of the French speaking officer mentioned in your cable,” [this cable is missing] this documentation is more important for the contravention of Dai Li’s stated desire by Washington.

illustrated in a photograph of Miles with Dai's family. In this photograph, Miles is sitting next to Dai Li's mother who has her great-grandson, Dai's grandson, in her lap, while Miles holds Dai's granddaughter in his own lap.¹⁹ The depth of their relationship is also revealed in two letters written after Miles learned of Dai Li's death in a plane crash in flight in 1946. In the first, written to Chiang Kai-shek, Miles states his belief that "I was as close in spirit to General Tai Li as most any one, even most Chinese," and quotes at length from a letter Miles said Dai had sent "just prior to his final disastrous [sic] takeoff."²⁰ In the second letter, Miles extends his condolences to Dai Li's mother, known by Miles in simple terms as Lao Tai-Tai 老太太 ("old madam"), affectionately referring to her son as his "older brother".²¹ Such a bond between two Allies working to defeat a common enemy was not in itself a detriment, but as director of the fledgling centralized intelligence organization Donovan was sensitive to battles over operational jurisdiction, since the history of the OSS was replete with them, and he prized his unit's independence. He would not go nearly as far as Miles in deferring to Dai Li.²²

¹⁹ Miles, first unnumbered page following page 246.

²⁰ Rear Admiral M.E. Miles to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek, 20 March 1946, Chiang Kai-shek folder, Milton Miles Papers, Box 1, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California. Miles included this portion of the letter Dai sent him, which reveals more about the basis of the bond the two felt for each other: "Both of us are condemned by various irresponsible and politically jealous persons in high offices in both countries, but we know down in our hearts that our work in the past and for the future must be for the benefit and welfare of both countries, based upon the continued cooperative spirit of mutual reliance and mutual help."

²¹ Rear Admiral Milton E. Miles to Madam Tai, 20 March 1946, Box 3, Mme Lao Tai-Tai, Milton Miles Papers, Hoover Institution. In Chinese culture, where Confucian precepts place high value on family relationships, to refer to someone as "older brother" 哥哥 carries a deeper significance than its simple translation into English suggests.

²² Thorne, 285. Conversely, Dai Li had been imprisoned in Hong Kong in 1941 by the British, which no doubt served to exacerbate his enmity for their Empire and hindered an alliance building with the British Special Operations Executive.

The different perspectives of Miles and Donovan toward Dai Li and the former's sensitivity on the issue of Chinese sovereignty, is apparent in the following excerpt from a letter Miles sent to one of the immediate successor organizations to the OSS after it was cannibalized in 1945, following the end of hostilities:

When General Donovan appeared in Chungking in 1943, as Chief of O.S.S., he was taken to the Generalissimo for a conference. General Tai Li attended that conference. The Generalissimo's Aide, a very close personal friend of mine was the interpreter at the conference. Both General Tai Li and the interpreter later reported to me that the Generalissimo had informed General Donovan, generally, as follows, "You are a high representative of a foreign and friendly country and you are now operating in a country both foreign and friendly to you, in a war of the Allies against a common enemy. We Chinese are a sovereign country and expect you to recognize that. We expect you Americans to behave in the same manner as you would expect other Allies to behave in your country. You do not expect a secret service from another country to go into the United States and start operations. You would object seriously. Likewise, we Chinese object to a foreign secret service or an intelligence service coming into China and working without the knowledge of the Chinese. Remember that this is a sovereign country and please conduct yourselves accordingly."

It was also reported to me that General Donovan made a remark during the conference to the effect that he was requested by his President to place agents in China, and he would follow his directive accordingly. Also that if those agents were killed by General Tai's guards, that he, General Donovan, would replace those agents and no matter how many times these agents were wiped out they would replace those agents with other ones.²³

²³ Milton Miles to The Chief of Information Branch Central Planning Staff, Central Intelligence Group, 17 May 1946, Secret Memorandum, Folder General Tai Li, Milton Miles Papers, Box 3, Hoover Institution. Miles explains in the letter that his account was derived from both Dai Li and Dai Li's interpreter on separate occasions. OSS #2439, Donovan from Dow, 26 October 1944; William J. Donovan, Memorandum for the President, 30 October 1944, Folder OSS, Box 167, President's Secretary's File (hereafter PSF), Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers as President (hereafter Roosevelt Papers), Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York (hereafter FDRL). In an incident Donovan considered severe enough to report to President Roosevelt, General Marshall, Stanley Hornbeck of the State Department, and others, an OSS representative, Brigadier General L.H. Miller, USMC, attended a dinner banquet hosted by Dai Li, and became drunk (Dai Li did not feel he was too drunk) before demanding "Sing-song" girls, insinuating the Chiang Kai-shek had several mistresses, referred to Chinese as Chinamen, "said that in the Philippines he would get Japanese genitalia and ask the Chinese to a dinner at which they would be served," and generally criticized China's worth in the fight against the Axis Powers "for more than 2 hours." Dai Li was expected to report the incident to Chiang Kai-shek and there was deep worry that the OSS might be thrown out of China as a result of the incident. Frederick Wakeman, *Spymaster: Dai Li and the Chinese Secret Service* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 268. China scholar, Frederick Wakeman, states that "two overseas training units directly under Juntong's control prepared Vietnamese

Obviously Miles' deference did not carry over to Donovan and the OSS. He was "100 percent Navy and 0 per cent OSS," according to Dr. Joseph Hayden, scholar and special OSS agent. Miles had told Hayden that "he would tolerate no 'interference' from OSS. He stated that he could accept no personnel not selected by himself and act upon no directive which he did not deem wise. If this position were not accepted he would at once sever all connections with OSS."²⁴ Greatly irritated by Miles' stance, Donovan used various arguments with different people to maneuver Miles out of control of OSS in China. For example, in a letter to General Stilwell, his argument was that "it was quite clear to me that at best the Chinese external intelligence service is very primitive. It is therefore necessary for us to put with them some of our best men who know the workings of foreign intelligence services and who can not only indicate but select proper targets for the agents we will send out."²⁵

In a letter to Rear Admiral W.R. Purnell, with whom Donovan had negotiated the *Friendship Plan*, the Director explained his reasons for wanting to break with Miles:

Reading his War Diary and his cables must make as clear to you as it does to me that Captain Miles and OSS are now in an impossible position, not only in relation to General Stilwell but in relation to each other.

Double allegiance and double command with resulting conflicting obligations will not work. Illustrative of this is Miles advising you that he goes to New Delhi as Naval Representative but not as OSS or SACO representative. He cannot divest himself as if it were a coat of his representation of OSS or of the Navy. His obligation to each is a continuing one or it is worth nothing.

agents to be sent back into Indochina to fight against Japanese (and in some cases the French)," though he does not elaborate.

²⁴ Harris R. Smith, *OSS: The Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 246 and 250.

²⁵ Brigadier William J. Donovan to General Stilwell, 10 December 1943, Folder 194, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

Up to now OSS has had its guerilla instructors accepted but has been prevented from sending in personnel in the performance of other duties under SACO because Miles has stated that the proposed personnel is unsatisfactory to the Chinese.²⁶

In his reply to Donovan, Purnell acknowledged the need for OSS operations to be removed from under SACO, but offered the following defense of Miles:

There is one statement to which I must take exception "because Miles has given his word to the Chinese that he will not engage in intelligence activities." He is deeply engaged in such activities with full knowledge and collaboration of the Chinese. OSS has neither given nor offered him intelligence officers or other help along this line. Instead SI agents have been sent out independent of him—to his continual embarrassment. I agree that American and Chinese intelligence services should each be free to act independently. As you are aware the Chinese do not agree. Whether or not it will benefit the allied cause to override the Chinese in this matter is something requiring decision on a broad basis, not on the theoretical rights and wrongs of their particular contention.²⁷

General Donovan effectively fired Captain Miles on November 9, 1943 when he sent a cable with the following message:

Events have shown that it is impracticable for OSS and the Navy to be represented by one officer both with respect to relations between OSS and General Stilwell and with respect to the Navy's and OSS' relations to the Chinese and to each other.

I now feel it is my duty as Director of Strategic Services to relieve you from your difficult position and from any responsibilities to OSS as its representative in order that we may perform the tasks required of us by the theater commander without conflict. It will henceforth be possible for your organization and ours to cooperate without difficulty or embarrassment.²⁸

²⁶ Director William J. Donovan to Rear Admiral W.R. Purnell, 3 November 1943, Folder 194, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

²⁷ Rear Admiral W.R. Purnell to Brigadier General William J. Donovan, [no date given], Folder 194, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

²⁸ Paraphrase of cable from Donovan to Miles, 9 November 1943, Folder 194, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

Major Carl O. Hoffman temporarily replaced Miles as head of OSS in China on December 5 until Lieutenant Colonel John G. Coughlin arrived from SEAC on February 17, 1945.²⁹

Donovan was also concerned that an effort to replace General Stilwell as commander of CBI underway in Washington, D.C. threatened the existence of OSS in China. So in December 1943 he began negotiating for the establishment of a separate OSS unit attached to Chennault's 14th Air Force. Donovan began pulling personnel and resources out of SACO to be used by Chennault. Unlike Stilwell, Chennault enjoyed good relations with Chiang Kai-shek and operated from Kunming, in the province of Yunnan, run by the semi-autonomous warlord Long Yun, an area relatively free of the control that Chiang and Dai Li maintained over activities in Chongqing. Donovan's deputies, Coughlin and Hoffman, were assigned to work out the details. Their work was made easier by the fact that Chennault was engaged in a battle for supplies with Stilwell, who Chennault saw as representing the Washington and military establishment. The OSS promised additional support freed from direct control by Stilwell. In an attempt to avoid violating the letter of an agreement with Dai Li for there to be no OSS activities outside of SACO, the group was given a name to conceal its identity. Hoffman decided on Air and Ground Forces Resources and Technical Staff (AGFRTS, or the 5329th,

²⁹ "Orders-Turn-Over," 17 December 1943, Folder 250; Aide Memoire, Carl O. Hoffman, 26 January 1944, and Hoffman to Colonel John G. Coughlin, 17 February 1944, Folder 248, Box 17, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

affectionately nicknamed AGFarTS) because it was “the most confused title I could think of at the moment.”³⁰



General Albert Wedemeyer, (standing), with (left to right) General Sultan, Admiral Louis Mountbatten, and OSS Director William Donovan.³¹

Donovan’s anticipation that General Stilwell would be replaced came true on October 18, 1944. Stilwell’s removal was instigated by Chiang Kai-shek and T.V. Soong

³⁰ Yu, 66, 155 and Chennault, 171, 176, 177, 205, and 212-16. In his memoirs, Chennault made clear his dislike for Stilwell, who “during the entire time he commanded the C.B.I.,” had “never once sought my advice on aviation matters.” Chennault’s complaints with Stilwell did not just stem from ego, but derived from his persistent worry over lack of resources. For example, Stilwell had ordered on January 20, 1943 that Chennault’s air force (the China Air Task Force, or CATF, which began on July 4, 1942 as the interim force after the AVG was grounded ended when the 14th Air Force was formed on March 10, 1943) was to have its gas supplies cut by 50 percent, Chennault flew to Chongqing to argue against this cut. Stilwell listened to Chennault’s report then told him perfunctorily, “You must realize that the air force can’t have everything. You’ve got to learn to do without things.” Chennault threatened that his air force would be grounded and Stilwell never enforced the cut. Chennault argues that “the C.A.T.F. had to fight, scream, and scrape for every man, plane, spark plug, and gallon of gas.” His resource problems did not improve until he bypassed the command structure when on October 12, 1942 he had a confidential meeting with Wendell Wilkie, FDR’s personal envoy. Wilkie instructed Chennault to state his case for lack of sufficient resources in a detailed letter which he would deliver to the President. It took some time, but on March 3, 1943 Chennault was promoted to major general and by the end of the month his resources were substantially increased.

³¹ Archimedes L.A. Patti, *Why Viet Nam? Prelude to America’s Albatross* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), seventh unnumbered page following 236.

and carried out through Roosevelt's personal representative, Major General Patrick J. Hurley. Chiang felt threatened by Stilwell's "abolitionist" attempts to gain control of the Guomindang military and to supply the Communists, according foreign service officer John Paton Davies, while Soong had wanted a more pliant American representative who he could manipulate to gain more power for himself in Chinese politics. Davies calls Chiang's *aide mémoire* to Roosevelt accompanying one request that Stilwell be relieved from his post in the China Theater a "bad-tempered survey of Stilwell's alleged shortcomings as a strategist. Coming from Chiang, with his wartime military record of crashing incompetence, the critique was ludicrous."³² Roosevelt replaced Stilwell with Major General Albert C. Wedemeyer. Wedemeyer's appointment as commander for the newly designated China (formerly CBI) Theater, which included Indochina, was a propitious event for the OSS. Wedemeyer had helped draft the JCS directive establishing the OSS. According to Maochun Yu, Wedemeyer supported an independent OSS operating in his theater for two reasons. Wedemeyer was highly suspicious of British SOE requests for assistance to be given to the British Air Aid Group (BAAG) in China, considering their activities in the theater "essentially intelligence particularly concerning Chinese political and economic developments."³³ He was also concerned about there being too many different agencies operation independently and uncoordinated in his theater, and appointed Colonel Richard P. Heppner of the OSS to oversee all intelligence activities in China.³⁴

³² John Paton Davies, Jr., *Dragon by the Tail: American, British, Japanese, and Russian Encounters with China and one Another* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1972), 328-29, 336, 372 and 377.

³³ Yu, 198-99; Patti, 1980), 26-27.

³⁴ Yu, 198-99.

The separation of OSS from Miles and SACO was formalized in an operational directive on February 6, 1945, Wedemeyer stated that “the OSS will be considered a separate command and will be under the control of the Theater Commander.”³⁵ Meanwhile, as the war in Europe seemed to be winding down, Donovan lobbied FDR in November 1944 for a peacetime central intelligence agency, and the following month proposed that the China Theater could serve as a model, placing renewed importance on Indochina.³⁶

THE MEYNIER MISSION

Roughly paralleling the birth of SACO was the most promising “OSS” plan for involvement in Indochina before 1945, the Meynier Mission. In his recounting its origins, Miles explained that he had gone to Washington, D.C. to meet with Donovan in the spring of 1943 to ask his help in negotiating the tangle of political intrigue affecting the Chinese, French and British allies in Chongqing, so that he could do something more effective in Indochina. Donovan responded by arranging for Miles to meet with General Henri Honoré Giraud in North Africa.³⁷

After escaping from a prison in Germany, Giraud had gone to Vichy, but was not welcomed by Marshall Philippe Pétain. Giraud was smuggled out of France to help the Americans dissuade Vichy French forces in North Africa from fighting when the Americans landed there to drive the Germans out. His appeal over the radio to the Vichy

³⁵ “Operational Directive No. 4,” 6 February 1945, Folder 194, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA; Thorne, 431; and Richard Aldrich, 272.

³⁶ Yu, 209-10.

³⁷ Miles, 182-84.

French troops was unsuccessful. The Americans, however, were able to convince Admiral Jean-François Darlan, “a Nazi, and heir to Vichy Government,” according to Raoul Aglion, de Gaulle’s representative in New York, to come to the aid of the Allies. Darlan, Minister of the Navy whose responsibilities included responsibility for Vichy imperial defense planning, successfully appealed to the Vichy French troops, supposedly on Pétain’s behalf. Darlan was assassinated, and the Americans maneuvered General Giraud into a short-lived position of leadership over the anti-Vichy French.³⁸

Giraud advised Miles that Commandant Robert Meynier of the French Navy, who was on his staff, would be just the person he needed to get things moving in Indochina. While escaping from the Germans in 1942, Meynier had purportedly sunk one of their submarines and captured some of its crew with pistols while escaping in his own submarine. He later sank an Italian submarine, and then attacked a French colonial city under British orders. Miles remarked of Meynier, “when I first met him I instantly took a liking to the cut of his jib.” His prior frustration with the international politics spoiling the Allied efforts turned to euphoric hope, but not just because of Meynier. After talking

³⁸ Raoul Aglion, *Roosevelt and de Gaulle: Allies in Conflict* (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 144-45, 148; Mario Rossi, *Roosevelt and the French* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1993), 92, 118. Admiral Darlan had met with Churchill and President Roosevelt in Washington, D.C. on 12 January 1942 to request a conference, but was denied since he would not bring the French fleet over to the allies. After learning of the American victory at Midway in June, and in October that the allies were planning on invading North Africa, he approached Murphy stating that he was then ready to join the Allies and bring the French fleet with him if he “provided he was made commander-in-chief of the French armed forces in North Africa.” Roosevelt thought General Giraud was “a good military type, but with no administrative or political sense whatsoever,” while General Eisenhower believed that he was not “a big enough man to carry the burden of civil government in any way.” Elliott Roosevelt, *As He Saw It* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946), 91. The President’s son, Elliott, reported that after meeting Giraud, FDR said “I’m afraid we’re leaning on a very slender reed. This is the man that Bob Murphy said the French would rally around! He’s a dud as an administrator, he’ll be a dud as a leader!”

See also *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers: The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943* (Washington: United State Government Printing Office, 1961), 484.

to Meynier, Miles naively wrote to Donovan that with the help of Meynier's wife, whom he described as the "key man," they could "probably have between 200,000 and 300,000 agents working for us in a very few months, ranging from Haiphong to Cochin [sic]," and "through her we can swing practically the whole of the native populations over to working for us." Miles added that after obtaining initial funds from the OSS, "Commandant Meynier's uncle-in-law is a very wealthy man and will produce ten million piastres out of the hat without blinking an eyelid."³⁹

The ambitious plan of the Meynier Mission was developed on May 7, 1943 at a meeting between Miles and Commandant Meynier, and a subsequent meeting later in the day which included General Giraud. The group was to be trained by Americans



Admiral Jean-François Darlan, right, with Marshall Philippe Pétain.⁴⁰

at an abandoned farm near Algiers in sabotage, demolitions, and a select few would receive training in parachute jumping. Miles and Meynier proposed to set up an intelligence network and a Vietnamese civilian resistance movement; organize Allied supporters amongst military, administrative, and religious (Buddhist and Catholic) circles;

³⁹ Miles, 182-84, 187; "Mary" to Colonel William J. Donovan, 7 May 1943, Folder 3939, Box 268, Entry 139, RG 226; and "Notes on Meeting held May 7th between Captain Miles, Commandant Meynier and Major Pflieger," and "The Meynier Interview," 22 April 1944, Folder 3939, Box 268, Entry 139, RG 226, NARA. Meynier stated that Donovan had sent a letter in February 1943 to French Foreign Affairs in Algiers "asking for some French officers to do this job. I was on Giraud's staff and was chosen for this work, because I had family connections in Indochina." In addition to being impressed with Meynier, Miles was also later taken with Meynier's wife whom he described as "half-pint size, cute, curvaceous, and had once won a beauty contest."

⁴⁰ *Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission*, <http://www.eisenhowermemorial.org/stories/dealing-devil.htm> (accessed April 24, 2005).

and establish a smuggling operation. Meynier's Vietnamese wife, Katiou Do Huu Thinn, was to be smuggled into Hà Nội to contact her uncle Hoàng Trọng Phú, a high official whom they believed could "swing practically the whole of the native population over to the Allied cause because he was responsible for most political appointments in Annam." They also proposed to smuggle arms—with the aid of French submarines—and money into Indochina, and to smuggle rubber, tin, rice, and other unmentioned items out. Miles and Meynier intended to begin "concentrated operations" in October 1943. "My Boss in China," Miles wrote Donovan, "will agree to all the conditions which will have to be made."⁴¹

The problem for nearly all concerned, though, was that Madame Meynier was in a German concentration camp. However, Giraud, who had only six months earlier escaped from the Germans for the second time, said "Pouf! Ça ne fait rein" (It is nothing). It turned out to be not quite so simple. Several Frenchmen, and possibly a British soldier, according to Miles, had been killed in the successful attempt to gain her release. She was sent to Britain where her identity had to be hidden because the British had chosen to "undercut those who preferred Giraud." An OSS operative gave her the identity "Miss Paula Martin, U.S. Army WAC" (Women's Army Corps), provided her with a companion, and advised her to pretend she was unable to talk due to a sore throat. The remainder of the Meynier Mission was composed of priests, about twenty Vietnamese soldiers to be "entrusted with long distance and relatively important courier duties," and

⁴¹ "Notes on Meeting held May 7th..."; and "Notes on a Meeting Held at 10 a.m., May 7th at Colonel Eddy's Headquarters, Algiers" [Present: Captain Miles, Commandant Meynier, Major Pflieger], Folder 3939, Box 268, Entry 139, RG 226, NARA.

eight French officers who had been members of the Colonial Army, had commanded frontier posts, and who were all former Prisoners of War in North Africa. The group was trained by Americans in North Africa before going on to China via Calcutta, India where the British, who were enlisted to help this group of French officers, priests, “Paula Martin,” and Vietnamese traveling under the guise of “Philippine Army troops of liberation,” commandeered a brothel for them to reside in.⁴²

“Paula Martin’s” signature appears at the bottom of a document entitled “Propaganda Directed to Cochin China,” dated October 10, 1943. It is a remarkable document because it is less a plan for propaganda to fight the Japanese enemy than it is an expression of support for the Vietnamese nationalist movement. No wonder then, that Katiou Do Huu Thinn used the pseudonym given her to hide her true identity from the anti-Giraudists. She argued that “our propaganda should concentrate on the support of the program presented” by nationalists of Cochinchina. The seven or eight groups—one of which was headed by “Paula’s” father though she makes no mention of this fact—labeled “revolutionary nationalists” in Cochinchina were distinguished only by methods and the time frame they felt necessary to gain independence, she explained, that goals were “not contrary to the French democratic principle of liberty and equality.”⁴³

⁴² Miles, 184-85; “Mary” to Colonel William J. Donovan, 7 May 1943, Folder 3939, Box 268, entry 139, RG 226; “Notes on Meeting held May 7th...”; “The Meynier Interview,” 22 April 1944, Folder 344, Box 43, Entry 140, RG 226; “Plan and Operation – Meynier Group,” 20 November 1943, Folder 250, Box 17, Entry 148, RG 226; and “The French Situation in China,” [no date given, post 27 December 1943], Folder 248, Box 17, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA. It is not clear when Madame Meynier had gone to Britain (found in Miles’ published account), since according to the letter Miles sent Donovan, she was “in France in the process of being sneaked across the border into Spain on her way to Algiers.”

⁴³ Paula Martin, “Propaganda Directed to Cochinchina,” 10 October 1943, Folder 250, Box 17, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

Just over a week later, Commandant Meynier responded to a passage in a letter from the Mission Militaire Française (French Military Mission in Chongqing, or MMF) calling for propaganda “threatening those elements in Indo China who are profiting from the present situation.” Meynier countered with support for his wife’s proposal. He added:

Rather [than taking the MMF’s proposed approach] the accomplishment of this purpose should be made by assurances that the U.S. Nations [sic] wish and intend to give the Indo Chinese the liberty which the Indo Chinese have been claiming for years, emphasizing that this liberty cannot be completely accomplished overnight and that the speed of its accomplishment will depend in a large measure upon the cooperation offered by the Indo Chinese themselves. Emphasis should be placed upon an enlightened post war program.⁴⁴

Meynier stuck by his position. In an interview with OSS agents in April 1944, by which time he had fallen out of favor, he insisted that “some sort of political assurances must be given to the Annamese right now,” and “repeatedly spoke of the possibility that Russia would play a great role in post-war Indochina, and could furnish weapons and trained agitator-leaders, if the Indochinese question was not well settled.” Lieutenant George Devereux of OSS dismissively wrote in his report that Meynier “played on the communist bugaboo, to frighten the Americans whom he believes to be very anti-Russian.

⁴⁴ R.P. Larson, “Conference with Comdr Meynier on 18th and 19th October,” 20 October 1943, Folder 3939, Box 268, Entry 139, RG 226; “The Meynier Interview,” (participants: Meynier, Major Wilkinson, Lieutenant Larson, Lieutenant Devereux), 22 April 1944, Folder 344, Box 43, Entry 140, RG 226; and Major Wilkinson to Colonel John G. Coughlin, 30 April 1944, Folder 250, Box 17, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA. Commenting on the interview of Meynier attended by Lieutenant Larson, Major Wilkinson, and Devereux, Major Wilkinson said “George, I find, is prone to exaggerate and to interpret statements or actions of others, particularly the Meynier Group, adversely. I think George has an entirely too biased opinion to really treat the situation fairly. The statements on the interview are in general correct if you disregard the notes that George puts in for his interpretations.”

I happen to know a lot about Communism in Indochina (Kontum, where I worked, was the prison for Annamite communists in my time).”⁴⁵

The other French speaking OSS officer to have interviewed Meynier, Major Austin Otis Glass, was born in 1899, had spent 30 years in Indochina where he worked as a manager for Standard-Vacuum Oil Company for northern Indochina and Yunnan, was married to a Vietnamese woman, and was also fluent in Vietnamese. He had retired in 1937 and continued on near Hải Phòng as a horticulturalist and rice planter, but was imprisoned by the *kempeitai* because he “shared with the Vietnamese a strong feeling for their spirit of independence and antifascism,” but was repatriated on the “mercy ship,” the *Gripsholm* in 1942. His reports showed a less obvious bias in the Meynier matter than Devereux’s. For whatever reason, he did not suggest any close relationship between Meynier and Vietnamese nationalists. In his reports of interviews with Meynier on May 24 and July 10, 1944 he only revealed that Meynier had been authorized to meet two delegates of the “Annamite Nationalist Movement” (the Việt Nam Cách Mệnh Đồng Minh Hội or Đồng Minh Hội sponsored by the Guomindang, see Chapter 8) who, according to the earlier report, had “recently held a convention” at Liuzhou. After seeing

⁴⁵ “The Meynier Interview,” (participants: Meynier, Major Wilkinson, Lieutenant Larson, Lieutenant Devereux), 22 April 1944, Folder 344, Box 43, Entry, 140, RG 226, NARA. Peter Zinoman, *The Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 62, 86. Zinoman tells us that the prison camp built at Kon Tum in 1931 housed 250 inmates and was one of two penitentiaries (he refers to Kon Tum as a prison camp and penitentiary on different pages) and three penal work camps built in southern Annam to supply labor for the construction of new roads. Having worked at Kon Tum was no badge of honor, Zinoman, 87, states that 135 prisoners died during a six-month period in 1931 while working on strategic road #14. [Unsigned, but identifiable as Major Wilkinson] to Colonel John G. Coughlin, 30 April 1944. Major Wilkinson, who attended the interview of Meynier which Lieutenant Devereux reported on said: “George [Devereux], I find, is prone to exaggerate [sic] and to interpret statements or actions of others, particularly the Meynier Group, adversely. I think George has an entirely too biased opinion to really treat the situation fairly.” Jacques Dalloz, *The War in Indo-China 1945-1954*, translated by Josephine Bacon (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan Ltd., 1990), 38. The MMF was established in China in January 1942.

the resolutions passed, Meynier said they were “very well gotten up.” In the second interview Glass conducted, Meynier explained that “the leaders of the Annamite Nationalist Movement” met him at Nanning where they pledged their support in fighting the Japanese, and told him that they had “50,000 members well organized into cellules (groups) in the Colony.”⁴⁶

The Meynier Mission never had the chance to hatch its plans in Indochina. The source of their problems lay in the fact that the arrangement made between the French and Americans for the establishment of the Mission had relied on General Giraud, whose authority quickly eroded. First his administration had been merged with de Gaulle’s in January 1943, under an agreement that they would alternate as president. When the Comité Français de Libération Nationale (French Committee of National Liberation or CFLN) was formed on June 3, Giraud was forced to share the presidency with de Gaulle.

⁴⁶ “Mr. Austin O. Glass,” 5 November 1942, “Officer’s Qualification Sheet,” [no date given], and “Austin O. Glass, Major AUS,” 3 October 1944, Folder 391, Box 26, Entry 92A, RG 226; Major Austin O. Glass, “Interview with Commandant Robert Meynier,” 31 May 1944, and “Resume of Conversation with Cdt. Robert Meynier,” 11 July 1944, Folder 340, Box 423, Entry 140, RG 226; “Lieutenant Commander Turner McBaine to Lieutenant Colonel Paul E. Helliwell, 5 March 1945, Folder 4, Box 228, Entry 210, RG 226; and Colonel John G. Coughlin to Major Carl O. Hoffman, 3 April 1944, Folder 250, Box 17, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA. Coughlin favored Devereux over Glass—whose background he was apparently oblivious to—saying “I really felt disappointed. I was hoping that he would give Meynier and Larsen [sic] the devil and instead he thought they were both pretty fine stuff.” “I had Devereux read Glass’ report,” Coughlin said, “and he really started taking it apart.” Then he concluded with: “I sure don’t think that Major Glass is any ball of fire just between the two of us, but perhaps I am being unfair because he didn’t agree with me about Meynier. Perhaps when he has been out here for a month or two he will feel a little familiar with the situation.” Patti, 49, 85, and 492; and Dixie R. Bartholomew-Feis, “The Men on the Ground,” Ph.D. Dissertation (Ohio State University, 2001). Patti states that Zhang Fakui 張發奎 had “already pressed” Hồ Chí Minh “into service” for the Guomindang to infiltrate the Đông Minh Hội while the OSS was negotiating during the summer and fall of 1943 “through diplomatic and military channels” for his release. Hồ Chí Minh, Võ Nguyên Giáp and Phạm Văn Đồng had all attended the congress at Liuzhou. Patti’s information about Glass’ wife and sympathy for the Vietnamese is from an interview with Hồ, who had never met Glass personally, but was obviously well informed about him. Bartholomew-Feis cites an OSS folder that corroborates Patti’s biographical information about Glass, but not the ethnicity of his wife. Bartholomew-Feis, 6, gives the exception to the rule that Glass usually hid his sympathies. In his July 1945 final report, which she quotes, Glass is clearly anti-French in a paragraph-long condemnation of their treatment of the Vietnamese.

De Gaulle quickly outmaneuvered Giraud, who was forced to resign on July 31. “Commander Meynier’s orders, of which I had a copy signed by General Giraud,” wrote Miles, “had been slipped back into a typewriter before the commander had left North Africa, and General de Gaulle had somewhat slantingly added his signature.”⁴⁷

The de Gaullists would later argue that though the Meynier Mission was organized before the CFLN in Algiers was formed, on July 16, 1943 it was integrated into the French Military Mission in Chongqing.⁴⁸ In fact, it would take several months for the Meynier Mission to be “integrated” into MMF, but the tug of war between Meynier and the Gaullist MMF had its roots in July. Still a French soldier, Meynier’s orders were to report, upon arrival in China, to the MMF, headed by the de Gaullists General Zinovi Pechkoff and his chief of staff Lieutenant Colonel L. Emblanc.⁴⁹ The de Gaullists were rightfully suspicious of U.S. intentions in Indochina, and were not willing to permit the Americans to command French soldiers operating clandestinely within their colony of Indochina. Giraud was no longer in a position to protect the Meynier Mission from the de Gaullists.

Pechkoff and Emblanc had opposed Meynier from the beginning, having sent a telegram to Algiers to abort his mission’s dispatch to China. In early September, Madame Emblanc worked at the MMF where she received telegrams, decoded them and

⁴⁷ Miles, 185; Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1962), 218, 220.

⁴⁸ Aide Memoire, 2 March 1944, General de Brigade Aeriennne Charles Luguët to General W. Donovan, 2 March 1940, Folder 3970, Box 270, Entry 139, RG 226, NARA. The term “de Gaullist” refers to followers of Charles de Gaulle and is used throughout as a counter term to supporters of Giraud or Vichy. Although this term is often used interchangeably with “Gaullists,” the latter term refers more generally to a French patriot.

⁴⁹ Ibid; Martin Thomas, “Silent Partners: SOE’s French Indo-China Section 1943-1945,” *Modern Asian Studies* 34, 4 (2000): 948.. The French general with a Russian name, Pechkoff, was Maxim Gorky’s son. He had been the Free French representative in Pretoria beginning in 1941.

showed them to her husband. In a confidential interview, Father Bec of the Meynier Mission discussed the “role and the constitution” of the Meynier group with Major Bonnet of the MMF. Madame Emblanc, who worked at the MMF but was not present at the interview, prepared a report for her husband several days later concerning the statements Father Bec was purported to have made. The report so outraged General Pechkoff that he verbally reprimanded Meynier and reserved the right to punish Father Bec. Meynier investigated the matter and found out that the statements attributed to Father Bec “had been exaggerated, and words which he had never pronounced were put in his mouth.” Father Bec then approached Pechkoff directly, and was told that the matter was “a regrettable incident, that he had been badly informed, and that the affair was forgotten.”⁵⁰

“Concentrated operations” were to have started in September, but Pechkoff and Emblanc thwarted the Meynier Mission’s every effort. On September 22, Pechkoff forbade Meynier from making any contact along the China-Indochina border or to meet with high foreign officials without his consent. Meynier was also forbidden to make personnel decisions within his mission without the General’s approval. The following day, Emblanc drafted a “French Intelligence Operational Plan,” which, while seeming to acknowledge some autonomy for the Meynier Mission—they were permitted to “communicate directly” with the Chinese, American intelligence services, and the 14th Air Force—ordered the mission to retain a permanent liaison with the Service de Renseignement Extrême Orient (SREO, or French Far Eastern Intelligence Service), and

⁵⁰ “The French Situation in China,” [no date given, post 27 December 1943], Folder 248, Box 17, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

to report all communications to the MMF. Diagrams furnished by Emblanc revealed that he was in charge of SREO for the MMF in China. About this time, Pechkoff forwarded a telegram from Algiers instructing Meynier to detach himself from "American tutelage." Then, on September 24, Meynier received another telegram from Algiers, informing him that the CFLN had decided to abolish the "ex-Meynier Group" and its officers were to report directly to the MMF. Only after Captain Miles interceded on behalf of the Meynier Mission with Pechkoff on September 29 did the General agree to request that the CFLN reconsider its decision on his trip to Algiers in October.⁵¹

In the meantime, the Meynier Mission continued operations, but under stiff restrictions imposed by the MMF. Lieutenant Robert Larson, whom Miles had placed in charge of the Meynier Mission in China, noted that it had sent an emissary to Algiers in an effort to gain the CFLN's official sanction due to the concern that otherwise the French General Staff in Indochina would be hesitant to cooperate: "because the general officers lack initiative and desire orders from higher authority and because they are not anxious to take personal responsibility." Meynier also felt stymied in his effort to French commanders along the border territories by his "retention" at the MMF, now headed by his enemy Emblanc.⁵²

Meynier had also planned to contact naval officers and marine engineers in Cochinchina to restrict the Japanese use of French naval vessels through sabotage, but his

⁵¹ Emblanc, "French Intelligence Operational Plan," 20 September 1943, and "The French Situation in China"; and attachments "Piece no. 10" and "Schema de l'Organisation Initiale du S.R.E.O." of Robert P. Larson to Captain Miles, "Lt. Co. Emblanc—Orders of to [sic] Commander Meynier," 1 January 1944, Folder 250, Box 17, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

⁵² Lieutenant P. Larson, "Plan and Operation—Meynier Group," 20 November 1943, Folder 250, Box 17, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA; "The Meynier Interview," 22 April 1944.

agent was unable to contact them because he could not obtain a necessary Chinese visa. In an interview with OSS agents several months later, Meynier made the sardonic comment that “for some reason the Chinese seem opposed to the French military mission.” Making another hidden reference to tension between the MMF and the Meynier Mission, Larson also noted that “it is the belief of Captain Miles that one Frenchman will not talk freely to another Frenchman if he is being openly watched.” In this regard, Larson recommended that American and Chinese authorities grant the Mission their full support so that “Meynier or his officers be able to operate without being openly watched.”⁵³

Emblanc issued a number of directives on December 2 which renewed attacks on the autonomy of the Meynier Mission. Based on a guideline that the Mission should “supplement those of the SR-EO and should not endanger that net-work with imprudent contacts,” and the fact that the MMF had made contacts with General Eugène Mordant, Commanding Officer of French forces in Indochina, Emblanc forbade Meynier from making any military contacts in Indochina without Emblanc’s prior consent. He was however still permitted to establish civilian contacts including those with “the Annamite Mandarins.”⁵⁴ It appears that prohibitions against the Meynier Mission making contacts with the French military in Indochina also applied to officials such as the relatives of

⁵³ Ibid; and Lieutenant George Devereux, “Conversation with Captain Rousset,” 8 March 1944, Folder 3939, Box 268, Entry 139, RG 226, NARA. Captain Rousset of the MMF, held a similar opinion of the General Staff in Indochina: “People on the general staff,” he told Lieutenant Devereux, “and general officers develop a certain kind of mentality that is not suitable for our purposes.”

⁵⁴ Robert Larson, Memorandum to Captain Miles, 1 January 1944, Folder 247, Box 17, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

Madame Meynier for there is no evidence that she ever made it across the border into Tonkin.

The enmity those in the Meynier camp bore for Emblanc may have begun with his attacks on the Mission, but they were exacerbated by his poor character which seemingly bred dissension everywhere he went. It was reported, for example, that he had left Indochina because he knew he was about to be expelled from the Army due to “extra-military activity,” though no more specifics were provided. There was also a claim that Emblanc was forced to leave Syria at some point because of activities of a similar nature. It was widely understood that the MMF’s activities in China had been “strongly paralyzed” because of their “anti-Chinese sentiments—manifested orally as well as in writing—(and of which the Chinese have been informed).”⁵⁵

Emblanc was also known to have regularly changed and withheld telegrams that went through the MMF to suit his own purposes. Colonel Coudrais of the MMF, and a former friend of Emblanc’s from time they had spent together in Indochina, had set up contacts with French officers in the border territories of Indochina from Longzhou. Upon instructions given to the officers in Indochina, telegrams were given to Coudrais in a code that he was not furnished with. Emblanc also wrote and signed telegrams as General Pechkoff, “which were often written in an unfriendly tone,” for nearly a month after Pechkoff had left China. Coudrais only learned of Pechkoff’s departure by accident from a new officer who came through the MMF to his base in Longzhou. Emblanc had reportedly suppressed telegrams unfavorable to him destined for Algiers from Mr. Siguret

⁵⁵ “The French Situation in China.”

who was the liaison between the French in Indochina and the CFLN in Algiers. Later, Miles was said to have learned that Emblanc had sent wires to the French Deuxieme Bureau (Intelligence) in Hà Nội containing plans of Miles and the Meynier Group. Navy radio intercepts discovered that the information Emblanc had sent to Hà Nội was then sent on to Japan. Pechkoff had learned Emblanc was suppressing telegram transmissions destined for the CFLN in Algiers and had appointed the First Secretary of the French Embassy to investigate the matter.⁵⁶

There appeared to be a glimmer of hope that the American government might continue to fight for the Meynier Mission as late as mid-December 1943. On December 13, an unsigned OSS document, from the office of Morale Operations in Washington, D.C., proposed the general outlines of a propaganda plan stating that Madame Meynier's "family was at one time anti-French and had revolutionary activities. However, now it is understood they have come over to the French way of thinking and [are] cooperating with them." In the next paragraph, while acknowledging the difficulties arising from the changing French political situation in Algiers, the author stated that any U.S. Secret Operations, Secret Intelligence or Morale Operations activities would have to be

⁵⁶ Ibid; and Major Austin O. Glass, "Interview with Commandant Robert Meynier," 31 May 1944, Folder 340, Box 423, Entry 140, RG 226; "The French Situation in China"; and "Conversation with Captain Rousset"; and ONI 6-44. "French Indo-China—Japanese Secret Service," 18 March 1944, Folder 1618, Box 119, Entry 139, RG 226, NARA. It is unclear if the French Deuxieme Bureau was formally working for the Japanese, but it seems likely that it officially maintained its autonomy before March 9, 1945, though it was likely infiltrated by Japanese spies. The MMF had informed Lieutenant Devereux of the OSS that the French Deuxieme Bureau was not to be trusted because they had arrested an officer for pro-Allied activities. An Office of Naval Intelligence document from March 1944 with a rating of B-3, [for OSS documents, this would be designated "previously or probably reliable" information that is "unsupported but considered probably true"], states that the "Japanese Secret Service seems to be directed by the Japanese Deuxieme [French: "second"] Bureau in Hà Nội which furnished its agents operating at the border with Japanese Army passes countersigned by French authorities. The document does not mention the French in connection to Japanese Secret Service or the Japanese Deuxieme Bureau in and so it is unclear if they are merely using the French term for the Japanese.

coordinated with the Meynier Mission. Two alternatives were presented: either to utilize the Meynier Mission with all its advantageous connections in Indochina or to organize an alternative, a “parallel unit for working independently of the French.”⁵⁷

In an *aide-mémoire* in January 1944, Major Carl Hoffman stated that even though the OSS had high regard for the Meynier Mission, they were cooperating with the CFLN’s request to release the mission to its control. A memo to Colonel Coughlin and Hoffman explained that Pechkoff was returning to China as French Ambassador, and an American failure to turn the Meynier Mission over to him would demonstrate that the Americans did not support the French government-in-exile. On the 22nd, Pechkoff met with Donovan, Heppner, and Hoffman at General Donovan’s residence in Washington. Pechkoff—apparently not aware that Donovan had initiated the whole affair—said that it had been his mistake that he let Meynier operate under Miles for so long. Donovan stated that he no longer wanted the OSS involved with the Meynier Mission.⁵⁸

On March 20, Donovan agreed to “arrangements whereby Meynier and his Mission shall be under the command and authority” of the MMF in Chongqing resolving the difference of opinion that seemed to have existed for nearly a year. Finally, on May 24, Austin Glass reported that the Meynier Mission had been completely separated from all American (OSS and Navy) direction. Commandant Meynier was to act in the future

⁵⁷ “Indo-China Mission,” 22 October 1943, and “Indo China—M.O. Unit,” 13 December 1943, Folder 1864, Box 138, Entry 139, RG 226, NARA. A memo from October 22 also stated “it has been though advisable that the present French SO Mission under Colonel Meynier, acting in that area, be coordinated for all planning, supplies, disbursements, etc., through the MO Mission with Captain Miles in Chungking.”

⁵⁸ “Meeting with General Petchkoff [sic] at General Donovan’s home,” 29 February 1944, Folder 3970, Box 270, Entry 139, RG 226, NARA—Petchkoff had also met Donovan at the latter’s office on 25 February 1944 (see Major C.O. Hoffman to Files, 25 February 1944 same location) General Pechkoff had left China for Algiers in late September or early October, and later went to Washington, D.C.

as liaison for the French with the Americans and Chinese, and had been placed under the direct control of the French Military Attaché, Colonel A.L. Sol of the Colonial Infantry (though Sol had not yet arrived in China). Around July 6, Meynier was recalled to North Africa to join the French fleet and was expected to leave with his wife around the 20th of the month.⁵⁹ Emblanc had worked diligently to kill the Meynier Mission, but it took a formal break from the Americans and seven months for it to be finally extinguished.

Emblanc, too, was soon removed. He had been stripped of all his authority in the China Theater according to Glass' report of May 24, was not permitted to communicate directly with the government in Algiers, and was kept busy with ciphering and other office work. Dai Li was reported to be furious over the way Emblanc treated the Meynier Mission, and had as a consequence ordered the MMF to cease all border activity with Indochina. Emblanc and his wife left China for Europe on September 3 after being recalled.⁶⁰

Miles' initial estimation of the Meynier Mission's capabilities was wildly exaggerated, but he was not willing to acknowledge its failure. He attempted to take some of the credit for Admiral Halsey's raid on Sài Gòn, Cam Ranh Bay, Nha Trang, Phan Thiết, and Cap St. Jacques in January 1945, in which 12 transport ships (53,000

⁵⁹ William J. Donovan to General de Brigade Aérienne Charles Luguët, 20 March 1944, Folder 3970, Box 270, Entry 139, RG 226; Major Austin O. Glass, "Interview with Commandant Robert Meynier," 31 May 1944; and Yu, 181; and Headquarters, Supreme Allied Commander Southeast Asia, Supreme Allied Commander's Meeting Minutes, 29 January 1945, Folder 4, Box 229, Entry 210, RG 226, NARA. After becoming commander of the China Theater, General Wedemeyer appointed Colonel Richard Heppner head of OSS in China on December 9, 1944 to be directly responsible to Wedemeyer rather than OSS, Washington, D.C. and Coughlin was placed at head of OSS SEAC on 29 January 1945. SEAC was Mountbatten's command, but within SEAC was the India-Burma Theater (formerly CBI), where Coughlin would have been under the American General Sultan.

⁶⁰ "Interview with Commandant Robert Meynier," and "Resume of Conversation with Cdt. Robert Meynier," 11 July 1944, Folder 340, Box 423, Entry 140, RG 2260; and Dissemination No. A-39535, 4 September 1944, Folder YH/KM-50, Box 381, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA.

tons) and 12 oil tankers (75,000 tons) were sunk, and 8 transports (36,000 tons) and 5 tankers (36,000 tons) were damaged.⁶¹ Miles claimed that he was able to supply Halsey with target information within a few hours based on Meynier's intelligence networks still operating from within Indochina. Roughly three weeks after the raid, a French Intelligence officer in Calcutta told Colonel Heppner "that there was no working arrangement between them and Miles," and the "coast watching arrangement was a remnant of Meynier."⁶²

On April 22, 1944 Meynier said that they were still in the "stage where we make frontier contacts." In May, Austin O. Glass, who had drafted a proposal for a secret intelligence set-up in Indochina, conducted the first interview with Meynier a few days later, then drew up a supplemental report the following month. His only mention of the assets that might be useful from the Mission's activities appeared in his first proposal, but not in the supplement. The SI proposal covering all of Indochina mentioned only a "small radio set" that the Mission was supposed to have set up in Lạng Sơn, "to be operated by French or native agents," to communicate with Longzhou earlier in March.⁶³ The Meynier Mission had held the most promise of any covert activity aimed at occupied French Indochina during this phase of the war, but it had come and gone in less than a year, and accomplished little, a victim in large part of French internal politics.

⁶¹ Sachiko Murakami, "Japan's Thrust into French Indochina, 1940-1945," Ph.D. Dissertation (New York University, 1981), 507; No. 1027, 16 January 1945, 2, *Intercepted Japanese messages: Operation "Magic."* The Japanese believed they had shot down 30 planes of an estimated 150 planes involved in the raid, but the American Third Fleet reported only 16 lost.

⁶² Miles, 424-25; To 109 from Heppner, 5 February 1945, Reel 90, M1642, NARA.

⁶³ Major Austin O. Glass to Colonel John G. Coughlin, 20 May 1944, Major Austin O. Glass to Lieutenant Colonel Robert B. Hall, 1 June 1944, Folder 340, Box 423, Entry 140, RG 226, NARA; and "The Meynier Interview."

THE FLYING TIGERS AND GBT

While the Meynier Mission produced little of substance, there were two tangible sources of concern for the Japanese and Vichy French in Indochina, the U.S. Navy and Chennault's air force. The Navy decimated the Japanese merchant marine and the 14th Air Force continually bombarded and strafed important production centers and supply lines, rendering Japan's exploitation of Indochina's resources negligible. The OSS prepared a report which provides a valuable examination of the effect the war on the Indochinese economy since 1940.

It showed that rice production decreased after 1942 as rice lands were converted to cotton production, partially due to Japanese demands (Japan took 80 percent of Indochinese cotton production), but also the result of the cessation of fertilizer shipments from France. Meanwhile, rice that the Japanese had been storing in vast amounts in warehouses spoiled due to lack of shipping. Transportation of rice from Cochinchina to Annam and Tonkin had also been disrupted, inflating its price in the latter two regions. Coal production was devastated by Allied bombings (discussed below). Rubber production was unabated, but lack of shipping led to the stockpiling of 35,000 tons of the product at Sài Gòn (based on acquisitions of 3,000 tons per month). When German ships attempted to depart Indochina with 32,000 tons of rubber (probably in June 1943), they were sunk at Cap St. Jacques (Vũng Tàu).⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Economic Intelligence Division: Conference of December 20th with R.P.L., [1943?], Folder 465, Box 80, Entry 106, RG 226, NARA. The year is not given on this document but several references to "the first eight months of 1943" suggest that it is from 1943. The date of the sinking of German boats is referred to as "last June."

On October 12, 1943, the Japanese-controlled Chinese radio in Canton announced that they had killed Chennault on a “devastating raid on the base of the American Air Force in Kunming on Sept. 20.”⁶⁵ It was wishful thinking. Chennault’s 14th Air Force was responsible for the most effective Allied actions in Indochina during the war. According to various intelligence reports gathered by the OSS, the 14th Air Force had crippled transportation networks the Japanese depended on and struck key industries. Airfields in Luang Prabang and Vientiane (Laos) were rendered unusable. Traffic on the railroad linking Hà Nội with Sài Gòn was significantly reduced from 2,868 freight cars in 1940 to 1300 in 1944, and from 22 to 6 heavy freight locomotives from 1942 to late 1943, largely limited to military use. Movement was rendered “slow and uncertain” after bombings of portions of the line, including bridges, necessitating multiple transshipments and ferrying of goods along the route. Shipping between Hải Phòng and Hòn Gay was substantially reduced, while the principal port in Tonkin, Hải Phòng, virtually ceased to operate due to bombings of piers, sunken ships at port and the presence of American submarines along the coast. In one day of August 1943, the 14th Air Force destroyed 400 precious barrels of gasoline at Hà Nội—as the result of shortages as early as late 1941, it was reported that “official and essential business cars” were only permitted to run for one hour daily, and they did so on alcohol distilled from rice stocks while trucks ran on charcoal gas. The central power plant of Hòn Gay was reduced to one third of its output. The largest coal mines in eastern Asia at Hòn Gay were destroyed by Chennault’s flyers, whose actions also led to the closing of cement factories in Hải Phòng, and nearly closed

⁶⁵ “Aerial Operations Detailed Operational Plan,” [no date given], Claire Lee Chennault Collection, Box 9-1, Hoover Institution.

down other mines at Cam Đường. As a result of these successes, several Japanese businesses in Hà Nội maintained only skeleton staffs while several Japanese companies merged, and Japanese merchants evacuated with their families to the South.⁶⁶

Chennault's flyers could have never been so successful without reliable intelligence from within Indochina. A ragtag civilian group, GBT, provided this intelligence. Known by the acronym for three expatriates, L.L. ("Laurie") Gordon, a Canadian, Harry Bernard, an American, and Frank Tan, a Chinese-American, GBT was begrudgingly acknowledged as the only substantive Allied intelligence gathering group for Indochina from mid-1942 to March 1945 by military and intelligence groups.⁶⁷ Their primary goal was gathering intelligence and reporting it via radio from within Indochina through their base on the China frontier to Chinese, American, and British military and

⁶⁶ Indo-China Information Bulletin No. 1, 14 (Source: Commandant Meynier), September 1943, Folder 3939, Box 268; "Conditions in French Indo-China—Late 1944," 9 December 1944, Folder 1616, Box 119; "From Indo-China Desk," hand signed by B.M.T. [no date given], Folder 1863, Box 138, Entry 139; "Japan: sundry items of information received from Fighting French," 16 November 1943, Folder 344, Box 43; "Notes of Interview with Father Tong," 20 December 1944, Folder 344, Box 43, Entry 140; "Economic Intelligence Division: Conference of December 20th with R.P.L.," 30 December 1943, Folder 465, Box 80, Entry 106; "Recent Events in French Indochina," 23 September 1944, Folder YH/KM-125, Box 381, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA; Kurt Bloch, "Coal and Power Shortage in Japan," *Far Eastern Survey* 9, no. 4 (14 February 1940):42; and Virginia Thompson, "Japan in Indo-China," *Far Eastern Survey* 10, no. 23 (1 December 1941): 273. On the scarcity of gasoline, portions of an article reprinted and translated from the Hà Nội weekly, *Indochine*, which quoted Mr. Martin, Director of Economic Affairs who stated "To replace gasoline, of which Indo-China imported 40,000 tons annually before the war, alcohol has been used in part and as a further substitute, gas generators from charcoal have been installed on 3,000 cars and trucks between 1940 and 1942." Later in the same article he reflects on diminishing imports which fell from 560,000 tons in 1940 to 73,000 tons in 1943, due no doubt to the cutting off of commerce with France and the effective Allied sinking of Japanese merchant marine vessels. Japan had also imported as much as 900,000 tons annually until the Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937. See also "The Financial and Economic Situation in Indo-China," 30 August 1944, Folder 3939, Box 268, Entry 139, RG 226, NARA.

⁶⁷ Charles Fenn, *Ho Chi Minh*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 75; Lieutenant Commander Turner McBaine to Lieutenant Colonel Paul E. Helliwell, 5 March 1945, Folder 4, Box 228; Lieutenant Colonel Paul L. E. Helliwell to Chief, Japan-China Section, FESI, Washington, D.C., 9 March 1945, Folder 4, Box 228, Entry 210; and Paul L.E. Helliwell, Lieutenant Colonel, F.A., Chief, SI, OSS, CT to Strategic Services Officer, China Theater, 29 March 1945, Folder 200, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA. In March 1945 the Japanese decided to take direct control of the administration of Indochina and as a result limited the activities of French civilians and military. This event is discussed in Chapter 5.

intelligence groups. The group also aided downed pilots and POWs, and spread rumors for propaganda purposes.⁶⁸ The intelligence gathered included daily weather reports from 36 weather stations on demand and details on enemy supplies, ship and troop movements, barracks, installations, airfields, and construction. Pilots were given a list of “safe areas,” or were directed to these areas through signal fires on hilltops, so they could be guided to safety across the border to China. This was the best-case scenario. One downed pilot was reportedly escorted across the border to GBT headquarters through villages in Tonkin by a Chinese farmer. By November 1944, GBT claimed to have rescued two pilots, and reported that a third pilot was being cared for in Indochina while he recovered from injuries, including what was hoped to be only temporary blindness.⁶⁹

While conducting such activities Gordon suffered bouts of dengue fever and lobar pneumonia. The group had to be constantly watchful of bandits who could attack as they traveled within China, and spies who attempted to infiltrate their organization. If the radios did not fail or overheat and burn up, they might be captured in Indochina along with the operators. In the end, however, GBT did not succumb to such dangers and problems, but to Allied politics and the Japanese.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ “Rumors—Indo-China,” 21 November, Folder 1616, Box 119, Entry 139, RG 226, NARA. This document lists 11 rumors spread by the G.B. [sic] group including such stories as the discovery of three Japanese soldiers floating in a river below Hà Nội, Japanese slaughter of civilians as reprisals for a Japanese officer in Sài Gòn, two incidences of slaughter in Manila of rioters, and a club of women formed by French businessmen in Sài Gòn to use mistresses of important Japanese officers as spies.

⁶⁹ “French Indochina Report on Civilian Resistance and Group 22 by Gordon-Bernard-Tan Group,” 11 November 1944, Folder 3429, Box 204, Entry 154; Major General A.C. Wedemeyer to Commanding General, 14th A.F., [no date given], Folder 121, Box 8, Entry 148, RG 246, NARA; and Bartholomew-Feis, 92.

⁷⁰ [“Gordon’s Diary,” no date given], 3, 40, 43, 47-48, and 59, Folder 3, Box 229, Entry 210; “Interview with Frank Tan,” 31 October 1944, Folder 344, Box 43, Entry 140; Colonel John G. Coughlin to Commanding General, USAF, CBI, Incl. #8: “Gordon and His BGT [sic] Group,” 20 September 1944, Reel 88, M1642, RG 226, NARA. “Gordon’s Diary” is the single most important historical documentary record

GBT was in actuality Laurie Gordon's group. Before the war, Gordon had commuted fifteen miles everyday from his home at the beach resort town of Đồ Sơn to Hải Phòng where he worked for California Texas Oil Company (Caltex), making occasional overnight trips to Hà Nội. Having heard of Japanese atrocities at Nanjing 南京 (Nanking), he sent his family to the U.S. when the Japanese began arriving in Tonkin in 1940.⁷¹ He began his resistance to the Japanese and Vichy French collaborators a short while later at his new residence, the Métropole Hôtel in Hà Nội, a colonial era hotel catering to the French and foreigners. There he joined with other expatriates engaging in "semi-spy work and acted as listening posts for our Consuls," who were also staying at the hotel, but they increasingly came under the watchful eyes of the Vichy *sûreté* and the Japanese. Then he went to Sài Gòn in 1941 to close out the bulk of Caltex's affairs in Indochina. The night before the Japanese landed there, Gordon went to the docks with a

of GBT. There are no page numbers on the sixty-five page "diary," but page numbers are cited for convenience. Although Gordon's diary has no title, date or author's marks appended to it, its identity is clear through the details, corroboration in other O.S.S. documentation, including a reference to it in Lieutenant Commander Turner McBaine to Lieutenant Colonel Paul E. Helliwell, 5 March 1945, Folder 4, Box 228, Entry 210, RG 226, NARA, and a passage on page 23 of "Gordon's Diary": "On arrival at the B.M.M. [British Military Mission] an officer greeted me with "Hallo, Gordon, I haven't seen you since Indo-China days." Chennault does not mention GBT in his memoirs nor could any mention of the group be found in intelligence information in Chennault's papers at the Hoover institution, but OSS records at NARA II contain numerous intelligence reports and various other OSS documents attest to the strength of the organization as a reliable source of intelligence from within Indochina. In his "French Indochina Report on Civilian Resistance and Group 22," 11 November 1944 (Folder 3429, Box 204, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA), Gordon stated: "A regular flow of accurate and valuable information in mounting volume has been supplied for over two years. The 14th Airforce have learned to place considerable reliance on reports from Group 22 [French agents working in concert with GBT] which they have received from us and have expressed their satisfaction not only on paper but in terms of material support and better still, in action." In his "diary," Gordon talks of several meetings with Colonel Williams, the Intelligence Chief for the 14th Air Force, and stated that "a lot of targets we nominated got bombed and made us very happy." Gordon also stated in his "diary" that "So many people were glad to get what we had to offer and said nice things but few would stir themselves to help us when we asked for something. Bill Williams was no exception and at times we got rather 'browned off' about him." Finally, Colonel Williams is reported by Colonel John G. Coughlin to have said that GBT "has furnished the best information coming out of Indo-China."

⁷¹ "Gordon's Diary," 1-3.

bottle of white paint hidden in his coat and a paintbrush in his pocket, and painted large white Vs in the middle of the black asphalt road leading from the docks to the landmark Catholic Notre Dame Cathedral at the center of the city. “Spurred by the success of this effort I had a few hundred red Vs printed in China-town [Chợ Lớn],” Gordon wrote, which he left “lying about in waiting rooms, between the leaves of Vichy officials’ desk calendars and so on.”⁷²

After leaving Sài Gòn, Gordon rejoined his family in Long Beach, where he heard the news that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. He had earlier spoken with British Intelligence in Shanghai on his trip from Sài Gòn, so he approached the British Consulate. Gordon’s message was forwarded to the British military attaché in Washington, D.C., but he did not receive a direct response. Later, he learned that British authorities had responded to his queries through a “British Security Officer,” none other than fellow British Canadian Bill Stephenson, who initiated an arrangement whereby Gordon would continue to be employed by Caltex while also working for the British. He went to New Delhi in June 1942, where he met with Director of British Military Intelligence Major General Walter Joseph Cawthorn, who assigned him to a Colonel Skylark. Colonel Skylark secretly commissioned Gordon a captain at his request as “security for my family,” and he was given money, passes and complete discretion to “contact loyal Frenchmen” and decide for himself how to use them because the British (and the other allies) had little if any intelligence coming from Indochina at the time.⁷³ This fact and

⁷² Ibid, 4-6.

⁷³ Ibid, 7-8 and 14; L.L. Gordon, GBT Group to Colonel Hall, Office of Strategic Services, 24 October 1944, Folder 340, Box 423, Entry 140; “A Study of British Intelligence Organizations in China,” 7 January 1945, Folder 121, Box 8, Entry 148, RG 246, NARA; Lieutenant Commander Turner McBaine to

Gordon's need to gain support for his activities from the Chinese, since he would operate from their border area, became the basis for the independence of his organization. Before Gordon's family left for the U.S, they had all stayed with another Caltex employee, Gene Head. Head's "most able assistant" was a 4'11"-tall "in his shoes" Chinese-American with a heart "as big as a barn and his brain better than most," Frank Tan.⁷⁴ Tan, whose Cantonese father had participated in the 1911 Revolution which ended the nearly 250 years of Qing rule in China, was born a year later in Boston, where he grew up. Although his father maintained a successful medical practice, discrimination motivated him to take his family back to China in the 1930s to try to help the Guomindang rebuild the country. After earning a college degree in engineering, the younger Tan eventually went to Indochina to work for Caltex.⁷⁵ Initially, he drew maps and interpreted for Gordon's group, but documents reveal that he became Gordon's right-hand man.⁷⁶

Gordon did not enlist the third member of the group's core of expatriates, Harry Bernard, until 1943. Bernard was a Caltex employee working in India when Gordon received approval from the Caltex office in New York to use him.⁷⁷ Colonel John Coughlin later gave one of the few appraisals of Bernard that can be found:

Lieutenant Colonel Paul E. Helliwell; and "Gordon and His BGT [sic] Group"; and Patti, 44. Lieutenant Commander Turner McBaine and "A Study of British Intelligence Organizations in China" both state that Major Bissell, head of U.S. Army Intelligence, negotiated Gordon's arrangement with his civilian employer and the study places Caltex's head office in New York, but Gordon offers the other version and Caltex's headquarters were actually in Beaumont, Texas according to Dixie R. Bartholomew-Feis, 41.

⁷⁴ "Gordon's Diary," 3 and 36

⁷⁵ Dixie R. Bartholomew-Feis, 44. Bartholomew-Feis has a biographical sketch of Tan derived from an interview with him and OSS agent, Charles Fenn's unpublished memoir.

⁷⁶ "Gordon's Diary," 28, 41, 56 and 62.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 45.

[He] does not have the drive and is not the leader that Gordon is. Gordon told me that he used Barnard [sic] to head his supply service and he did not discuss all his operational plans with him. Barnard acts as Gordon's #2 when he is away from Headquarters, and I believe Barnard strongly desires helping Americans in every way he can. He, however, is not as shrewd as Gordon.⁷⁸

In all likelihood, the only reason Tan did not replace Gordon when the latter was gone from the base was that non-Chinese allies discriminated against the Chinese. On one occasion, Gordon remarked that he could not “ask the Air Force to fly Chinese girls around the country,” though the inference was clearly that he could not ask the Air Force to fly a member of his group because she was Chinese and a female. Once the British Military Mission in Guilin 桂林 (Kweilin) offered a place for Gordon to stay on Christmas day when he and Tan could not find a hotel with a vacancy, but said nothing about “Frankie (a Chinese don't you know) so I refused as politely as I could.” Gordon would make light of it, but Tan's ethnicity and stature were as much liabilities as they were assets. The children of the village where GBT set up its headquarters would shout after him, using a word in the local Thau dialect that he could not understand. Finally, he worked up the courage to ask around what it meant, but he was not happy to learn that they were calling him “shorty Japanese.” It was not just children who mistook him for

⁷⁸ “Gordon and His BGT [sic] Group.” David G. Marr, *Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 272, identifies Bernard as a British tobacco merchant and also states that there was “a French priest who was apparently able to tap the wealth of the Catholic mission in Indochina,” but no sources of this information are provided. R. Harris Smith, who relied on published materials and extensive interviews—O.S.S. records had not yet been released to the public—for his *OSS: The Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 325, seems to be the unwitting culprit for the most disinformation: “Meanwhile, still another intelligence net in Tonkin was providing information to both the *French* and OSS.... Joining with *Paul Bernard*, an *official of the British-owned Asian tobacco monopoly*, and a Chinese businessman named *Tau*, Gordon organized the “GBT” espionage group.... *Unlike French spy networks, Gordon's group was willing to work closely with any useful clandestine source, including the Viet Minh nationalist movement.*” (italics added)

Japanese. After visiting his mother and sister in Chongqing, he was detained on his way back to their base by Chinese authorities who also suspected he was Japanese.⁷⁹

When Gordon first arrived in Chongqing, he met with a skeptical British military attaché who felt that he had little hope of gaining Chinese permission to work on the frontier in Guangxi and even less possibility of obtaining anything of use to the war effort.⁸⁰ Gordon then approached the Chinese director of military intelligence (DMI). He successfully used the same approach that he had with the British by offering his services while mentioning that he had French contacts in Indochina ready to assist in the war effort. The intelligence he later gathered went through the Chinese DMI to the American and British military attachés. Gordon and Tan located their base in a village outside of Longzhou. Longzhou had been heavily bombarded by Japanese when they took it in 1940, but was abandoned by them a short while later when the supply network from Indochina was broken. Due to its strategic location, Longzhou attracted refugees, intelligence groups, Vietnamese, nationalists and Japanese spies, though the war kept its civilian population from growing to pre-war levels.⁸¹

Gordon and Tan began building their headquarters at the site recommended by the border inspector, a simple cemetery overgrown with tall grass and bushes near the river's edge. Just below the cliff, some 50 feet above the river, was a cave they used as a bomb shelter whenever they heard Japanese planes approaching. Gordon only admitted to moving a couple of headstones in building their headquarters, one of which was at their

⁷⁹ "Gordon's Diary," 26, 35, and 54.

⁸⁰ Guangxi, and Yunnan were the provinces bordering Indochina, and Yunnan was then under the control of a warlord, Long Yun 龙云 (Lung Yun).

⁸¹ "Gordon's Diary," 16, 24 and "Interview with Frank Tan."

front door. A local woman came to their household and complained that they were disturbing her “husband’s slumbers,” as Gordon put it, and demanded compensation to move his remains. He gave in grudgingly because he was afraid of setting a precedent, but his reticence did not matter much. A short while later, the border inspector claimed compensation on behalf of thirty-six graves at fifty dollars per grave. One day, Gordon found an earthenware jar full of charred bones when he was digging in the garden.⁸²

The first structure they built had three rooms—one each for Gordon and Tan, plus a living room—and was furnished with mats and wood furniture they had built. The windows had bamboo bars and they made moveable blinds out of oiled bamboo paper. They used peanut oil lamps in the evenings. At one point, their home became infested with rats that gnawed away at the paper-lined house. They could not buy a cat locally to deal with the problem because an epidemic had wiped them out, nor could they spare bullets, so they resorted to making small bow and arrow weapons. Nearby, they had a combined kitchen-servant’s room built, and a separate bathroom hut furnished—as was typical in that part of the world—with “a large earthenware jar of water and a dipper.” Their garden had flowers, fruit trees, and vegetables. Later in the war, the group moved to a brick building in town, formerly the Chinese Army headquarters.⁸³ In late 1944, Longzhou was evacuated in anticipation of the arrival of a Japanese battalion,

⁸² Ibid, 25-27.

⁸³ Ibid, 25-27 and 40-41; “Interview with Lieutenant Charles Fenn,” 17 November 1944, Folder 344, Box 43, Entry 140, RG 226, NARA; and “Interview with Frank Tan.” Tan estimated the 60 percent of the inhabitants in Longzhou had abandoned it, but 3000 remained.

commanded by Tazoe Masanobu 田副正信, of the 62nd Regiment, and GBT moved their headquarters to Jingxi 靖西 (Tsingsi).⁸⁴

The other residents of the GBT headquarters, until late 1944, were exclusively Chinese. Of course, Gordon had to be cautious. Japanese spies were always trying to infiltrate his organization. In addition to a Chinese radio operator supplied by Admiral Yang Xuancheng 杨宣诚 (Yang Hsuan-cheng), head of intelligence for the Junshi Weiyuanhui 军事委员会 (National Military Council), Gordon hired four Chinese women to help with intelligence activities and to run the household. Expatriates like Gordon had built up some trust in the Chinese population because they typically employed *amahs* (Chinese servants) with “black lacquered teeth” to tend to their children. First, they hired a 50-year-old Cantonese woman, whose possessions had been destroyed by the Japanese eight times, as a servant/cook. They also hired three women from the Tong family: the mother, one of her two daughters who were refugees from Hải Phòng, and the third daughter who had been living in China. The 55-year-old mother, whom they nicknamed Cornelia, knew “Europe well,” could speak both English and French, and had “a good record with the Chinese government,” came to manage GBT’s accounts and provide translation work. The two daughters learned shorthand and typing, and one each excelled in ciphering and mapping targets for Chennault’s 14th Air Force.

In addition to the Chinese-American Tan, and the Chinese employed at their base, Gordon also used Chinese, sometimes smugglers, as “runners” to carry messages to and

⁸⁴ “Interview with Lieutenant Charles Fenn”; “Identification of Japanese Units in Indo-China,” 17 January 1945, Folder Y-2400, Box 374, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA.

from agents across the border into Indochina, and “spotters” to map objectives that a Frenchman could not get to easily. According to Gordon, one runner learned to bribe a Japanese truck driver to give him a ride to avoid troubles with the French authorities, but later in the war, an OSS agent living with GBT reported that runners traveled with papers furnished officially by the French Military. Tan told the OSS that the group would send a Chinese runner to the border where the French picked up messages. Gordon also made use of the local border inspector who helped with planning for gathering and transmitting bombing target intelligence, which sometimes involved the secret use of the Indochinese telegraph system passing through French border posts.⁸⁵ These various scenarios suggest GBT had to alter its methods due to changing conditions.

Contrary to some published reports that state that Gordon and/or GBT had ties with the Vietnamese communists as early as 1941, source documents make it clear that both Gordon and Tan felt that it was too dangerous to use Vietnamese in their operations.⁸⁶ In September 1944 the OSS Research and Analysis Division reported that Gordon had said:

⁸⁵ Ibid, 25, 28, 40-43; Fenn to Colonel Robert Hall, “Report No. 3,” 22 October 1944, Folder 340, Box 423, Entry 140, RG 226, NARA; “Interview with Frank Tan”; “Interview with Lieutenant Charles Fenn”; and Patti, 44. Former OSS agent Archimedes Patti errs when he states that *after* Gordon returned to Asia, “he traveled through Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina, renewing old contacts, regrouping loyal Frenchmen and *Vietnamese*, and purchasing quantities of gasoline and other commodities for the Chinese black market, while at the same time organizing a network of informers in the interests of salvaging company assets.” Gordon did not travel in Indochina after he returned; instead, he used runners. Gordon reveals a few additional specific instances when Chinese runners were used inside Indochina. Tan’s contradiction of this information from Gordon may reflect changes that occurred later in the war. On occasion, Gordon would meet agents on the Guangxi-Tonkin border (see for example, “Gordon’s Diary,” 63, when he mentions meeting Nos. 22 and 42, “my two main agents,” just across the river marking the border), and much later, in 1945, Frank Tan would go into Tonkin on behalf of the O.S.S.

⁸⁶ Cecil B. Currey, *Victory at Any Cost: The Genius of Viet Nam’s General Vo Nguyen Giap* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s Inc., 1997), 84; Arthur J. Dommen, *The Indochinese Experience of the French and the Americans* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001) and Robert Shaplen. *The Lost Revolution: The U.S. in Vietnam, 1946-1966* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1966), 34. Shaplen, for example, states

It is believed that the nationalist movement in Indo-China does not currently represent a very potent political force and that it is not a promising source of cooperation with the Allies. The movement is scattered among a plethora of small and often local parties. A number of these are now joined in a "league", but no effective action has so far been forthcoming. Probably the best organized of these groups is the communists, who are strongest in the south of that country, under the leadership of a European-educated and very capable Anamese [sic]. The Communist Party, like the other sin Indo-Chinese nationalism, has, however, engaged in no real political action.⁸⁷

In a letter to Colonel Robert Hall in October, Gordon introduced the possibility of using "native groups" for the first time, writing "as you know I have been averse to Native Groups in the past on the grounds that they would be ineffectual and dangerous."⁸⁸ In an interview with OSS a week later, Frank Tan is reported to have said that:

Generally the Annamites are not reliable, especially those in the North. On the other hand those in the central part are more reliable. They vary in physique, also, from tribe to tribe. The Chinese aren't liked in Indo-China—they are more industrious and get the business which arouses animosity. The Annamites are lazy.⁸⁹

Again in a report drafted by Gordon dated November 11, 1944, he assessed the reliability of the Vietnamese in aiding downed airmen, by stating that "natives" are untrustworthy in the frontier area of Tonkin, the Red River Delta, Hải Phòng, "doubtful and should be avoided" along the coast of Annam, and only "trustworthy" in safe areas bordering Thailand (i.e., non-Vietnamese territories of Cambodia and Laos). The native groups

that when Hồ Chí Minh was introduced to General Claire Lee Chennault, he "came a representative of the civilian group of former American businessmen in Indochina, who had for some time been co-operating with Ho's men." [no source cited]. Dommen places Gordon somewhere on the Chinese frontier perhaps at Jingxi or Longzhou in November 1941, not Sài Gòn or his home in Long Beach: "an agreement was worked out at a meeting in November 1941 among [Laurence] Gordon, [Austin O.] Glass, Pham Van Dong (personally accredited by Quoc), Vo Nguyen Giap, and the Saigon architect Huynh Tan path, a recent recruit to the ICP." [no source cited] See also Patti, 85, who recounts a conversation with Hồ Chí Minh in 1945 that discredits that portion of Dommen's account placing Glass in this meeting: "Having never met Glass personally, Hồ was recounting what he knew thirdhand."

⁸⁷ Recent Events in French Indochina, 23 September 1944, Folder YH/KM-125, Box 381, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA.

⁸⁸ L.L. Gordon to Colonel Hall, 24 October 1944, Folder 340, Box 423, Entry 140, RG 226, NARA.

⁸⁹ "Interview with Frank Tan."

Gordon was considering using were recommended by French agents in central Annam and were not Vietnamese, but Laotian.⁹⁰

The strength of Gordon's intelligence network lay in several French acquaintances he contacted before leaving Indochina in 1941. His network grew from this base throughout the war. In Tonkin, Gordon's main agent was called 22. Later a group formed around this agent was referred to as Group 22.⁹¹ When Gordon had gone to Sài Gòn to close Caltex's business operations in 1941 and get its money out of the country, he met a group of *colons* there headed by a woman named Vana, from Lorraine. Vana was a successful *colon* who owned a pharmacy and a coffee plantation, rode about on a Norton motorcycle, and held soirees for her intimate friends in her apartment above the pharmacy, where she had a fragment of a Japanese bomb mounted on a pedestal. The Nazis had imprisoned her husband during the fall of France, and Gordon said her friends were of the "same caliber" as one who had "stabbed a German sentry, at the age of fourteen, during the German occupation" of World War I. Gordon referred to this group as Vana and Co. Vana had been supplying some of the 400 prisoners of a nearby POW camp with medicine from her shop and had hidden an escapee, Basil Bancroft. Bancroft, a South African gunner who had been a prisoner since the fall of Singapore, later escaped

⁹⁰ Ibid; and "French Indochina Report on Civilian Resistance and Group 22 by Gordon-Bernard-Tan Group," 11 November 1944, Folder 3429, Box 204, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA.

⁹¹ "Gordon's Diary," 29. Bartholomew-Feis, 47, refers to the *colon*, Andre Lan, as "Gordon's 'number one,' or most important agent," who later received the Medal of Freedom and the Legion of Honor. Though she does not state that 22 and Andre Lan are one in the same, the fact that the GBT group clearly states that Group 22 is the most important group of agents in their network suggests so. Bartholomew-Feis sources for her brief comment are listed as Fenn's unpublished memoirs and Philippe Devillers, *Histoire Du Viêt-Nam de 1940 à 1952* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952). Devillers only uses Lan's surname in connecting him to Gordon's group and states that he directed several French civilians, so Fenn's memoirs must be the principal source of Bartholomew-Feis' comments.

to China with GBT's assistance. Vana was one of GBT's main group leaders in the South.⁹² The locations at which GBT had agents increased over time, and their number came to include 512 French and a company of 100 native troops.⁹³

GBT supplied intelligence to the Americans, British, and Chinese and received resources from all three as well. In the November 11, 1944 report prepared for the Americans, Gordon revealed that his group's headquarters was in radio contact with:

1. Chinese Director for Military Intelligence Chongqing and through him with the American and British Military Attachés.
2. 14th Air Force through Air and Ground Forces Resources and Technical Staff (AGFRTS).
3. Air-Ground Aid Section (AGAS) headquarters in Kunming.
4. OSS headquarters in Kunming.
5. Chinese 4th War Zone headquarters.
6. Chinese Central Government Intelligence Representative in Guangxi Province.
7. Chinese 4th War Zone Frontier Representative at [Dong Xing 东兴].
8. British Army Aid Group (BAAG).⁹⁴

The group's sources of support were as diverse. Gordon and Bernard continued to work as Caltex employees while they ran their intelligence network. Gordon received passes from the British and Chinese. The Chinese provided radio operators. The

⁹² "Gordon's Diary," 5, 44, 53, 57 and 65; and W.A. Pruett to Chief of SI, SM Plans for Indo-China, 29 December 1944, Folder 2687, Box 159, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA. W.A. Pruett spoke of a concentration camp for Allied civilian internees at Mỹ Tho, near Sài Gòn, as well as a Madam Tournier, who may or may not be Vana as she owned a pharmacy in Sài Gòn: "called 'Pharmacie Commerciale' I believe, which is on the Rue d'Espagne just across from the municipal market. I knew Madam Tournier and her husband when they had a Pharmacy in Namdinh, and they were always very friendly disposed towards us and towards other Americans. When the war broke out in Europe, her husband managed to get out of Indo-China, and went to Madagascar, thence to North Africa, and is now fighting with the Free French in Italy or in France. Madame Tournier is still young, about 30 I should say, and is very attractive and intelligent. I believe that she is a capable and a prudent woman, and would doubtless be willing to befriend and help any Americans all that she could. She lives in an apartment right above the Pharmacy."

⁹³ "Gordon and His BGT [sic] Group."

⁹⁴ Ibid. *A Study of British Intelligence Organization in China*, 9 January 1945, Folder 121, Box 8, Entry 148, RG 246, NARA. The OSS reported that BAAG was "the brain-child of Colonel L.T. Ride, an Australian, who was formerly Professor of Physiology in Hong Kong University." Setup in Guilin during the summer of 1942, it was designed as a secret intelligence organization to gain intelligence on the Japanese and condition in Hong Kong and the Guangzhou delta.

Americans provided transport on their planes in China. The British and Americans provided funds, radios, and other equipment (including gasoline provided by the AGAS, which was in charge of rescuing downed pilots, and various small devices provided by the 14th Air Force). Later in the Vichy period, they began receiving money and equipment from the OSS. Most important of all, the French agents working in Indochina worked clandestinely and on a strictly volunteer basis without remuneration.⁹⁵

Gordon may have started out as a free agent only because he was an anomaly, a British subject working for an American firm in a French colony required to operate in the relative safety of Chinese-controlled territory, but he had soon realized the value of his independence. He harshly criticized the agencies for which he worked:

Intelligence services have a tendency to huddle in big centers and rely on travelers and new arrivals for their information. They spend a lot of time stealing it from each other. They have surprisingly little knowledge of what really goes on, as a rule.⁹⁶

The Free French (or Fighting French as opposed to the Vichy French) in China had long been suspicious of Gordon and resented him. "They felt they were the only competent people to handle Indo-China," he would say, "and I soon saw that they had a political axe to grind and were afraid of too close observation of their efforts. It was amusing to sit and listen to them tell me that I was most unpatriotic to work for the Chinese; that I was doomed to failure, etc., etc." The group's relationship with the Chinese was generally

⁹⁵ Ibid; and "Gordon's Diary"; and Fenn, 74-75.

⁹⁶ "Gordon's Diary," 52.

good, but Chinese officials closely monitored people Gordon brought in to the base at Longzhou.⁹⁷

In September 1944, Coughlin was trying to engender interest in Gordon's plan "for contacting and working with the French underground" in Indochina. He told Donovan and Hoffman that while Stillwell (who was fighting for his job) and his deputy, General Daniel Sultan, were not present, CBI headquarters had become too conservative and adopted a "Can't be done attitude." Coughlin understood that Gordon's proposal was initiated by the desire to "receive directives and specialist assistance and to be consulted so that their experience and capabilities may be exploited to the full." This is consistent with Gordon's earlier attempts to help the Allied cause while remaining independent. However, as Coughlin interpreted it, the OSS was not being "invited" to participate in the intelligence section of GBT, "only the resistance (combat and sabotage)." Coughlin recognized that the intelligence component of GBT was the crown jewel, felt that by having an American officer established as a "liaison" with GBT, and in using American equipment and personnel to expand radio communication of the group that "intelligence would be a natural 'By Product.'" Chief of intelligence for AGFRTS, Colonel Robert Hall of the OSS, assigned Lieutenant Charles Fenn to be this "liaison" officer with GBT the same month under the guise of a plan to work with the group on MO and secret operations.⁹⁸ GBT soon collided with de Gaulle's own long-term designs aimed at

⁹⁷ Ibid, 32-33 and 54.

⁹⁸ Colonel John G. Coughlin, "Contacting Civil Resistance Groups in Indo-China," 20 September 1944, Coughlin, "The Gordon Plan," 20 September 1944, and Coughlin to General Donovan, Atten. [sic] Lt. Co. Hoffman, 21 September 1944, M1642, Reel 88; "Interview with Lieutenant Charles Fenn"; Fenn (1973), 75-76; Patti, 45; and "Ilion Report from Indochina," 28 September 1944, Folder 273, Box 35, Entry 140, RG 226, NARA. About this time, an OSS agent code named "Ilion" argued "I have seen Gordon's

reestablishing French colonial control over Indochina, and a Japanese coup a short while later would end both GBT's effectiveness and de Gaulle's hopes for establishing resistance there.

CONCLUSION

Japan's interest in Indochina was military occupation that included economic exploitation as a wartime expedient. In allowing the Vichy-French administration and military to continue in place, the Japanese could not argue their aim in Indochina was to liberate fellow Asians from the western colonial powers as was claimed in propaganda in other parts of Southeast Asia. This decision to permit the French colonial regime to continue to administer the colony defined the nature of secret intelligence and secret operations directed toward the colony from Allied-controlled southern China.

At the core of America's involvement in Vichy Indochina is the story of battles between allies, the Vichy French and the Resistance, the Giraudists and de Gaullists, between agencies within the U.S. government, and between egotistical figures within all these groups. From this story, we learn that wars are not simply cleanly organized

organization and the help he receives. If you could bring yourself to give me ½ as much I could produce twice as much. I have passed caring one way or an other [sic]. I know personalities come into play. They do here too but here they seem to be in my favor! For the present I have been keeping well away from any organization!!!” It is improbable that Gordon, who was constantly on guard, had revealed the extent of his organization to someone from OSS other than Fenn at this time. As for Ilion's capabilities, his own report casts doubt on his effectiveness even to navigate the relative difficulties of the terrain at the frontier. While walking on a trail, which Ilion said “a mountain goat wouldn't give the name of ‘track’ that the Chinese have bestowed on it,” he was limited to a pace of “two and one-half miles per hour” due to darkness, mud and landslides. His horse slipped and fell “in a pool of liquid mud (two and a half feet deep), I underneath. It proceeded then to roll over me in trying to get up! Next the stirrup broke—then the saddle belly band broke.” “Ilion” may have been Lieutenant Robert Larson because he had been interviewing French officials from Indochina around this time.

battlefield adversaries pitted against each other, but they create shifting alliances based on like cultures and personal connections that interfere with the stated goal of overcoming a common enemy. Chennault's AVG-turned-14th Air Force lost its independence when it was incorporated into the American military, but eventually gained resources with this new arrangement. It also created a strategic alliance with the OSS through AGFRTS. The Meynier Mission fell victim to shifting French politics and the unwillingness of the OSS to support it at a crucial time of reorganization in the China Theater. As we shall see in the next chapter, GBT, which relied on its network of French agents in Indochina, also began to face threats to its independence due to de Gaulle's ambitions there, and from the OSS which aimed to establish its operational jurisdiction in Indochina for the first time since the Meynier debacle.

During this part of the Pacific War, the Vichy period of administration in Indochina, American policy towards the colony took a backseat to turf wars. The next chapter examines Anglo-French efforts to establish a de Gaullist presence in Indochina through the British regional command based first in India, then in Ceylon. The Americans clashed with their British allies over the politics of this issue. Meanwhile, Allied success in Europe and the Pacific increasingly threatened the status quo Franco-Japanese agreement on the administration of Indochina.



Charles de Gaulle by Yousuf Karsh, 1944¹

*Je suis la France*²

*France cannot be France without greatness*³

Charles de Gaulle

Chapter 5

The SEAC, British Support of de Gaulle's Free French, and the Japanese Coup

¹ Cybermuse, http://cybermuse.gallery.ca/cybermuse/search/artwork_zoom_e.jsp?mkey=36520 (accessed April 24, 2005).

² Mario Rossi, *Roosevelt and the French* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1993), 111. A remark de Gaulle is purported to have made.

³ Quoted in John E. Dreifort, *Myopic Grandeur: The Ambivalence of French Foreign Policy Toward the Far East, 1919-1945* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1991), 219.

In 1940, Prime Minister Winston Churchill had pledged British support to “complete the restoration of French territory, colonial and metropolitan,” and “to secure the full restoration of independence and greatness of France.” Later, both Churchill and Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden seemed to backtrack by stating they could not guarantee the territorial integrity of the French Empire, but aimed to restore “the independence and greatness of France.” To de Gaulle, these were one and the same, according to John Dreifort, for “the Empire would serve as the basis for the ultimate return of France to the ranks of the great powers of the world.” Great Britain’s own declining power, made powerfully evident as Japan swept through Southeast Asia in late 1941 through mid-1942, and President Roosevelt’s antagonism to colonialism, led the British to reconsider. Permanent Under-Secretary of State Alexander Cadogan lobbied Churchill for the Free French to be admitted to the South East Asia Command (SEAC) saying, “In view of the well-known American attitude towards the restoration of colonies generally, there is much to be said for the colonial powers sticking together in the Far East.”⁴

On September 8, 1944, Secretary of State Cordell Hull sent President Roosevelt two memoranda concerning the SEAC, Indochina, and recent concerns. “All military operations of SEAC are aimed primarily at the resurgence of British political and economic ascendancy in Southeastern Asia and the restoration of British prestige.” To avoid the public backlash over concern that Americans were supporting British imperialism, Hull advised that “no American civil affairs officer is to serve in any area in the SEAC theater unless under independent American command, and no American

⁴ Ibid, 219-20, 226; Woodward, Sir Llewellyn. *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1962), 93.

officer may collaborate in SEAC political warfare.” He also shared a concern that the Japanese might soon disarm the French in Indochina, and perhaps replace French administration with “an independent puppet regime.”⁵ This chapter explores these issues, tracing those origins which have not already been explored through the rapidly unfolding denouement involving de Gaulle’s CFLN, the British in SEAC, GBT, the Americans, and Japanese in Indochina over the following six months.

De Gaulle pursued two approaches to counter the threat that that France could lose Indochina as the result of anti-colonialism and Vichy’s collaboration (Huỳnh Kim Khánh prefers to call it political prostitution”). He confronted anti-colonialism with a propaganda campaign to soften the image of its colonial policies. The first act of this campaign was the CFLN-sponsored French African Conference held in the capital of French Equatorial Africa, Brazzaville (Congo) for just over a week in early 1944. The conference was the Free French attempt to catch up with British and Dutch declarations on colonialism. In his study of the conference, Martin Shipway asserts that the policy which emerged from Brazzaville was aimed at defending “the status quo ante behind a smokescreen of well-meaning rhetorical nonsense.” It became new policy to suppress

⁵ Memorandum for the President, *Indochina and Southeast Asia* and *Southeast Asia: British Attitudes*, 9 September 1944, Folder State—Cordell Hull, Box 166, Map Room, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York. Donovan to FDR, 27 October 1944, MF, Roll 130, United States Office of Strategic Services Microfilm Copy of Files Selected for Filming by General William J. Donovan. OSS Director Donovan went further than Hull in writing to the President in October: “It would appear that the strategy of the British, Dutch and French is to win back and control Southeast Asia, making the fullest use of American resources, but foreclosing the Americans from any voice in policy matters.

terms like “colonial” and “imperial” while colonies were renamed “territories” which were administered at the top by a High Commissioner rather than a Governor General.⁶

De Gaulle hoped to counteract Vichy collaboration with the Japanese in Indochina the same way the Free French had done in the *métropole*, through a resistance movement. In January 1942, he sent former Governor General Georges Catroux to Beirut to talk with a former French colonial officer, Colonel Coudrais, who had been organizing support for de Gaulle’s Fighting French in Cochinchina and Cambodia before he was expelled in September 1940. Coudrais wanted to setup a resistance movement in Indochina and provide the British with intelligence. Eager to gain more intelligence from the area, the British agreed to transport Coudrais and four lieutenants from the U.S. to British India Command Headquarters in Delhi, where they arrived on April 11, 1942. Over the intervening period, however, Singapore had fallen and the British were not able to give Coudrais’ team the support they required, so he moved to Chongqing where a French Military Mission (FMM) had been established in January, and from there to the Chinese frontier at Longzhou.⁷ There is insufficient evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of Coudrais’ efforts.⁸

⁶ Martin Shipway, *The Road to War: France and Vietnam, 1944-1947* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), 11, 28-29, 38, and 50; Thomas, “Free France, the British government and the future of French Indo-China, 1940-45”: 151.

⁷ Martin Thomas, “Free France, the British government and the future of French Indo-China, 1940-45,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 28,1 (March, 1997): 144-45; Jacques Dalloz, *The War in Indo-China 1945-1954*, translated by Josephine Bacon (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan Ltd., 1990), 38.

⁸ What is Fighting France?, “Airbel” 20 October 1942, Additional Directives to Follow Instructions of October 8, 1942..., “Airbell,” 10 January 1943, and Instructions for the Representatives of Fighting France in Indo-China Handed to the Civil Organization of Indochina in November, 1943, [unsigned], Folder 3939, Box 768, Entry 139; and [from Cayuga], Colonel Emblanc, 29 August 1944, Folder 273, Box 35, Entry 140, RG 226, NARA. Three documents, two of which were signed by Coudrais under his alias “Airbell,” authored between October 1942 to November 1943 explain de Gaulle’s Fighting French and his organizing committee, offer vague instructions for a resistance organization to be setup in Hà Nội, Huế, and Sài Gòn,

In November 1943, after pushing Giraud aside to become firmly in charge of CFLN, de Gaulle reinitiated efforts to build a resistance organization directed at Indochina, which later came to be called the Section de Liaison Française en Extrême Orient (SLFEO or French Far Eastern Liaison Section). CFLN appointed Pechkoff the nominal organizer of French internal resistance in Indo-China, and Coudrais was replaced at Longzhou by Captain Jacques de Laborde de Montpezat on August 25, 1944.⁹ French Major Jean Boucher de Crèvecoeur arrived at Meerut, northeast of Delhi, in November 1943 with five officers to establish a Free French mission within SEAC, which was to include two branches, the Service de Renseignement (SR, or Intelligence Service) and Service the d'Action (SA, or Action Section of the SR). He was head of de Gaulle's Service d'Action and represented the beginnings of permanent Free French operations within SEAC, acting nominally under the British intelligence organization, The SOE's Force 136, aimed at Indochina.¹⁰ The CFLN also announced the formation of the Corps Léger d'Intervention (Light Intervention Corps) in Algiers to serve under a former two-year Chief of Staff in the French Indochina Army, Lieutenant General Roger Blaizot, in operations in Indochina. Another officer of the French colonial Army, Lieutenant Paul Huard began training the Corps in December. General Zinovi Pechkoff at Chongqing

and establish targets for assassinations (the Japanese) and neutralization, or imprisonment (French officials and military collaborating with the Japanese and opposed to the Allies). Another OSS document suggests that his direct contacts were limited to Cao Bằng. A note on a November 1943 "directive" states: "A similar instruction was given in March, 1943, by Lieut. Colonel Coudrais (Alias "Airbell") to a French Officer in Indo-China.

⁹ Martin Thomas, "Free France, the British Government and the Future of French Indochina, 1940-45": 150.

¹⁰ Richard J. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan: Britain, America and the Politics of Secret Service* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 206; Stein Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945: Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh, and De Gaulle in a world at war* (London: Sage Publications, 1991), 49, 158; and Martin Thomas, "Silent Partners: SOE's French Indo-China Section 1943-1945," *Modern Asian Studies* 34, 4 (2000): 947-48.

had been named to organize the French resistance in Indochina, but by 1944 Chinese resistance to his mission and promising British support of the unofficial Free French mission in SEAC led to a change in tactics.¹¹

Marcel Levain, a subordinate of General Eugène Mordant, the commander of French Indochina Army, set up a clandestine organization and sent a courier to inform de Gaulle's committee in the fall of 1943. In February 1944, de Gaulle chose Mordant to lead the resistance, but delivery of his formal letter to Indochina was delayed for five months for logistical and political reasons. On February 21, Force 136, the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) unit submitted a proposal for dropping de Gaulle's representative(s) into Indochina to a joint Anglo-American staff meeting of SEAC. The proposal was modified at a meeting headed by Mountbatten replacing references to Free French mission with "the dropping of agents and supplies in North Tonkin for the development of an operation of the British Clandestine Services." The American officer responsible for coordination of SOE and OSS activities was not present after being told the meeting was cancelled. The subterfuge surrounding what was known as Operation *Belief* was necessary because the Free French operation was to involve transport of agent(s) to Indochina from China without the knowledge of American General Chennault.¹²

¹¹ Martin Thomas, "Free France, the British Government and the Future of French Indochina, 1940-45": 146, 149-50; "Silent Partners: SOE's French Indo-China Section 1943-1945": 949; Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945*, 49; and Office of the Chief, OSS SEAC, to OSS Director, 26 October 1944, Folder 2, Box 228, Entry 210, RG 226, NARA.

¹² Patti, 30-31, 37; Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs Joseph C. Grew to Cordell Hull, 28 August 1944, *FRUS, Quebec*, 250-51. De Gaulle appears to have written the letter to Mordant a little over a week after the SOE proposal was submitted, so it was probably not made with the intent purpose of flying de Langlade into Indochina, but this step was necessary before his trip could later be approved. David

After an abortive attempt in May 1944, Major Baron François de Langlade was parachuted into Tonkin on the night of July 4-5 carrying de Gaulle's handwritten letter to Mordant formalizing radio messages sent to the French Indochina Army Commander in April. De Gaulle had instructed de Langlade to meet with Decoux as well, but Mordant appears to have put up a pretense so that this meeting with his enemy would not take place. After meeting with Mordant at Hà Nội and Colonel Robert at Lạng Sơn, according to one report, de Langlade spent over a month walking out of Indochina to Kunming. Mordant reached the age mandating his retirement on the 23rd so General Georges Aymé succeeded him, thus providing a convenient cover for his proposed resistance activities. In August, the Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Française (GPRF or Provisional Government of the Republic of France) as the CFLN had become known in June, appointed Mordant Délégué Général de la Résistance (General Delegate of the Resistance), Blaizot Délégué Militaire de la Résistance (Military Delegate of the Resistance) and de Langlade Délégué Politique de la Résistance (Political Delegate of the Resistance) and subsequently informed Mordant by radio on September 7.¹³

Stafford, *Roosevelt and Churchill: Men of Secrets* (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 2000), 288; Richard J. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan: Britain, America and the politics of secret service* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 210. Although American facilities in Kunming were used for Operation *Belief*, the danger of failure to properly coordinate air operations in the China Theater with Chennault was realized in January 1945. The Royal Air Force liaison officer attached to Chennault's 14th Air Force was either not told or deliberately remained silent about Operation *Bazaar*. On the night of January 22-23, two of three of a squadron of British Liberator planes lost while flying supplies to the French in Tonkin were believed to have been shot down by Chennault's P-61 Black Widow fighters of the 14th Air Force. Air British Vice-Marshal Harcourt Smith decided "that it will be in the best interests of all concerned if we adopt sealed lips on these incidents and drop all ideas of any investigation."

¹³ Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945*, 49-51, 70; Marr, *Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 313-14; and Solon, for the Chief, 26 October 1944, Folder 2, Box 228, Entry 210, RG 226, NARA. Tønnesson states that de Langlade stayed in Tonkin for three weeks. A British officer attached to SEAC told the OSS that he had only 24 hours to meet his contacts in Tonkin before walking out to Kunming. De Langlade's mission appears to have taken over a month to complete and it is reasonable to expect that it would have taken him much of this time to walk to the

Decoux did not learn about de Gaulle's letter or the GPRF's appointment of Mordant as Délégué Général until October 28 when Aymé explained the events that made the retired General his chief. When Decoux asked Aymé if he still considered him the supreme commander, "General Aymé appeared to me a little disturbed by the indiscreet question I asked him. He ended by declaring to me if he continued to accept my superior authority it could be only so far as I would not give orders contrary to those given me directly by the provisional government."¹⁴ Decoux threatened to resign, but de Langlede parachuted into Indochina a second time and told him to stay in his position as a figurehead.¹⁵ By this time, Paris had been liberated and de Gaulle's committee was firmly ensconced as the provisional government, so Decoux had little choice but to obey his orders or suffer more severe repercussion for his collaboration. The French administration shifted from Decoux to the French Indochina Council, formed from the revamped and formerly superfluous body, the Consultative High Council, where the retired General Mordant held an official position as Vice President.

As will be seen in the next chapter, Churchill led British imperialists in protecting the British Empire from American pressures to decolonize. Churchill seldom openly

Indochina-China border if not all the way to Kunming. Patti, 30-31, 37, and 541. Archimedes Patti has argued that Mordant sent a letter through an M. François to Giraud in 1943 conveying his interest in resisting the Japanese. This letter, according to Patti, was inaccurately reported by Ambassador Gauss to be connected to "a mission by Admiral Decoux," then made it to de Gaulle. He then relies on de Gaulle's comment in his memoirs that "I wrote General Mordant to confirm him in the good intentions I knew were his and to stipulate what the government expected of him." Richard Aldrich, 207. Relying on British sources, and accounts by Decoux and Sainteny, Richard Aldrich states that the second *Belief* mission was on July 13, but Patti and Tønnesson are in agreement, and the latter relies on de Langlede's contemporary report of his activities. Martin Thomas, "Silent Partners: SOE's French Indo-China Section 1943-1945," *Modern Asian Studies* 34, 4 (2000): 948. De Langlede had spent 20 years in Malaya as a rubber planter.

¹⁴ Quoted in Murakami 477-78. In his conversation with Decoux, Aymé explained that they had established clandestine radio communications with the Algiers utilizing "American-made" radio posts, suggesting they were using British-supplied Lend-Lease equipment.

¹⁵ Dalloz, 40.

recognized that Great Britain was the weaker half of the alliance with the U.S., but his uncharacteristic reluctance to support the French Empire in Indochina through much of 1944 reflected his understanding that he needed to pick his diplomatic battles with President Roosevelt carefully. Ardent supporters of British imperialism within his government were confused at this reluctance to support the French Empire through official recognition of a Free French mission in SEAC, in spite of Roosevelt's resistance on the issue. The Far Eastern Department of the Foreign Office drafted a memorandum in July 1943, which they presented to the War Cabinet the following February, arguing that the British approach to Indochina should be incorporated with Dominion policy, emphasizing Anglo-French unity to offset superior American military power.¹⁶ Churchill refused the suggestion of the minister responsible for the SOE, Lord Selborne, that he permit the Free French mission to proceed to SEAC without informing the U.S.. Churchill resisted similar pressure from the British chiefs of staff.¹⁷

Christopher Thorne shows, however, that British support for French colonialism was not always aimed at protecting Britain's own empire. British policy guidelines adopted by the Cabinet February 24, 1944 were based on a report drafted by the Foreign Office and Post Hostilities Planning Committee, which read in part:

To deprive France of her economic stake in Indochina would weaken her severely. Any such deprivation would be passionately resented, with the result that the possibilities of friendly collaboration with France in post-war Europe would be jeopardised, and France would be encouraged to for a *bloc*, possibly with the Russians, opposed to an Anglo-American *bloc*.¹⁸

¹⁶ Thomas, "Free France, the British government and the future of French Indo-China, 1940-45": 148-49.

¹⁷ Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 623.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 465-66.

It was the Supreme Allied Commander of SEAC (SACSEA), Mountbatten, who above all, led British support for French colonial rule in Indochina from this point through the end of 1945. His first act of many was to instruct SOE's Force 136 to bring Free French personnel from Europe "with minimum fuss" hoping to present the Americans with a *fait accompli*. He also expressed an urgency when talking to Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, to combat American aims in Indochina.¹⁹ In March 1944 Eden tried to convince Churchill to support the Free French mission to SEAC, but was told: "Do not raise this before the presidential election, the war will go on a long time."²⁰ Eden made another attempt to change the Prime Minister's mind two months later, but Churchill told him that President Roosevelt "has been more outspoken to me on that subject than on any other colonial matter, and I imagine it is one of his principal war aims to liberate Indochina from France."²¹

Frustrated over lack of formal British acceptance of Corps Léger d'Intervention's attachment to SEAC, the Free French "assiduously sought to exploit British fears" to obtain this goal, argues John Dreifort. In the spring of 1944, for example, they threatened the alternative would be to transfer their activities to China. This is not likely to have influenced the British much, because the British long knew of Chinese resistance to aid the French.²² In July, chief of the French Military Mission in Washington, D.C., General Marie Émile Béthouart, approached OSS Director Donovan on behalf of de Gaulle to ask the U.S. to intervene to permit the Corps Léger d'Intervention move from Algiers to

¹⁹ Ibid, 623.

²⁰ David Stafford, *Roosevelt and Churchill: Men of Secrets* (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 2000), 256.

²¹ Thorne, 468.

²² Dreifort, 227-29.

India.²³ Secretary of State Cordell Hull sent the President a memorandum on July 7 advising him of the Free French desire to attach the light intervention force to SEAC.²⁴

In August, the British Chiefs of Staff asked the American Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) to authorize the Free French mission be attached to SEAC, and British Ambassador to Washington, D.C. Lord Halifax left an *aide mémoire* with the State Department bearing the same request. Hull sent a memorandum to the President expressing the urgency of Halifax's query. The JCS granted their approval with a reminder that Indochina was in China-India-Burma Theater (CBI), not SEAC, but Roosevelt said the matter should wait until he could discuss it with Churchill at the forthcoming Quebec Conference, and gave Secretary Hull a similar message.²⁵ Indochina was discussed at the conference in September, but only informally and no record exists. Roosevelt had, however, stated the time for action in Indochina was premature.²⁶ Impatient that the Americans had yet to authorize the Blaizot mission and the Corps Léger d'Intervention were languishing in Algiers, Anthony Eden authorized Blaizot to proceed to Kandy for

²³ Memorandum for the Joint U.S. Chiefs of Staff from William J. Donovan, Director, 18 July 1944, Reel 18, M1642, NARA.

²⁴ Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs Joseph C. Grew to Cordell Hull, 28 August 1944, *FRUS, Quebec*, 249, 247-51; J.C.S. 1200, 16 December 44, Policy With Regard to French Indo-China, Reel 90, M1642, NARA.

²⁵ Thorne, 468; Henry L. Stimson to President, [undated but attached to the President's memorandum to Admiral Leahy, 27 November 1944], Folder DC Indochina, Box 39, FDRL. In his summary of events leading up to the JCS approval of the French Military Mission being attached to SEAC, Secretary of War Stimson criticized the JCS, stating: "As you will see, this matter was never before the War Department as such for approval. It was for the purpose of avoiding such results, as shown above, that I have always insisted that communications to the Joint Chiefs of Staff—other than those from the President himself on military matters, but including all those from other departments and agencies of government—should go through the Secretaries of War and Navy."

²⁶ President Roosevelt to Secretary of State, 1 January 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, volume VI (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 293.

“informal discussions” over future activities of the French mission. Blaizot and some staff left Algiers for Kandy on October 5 and were expected to arrive by the 27th.²⁷

The State Department’s political adviser to the commander of CBI, Max Bishop, recognized British movement on the issue as an attempt “to force a *fait accompli* for the Combined Chiefs of Staff.”²⁸ Colonel Richard Heppner, then chief of OSS Detachment 404 at Kandy, agreed, informing Donovan:

Recently, it became known that a French Military Mission will arrive at SEAC shortly. At first, they are to have a strictly unofficial status and will be quartered at hotels. Gradually their mission will be transformed into an official one, and suitable headquarters and living quarters will be found for them. Meanwhile, this mission will participate in secret discussions and will have made available to them all of the data on hand.²⁹

The State Department official at Colombo, Ceylon reported that Mountbatten made a statement to his staff in early October that the U.S. had decided to recognize the de Gaulle Government, and, therefore, “on the basis of an oral agreement between Prime Minister Churchill and Roosevelt, the Blaizot Mission had been recognized officially and had the same status as the Dutch and Chinese missions at the Southeast Asia Command, in spite of the fact that the U.S. JCS [Join Chiefs of Staff] had not directly approved this arrangement.”³⁰ This was a blatant lie. In fact, Roosevelt, in a memo to Under Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius, Jr. on November 24 after hearing about Mountbatten’s statement, declared: “It should be called to the attention of our British friends that Mr.

²⁷ Thomas, “Free France, the British government and the future of French Indo-China, 1940-45”: 152; Thorne, 624; “The Blaizot Mission,” from Solon, 26 Oct. 1944, Folder 2, Box 228, Entry 210, RG 226, NARA.

²⁸ Buell to Secretary of State, 28 October 1944, Reel 90, M1642, NARA.

²⁹ Heppner to General W.J. Donovan, 4 October 1944, Reel 89, M1642, NARA.

³⁰ OSS #43045 from Buell, 18 November 1944, Reel 90, M1642, NARA.

Churchill and I did not officially recognize the French Military Mission at SEAC and furthermore, I have made no agreement, definite or otherwise, with the British, French or Dutch to retain their Far Eastern Colonial possessions.”³¹

General Wedemeyer, who was in Kandy at the time, offered a similar version to General George Marshall of JCS of the accounts given by Bishop and Heppner. After the President recognized the de Gaulle Government, Mountbatten contacted Churchill who told him he could interpret Roosevelt’s action as “tacit acceptance.” Wedemeyer, who would emerge as Mountbatten’s archenemy over Indochina, was livid, stating:

It is important that you know the above, for the British action fits into a pattern which is being followed in this part of the world. A close and coordinated relationship between British, French and Dutch exists with the primary purpose of retrieving prewar favored position in this area for these three countries, with the British in the dominant role. I have tangible evidence of this, General, as the result of many off-the-record discussions with Admiral Mountbatten and occasional remarks or papers which I inadvertently heard and read.³²

British subterfuge persisted. In December, the American Embassy in Paris notified the State Department that the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) “had no objections to the formation” of the French corps for Far Eastern service provided it did not interfere with Allied operations and the French provided their own equipment.” Stettinius implicitly reprimanded Donovan in a letter by pointing out that the Intelligence Section of the OSS was represented on SHAEF, before reminding

³¹ E.R. Stettinius, Jr., Memorandum for the President, 20 November 1944, Halifax to Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., 23 November 1944, and F.D.R., Memorandum for Hon. E.R. Stettinius, Jr., 24 November 1944, Folder DC Indochina, Box 39, PSF, FDRL. Ironically, Halifax had sent an *aide-mémoire* to Stettinius on the day before Roosevelt sent this memorandum to him, requesting U.S. “concurrence” on the establishment of a French military mission with SEAC, of the Corps Léger d’Intervention in India, and “French participation in the planning of political warfare in the Far East.”

³² Major General A.C. Wedemeyer to General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, War Department, 10 December 1944, Folder 23, Box 82 (George C. Marshall), Wedemeyer Papers, Hoover Institution.

him of the President's prohibitions against French resistance groups being deployed in Indochina. However, on November 22, Colonel Coughlin had informed Heppner, who was in Washington, D.C. at the time, and Donovan that he had clarified to Harry Berno, acting OSS chief in SEAC, S. Dillon Ripley, chief of the Secret Intelligence Branch for OSS at SEAC, and Lieutenant Commander Edmund L. Taylor, chief American representative in the British P-Division, that they were not to engage or maintain relations "with the French military mission to the Southeast Asia Command." They, in turn, had responded to his message within two days: "No one in this unit has discussed or proposes to discuss official or political matters with the French Mission here." As a result, Heppner prepared a reply to Stettinius for Donovan which stated: "OSS has never recognized the French Military Mission to South East Asia either officially or unofficially, and there have been no discussions of any nature involving French-Indo-China or any other area with them." In all likelihood, the British had simply sought approval for the French corps without consulting the Americans, as previously done in February.³³ In a joint British-American intelligence service meeting at SEAC headquarters in Kandy on January 29, 1945, the British admitted to Donovan, that in regard to Indochina, Force 136

³³ Heppner and 109 to Berno for Ripley and Taylor, 22 November 1944, To 109, Heppner from Berno, Ripley, and Taylor, 24 November 1944, William J. Donovan to Edward R. Stettinius, 26 December 1944, E.R. Stettinius, Jr., to Brigadier General William J. Donovan, 22 December 1944, C.A. Bane to Secretariat, 2 January 1945, and G. Edward Buxton, Acting OSS Director to Secretary of State Stettinius, 5 January 1945, Reel 90, M1642, NARA. Ripley to Heppner, 21 July 1944, Folder 2, Box 228, Entry 210, RG 226, NARA. C.A. Bane to Colonel Buxton, 2 January 1945, Reel 90, M1642, NARA; Archimedes Patti, *Why Viet Nam? Prelude to America's Albatross* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 20. Archimedes Patti claims "The Secretary's" December 22 "letter was referred to me for comment on which to base a reply." However, C.A. Bane notified Colonel Buxton, Acting Director of OSS on January 2, 1945 that "Mr. Stettinius' letter of 22 December had been referred by General Donovan to Colonel Heppner, who prepared the reply which General Donovan made on 26 December."

(the SOE unit at Kandy) was “working entirely through the French Services” (SLFEO), which was “under the direction of General Blaizot.”³⁴

In early March 1945, an exchange of letters took place between the highly effective warrior, the independent-minded Chennault, who had little patience for military politics and bureaucracy, and the Acting Commander of China Theater General Mervin Gross, who was temporarily filling in while General Wedemeyer was on a trip to Washington, D.C. It is a rare record of American military division over the issue of de Gaullist French involvement in Indochina, and reflects the validity of opposing viewpoints. Chennault chastised his commanding officer on March 5:

From the purely military standpoint, it is obviously desirable to do everything in our power to encourage the French in Indo-China to resist and sabotage the Japanese.... Formerly, the Fourteenth Air Force had good sources of Indo-Chinese intelligence. These were mainly British and Annamite, and are no longer so productive....

To achieve both objects, of encouraging the French generally and of improving the flow of information from Indo-China, it seems to me there is but one method we here in China, can adopt—that is, assisting the French Military Mission up to limit of the means at our disposal....

*Our military interests in this matter appear to me to be so clear and well-defined that I assume the policy laid down in your wire, CFB 33574 to me, “to generally discourage” the French, must be primarily political in its motivation.*³⁵

³⁴ Minutes of meeting between OSS and British clandestine services of SEAC, 29 January 1945, Folder 4, Box 229, Entry 210, RG 226, NARA. The meeting was held at P-Division Conference Room, Hut No. 10 in Kandy, Ceylon between: Major General William Donovan, Colonel John Coughlin, and Lieutenant Colonels Harry Berno and Peers of the OSS; Brigadier George Taylor and Colin Mackenzie of Force 136; Commander J.P. Gibbs and Wing Commander Hart of ISLD (SIS/M16 in the Middle East and Far East); with Captain G.A. Garnons-Williams, Captain J. Berry of P-Division and Captain J. Berry, Lieutenant B. Keeley and Ensign Jukes of FANY “in attendance” of P-Division.

³⁵ Major General C.L. Chennault to Brigadier General Mervin Gross, Acting Chief of Staff, China Theater, 5 March 1945, Folder 1 (Claire Lee Chennault), Box 81, Wedemeyer Papers, Hoover Institution. (italics added)

Gross responded two days later:

My CFB 33574 which concerns specifically with the “foot in the door” method of establishing some operation or agency, applied to any national or activity just as much as it applied to the French.... The French have asked you for transportation of their various agents, and now asking for the establishment of courier air service using courier type airplanes. Next step might well be a request for larger aircraft, request for additional aircraft, request for terminal facilities in the Kunming area, with attendant additional requests for hump tonnage. The Navy Group, China constitutes another example, whose last request for hump tonnage allocation was nearly twice their present allocation. It is this type of “foot in the door” tactics that General Wedemeyer wishes to stop at its very beginning.

Objective of the French Military Mission and other French activities is of course the liberation of FIC from the Japanese. *It is far more political in fact than military.* Our objective of course is on the other hand wholly military. It is particularly essential that any help or aid given to the French by us shall be in such a way that it can not possibly be construed as furthering the political aims of the French in the liberation of FIC.

*The governing factor is that action be in furtherance of our military objective and not a matter of convenience to the French or any other national.*³⁶

The repercussion of all this maneuvering by de Gaulle, Mountbatten, and others to build a French resistance movement in Indochina directed from SEAC had the most immediate impact on GBT. In a lengthy document entitled “French Indochina Report on Civilian Resistance and Group 22 by Gordon-Bernard-Tan Group,” certainly written for the OSS’s consumption and dated November 11, two pages are dedicated to criticizing General Mordant’s “campaign” to form his own civilian resistance group which would incorporate some of Gordon’s best agents in Indochina. This section of the document makes clear the urgency of his mission to gain OSS support. Gordon distanced his group within Indochina from the military there. He no longer mentioned Vana and Co.—perhaps in a belated move to protect their identity—stating “that in the South very little coordination has been possible and there is at present considerable confusion.” He uses

³⁶ General Mervin Gross, Acting Chief of Staff to Major General Claire L. Chennault to Brigadier, 7 March 1945, Folder 1 (Claire Lee Chennault), Box 81, Wedemeyer Papers, Hoover Institution. (italics added)

the name Group 22 to refer to the “Civilian Resistance Groups” GBT had sponsored in the northern and central Indochina.³⁷

His attack on the French Army in defense of his own group begins:

Up to September 1st 1944 the Army had not even taken any active interest in Civilian Resistance in Tonkin. They were cognizant of Group 22 whom they encouraged weakly while deploring their relations with me, which attitude they defended by the arguments that I am a civilian and that I had no official liason [sic] with the French Military Mission in China.”³⁸

The Tonkin Division Commander, General Gabriel Sabattier, sent messages to Gordon’s group requesting that he end his previous refusal to establish relations with the MMF in China and begin to co-operate closely with the Army. Gordon said that he agreed, but only because Colonel Emblanc had by then been replaced in Chongqing by Major Garnier who “agreed to cooperate.”³⁹ Having established that he was flexible in dealing with the French, Gordon took the offensive:

The French Army decided that they must effectively control all Civil Resistance Groups and the matter was taken out of General Sabattier’s hands. General Ayme, O.C. all troops, (Petains [sic] ex-emissary to French Somaliland to encourage anti-Allied and anti-Free French resistance) appointed General Mordant, recently retired O.C. troops, to the post of Chef de la Resistance).

General Mordant commander of Vichy French forces in Indochina] has advised Group 22 that they will be offered the choice of certain duties as outlets for their activities. The duties are not yet known.

Group 22, and in this they voice a majority of Indochina opinion, ask nothing better than the appointment of a Leader with a clear cut plan and Allied support. They object to Mordant and the present Army clique however for the following reasons: —

³⁷ “French Indochina Report on Civilian Resistance and Group 22 by Gordon-Bernard-Tan Group.” In a section headed “Prisoners of War,” he writes that “the only prisoner to break camp and be brought out of Indochina was handled by Group 22,” which we know was actually accomplished by Vana and Co. according to his “diary” written no earlier than two months before. Although OSS was furnished with both documents, Gordon must have had some belief in the effects of his deception.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

- 1) They represent past failures in ability.
- 2) They are not only turncoats seeking their own safety but they brand Group 22 as anti-French because of their insistence on Allied directives and cooperation.
- 3) Two immediate examples of Mordant's command reported by a good source, speak for themselves: —
 - a) In a leaflet prepared in October 1944 as a recruiting device the need is stressed for Civil Resistance as a weapon against "American Imperialism". This is so disgusting as to [sic] be almost comical but it fully illustrates the wavering policy of this clique. Their watchwords have been in order of occurrence: —
 1. "Perfidious Albion"
 2. America will neutralize British machinations.
 3. Britain will offset American Imperialism.

Group 22 earnestly hope that Allied policy will find an authoritative voice which will direct not only their actions but those of the French Army.⁴⁰

The OSS knew that Mordant had been "limitedly cooperating with the Allies" no later than August 1, 1944 but they were not aware that his "campaign" to build a resistance movement in Indochina was a reluctant one foisted on him by the CFLN/GPRF or of his connection to de Gaulle through Operation *Belief*. Gordon was almost certainly less informed than the Americans and had no idea of the political battles being waged between the Americans and British over the Blaizot mission's attachment to SEAC. Had he known more, his tactic would probably have been different, and he would have distanced himself politically from the British and French.⁴¹

In the memoir portion of his biography, *Ho Chi Minh*, Fenn states that Gordon went to the U.S. in February 1945 "in hopes of preserving the independence of his group."⁴² In an OSS interview dated November 17, 1944, Fenn had said that "the Civilian Resistance Group" is something Gordon wants to hand over to us or to someone

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ "French Indo-China: Do's and Don'ts for Agents," [unsigned and undated, but another document dated 1 August 1944 refers to it], Folder 68, Box 24, Entry 110, RG 226, NARA.

⁴² Fenn, 76.

else.”⁴³ In this contemporary interview, Fenn says nothing about the reason for Gordon’s trip though he implies it was for a well-deserved rest: “Gordon expects to stay in the US about 6 weeks. He has been out here [apart from his wife and children] for 31 months.” It is possible that the later version is due to memory lapse over the intervening period or, conversely, a better informed or more honest account than he was willing to provide in the interview. Nothing has been found in the record yet to suggest that Gordon had any reason to suspect that he could lobby for the independence of his group more effectively in the U.S., nor that he conducted such a lobbying effort. In fact, there is no account of his activity during this period. He may have been exhausted by his work with GBT and ready to hand over his organization to the most capable party. That he believed he could separate the intelligence network from a “civil resistance” group is improbable; most likely it was just a ploy to gain support from the threat posed by the de Gaullists.

While not taking on the GBT’s proposal for a joint effort in aiding the French civilian resistance in Indochina, Lieutenant Colonel C.M. Davis, on behalf of the Commanding Officer in the China Theater, Major General Wedemeyer, made the following decision in regards to GBT on December 6, 1944:

1. Mr. L.L. Gordon will continue his full operations as a separate agency, as at present, in French Indo-China under the direction of Office of Strategic Services, China Theater. These operations will cover all phases of sabotage, evasion, espionage, and related subjects contained within the directive of Office of Strategic Services, China Theater.
2. The Commanding Officer, Office of Strategic Services, China Theater will be full responsible for the directives issued to Mr. L.L. Gordon, and will assume complete responsibility for any financial and material support rendered to Mr. Gordon.

⁴³ “Interview with Lt. Charles Fenn.”

3. Mr. L.L. Gordon will cooperate with the Commanding Officer, AGAS-China,...., in all matters related to prisoners of war and evasion work and will in such specific matters accept the guidance of the Commanding Officer, AGAS-China,...., directed through the Commanding Officer, Office of Strategic Services, China Theater.⁴⁴

Wedemeyer's support of GBT's activities was iterated in a memo from the head of OSS Secret Intelligence Far East Turner McBaine to the OSS Chief of Secret Intelligence in the China Theater Lieutenant Colonel Paul Helliwell on March 5, 1945. McBaine said that he had received Colonel Jacques de Sibour's December 1944 report from OSS Kunming stating that Wedemeyer considered GBT "untrustworthy and definitely furthering British aims in Indo-China, and that was accordingly OSS was beginning to hold back somewhat on GBT and thinking rather in terms of our own outfit for FIC." McBaine went on to say that he checked with Donovan who said the statement was incorrect and that Wedemeyer approved of using GBT.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Lieutenant Colonel C.M. Davis to Commanding Officer, Office of Strategic Services, 6 December 1944, Folder, 3425, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA. Richard Aldrich, 292-93. Richard Aldrich makes the erroneous statement: "During 1944 the GBT group was willingly transferred by SIS [British Secret Intelligence Service] to OSS, whereupon it was run by a British-born OSS officer, Charles Fenn." Quoting an OSS memorandum, Aldrich also states that "repeatedly forbidden to work with the French by Roosevelt during 1944 and now urged not to work with the GBT Group by Wedemeyer, OSS were propelled towards the Viet Minh as one of the few remaining options for intelligence in Indochina." Maochun Yu, *OSS in China: Prelude to Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 203-05, Maochun Yu offers an even more perplexing story that "the GBT group soon acquired the secret backing of the British SOE's Force 136." He then goes on to explain that on November 4, 1944, Stilwell's designated chief of staff, General Hearn decided "That AGAS and OSS be instructed to make such purely practical arrangements with Gordon as may suit their operating needs," but "be confined to the grant of specialized equipment, weapons, or money, and the coordinated but independent action of AGAS and OSS agents operating, if these agencies choose, in the same areas as Gordon." As has already been stated GBT received various resources from all the allies and as a result felt beholden to none. This changed over time due to politics and a closer working relationship with the Americans, not the British. It is also important to note that AGAS was similar to AGFRTS in that OSS used both groups to extend its work, they were not as such in direct competition with each other. Charles Fenn, *Ho Chi Minh* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 76. Charles Fenn states that he and GBT were later transferred to AGAS (not a British outfit).

⁴⁵ Lieutenant Commander Turner McBaine To Lieutenant Colonel Paul E. Helliwell, 5 March 1945, Folder 4, Box 228, Entry 210, RG 226, NARA.

On March 9, 1945, Helliwell made clear the political tensions that had long since been threatening the independence of Gordon's group had not abated when he told his bosses in Washington, D.C. that the group should either be incorporated into OSS or "we shall wash our hands of them entirely." He added:

Obviously the G.B.T. net is valuable and is capable of producing excellent intelligence, particularly if it is put under our control and we can infiltrate trained American officers into FIC [French Indochina] to more or less supervise the operation of the show. However, I feel that full control of their activities is imperative, and I would rather disassociate ourselves from them than continue in the present ricky [sic] relationship where we may get all of the blame and none of the credit.⁴⁶

Nothing in the record suggests GBT was generating anything that could cause "blame," but what was at stake was the "credit."⁴⁷

De Gaullist and British efforts to build a French resistance in Indochina through SEAC were destructively ineffectual. It was not until December 1944 that Mordant began to establish an intelligence network, a local Service de Renseignement, and it was

⁴⁶ Paul L.E. Helliwell to Chief, Japan-China Section, FESI, Washington, D.C., 9 March 1945, Folder 4, Box 228, Entry 210, RG 226, NARA.

⁴⁷ This antagonism towards GBT from some on the American side seems to have at least partially resulted from tensions between rival oil men. Before the War, Gordon was an oil man, the chief of intelligence for the 14th Air Force, "Colonel Williams was an oil man, as was our C.O.," according to the summary of an OSS interview with Lieutenant Fenn in 1944, "and they were jealous of each other and as a result the 14th AF is prejudiced against OSS and, indirectly against our C.O. and Gordon may have been infected with this prejudice." It's unclear who the author of the document containing this comment is referring to as "our C.O." It may possibly be Lieutenant Colonel Paul Helliwell or Colonel John Whitaker since they headed Secret Intelligence, or Colonel Robert Hall since he was one-time chief of intelligence at AGFRTS, but it could not be Colonel Coughlin who was a career soldier, or Colonel Heppner, who was a lawyer before the war. (See: "Interview with Lieutenant Charles Fenn"). However, it appears most likely that the reference was to Major Austin O. Glass, whose referred to himself in "A Report of the Situation in the Field," (7 February 1945, Folder 391, Box 26, Entry 92A, RG 226) as "head of SI for French Indochina (FIC)." This is confusing though because Glass' respect for Gordon's groups is made clear in this same document where he states "these people are the best equipped both in and outside of FIC to obtain information from that important area. All members of the group are 'live wires,' hard workers and capable." He added, "It is surprising that in both volume and value the information received from this group exceeds that obtained from the French Military Mission." Clearly Glass was not the source of tension within OSS towards Gordon's group.

to be done solely through the existing military structure.⁴⁸ David Marr states only a “few British and American radios” were parachuted into Indochina during 1944, and “the army had to depend on prewar transmitters and receivers, whose replacement parts were all made locally.”⁴⁹ So despite the resources the French had hoped to gain through the SEAC, and the military personnel the British in SEAC had envisaged gaining through their colonial partners in Indochina, the net result of their efforts was to weaken the existing intelligence network established by GBT rather than the emergence of an effective de Gaullist resistance movement. In any event, GBT and French Indochina Army intelligence networks were knocked out in early March 1945 when the Japanese forcibly assumed complete control of Indochina from the French. By then SEAC had become known by some Americans to stand for “Save England’s Asiatic Colonies,” and songs were improvised similar to: “The Limeys make policy, Yanks fight the Jap, And one gets its Empire and one takes the rap.”⁵⁰ By mid-year, Mountbatten took note of reactions to his efforts, lamenting that the “American and Indian press evidently still regard us as merely Imperial monsters, little better than the Fascists or Nazis.”⁵¹

MEIGŌ SAKUSEN 明号作戦, THE JAPANESE COUP D’ÉTAT

In January 1944, Indoshina Chūtongun インドシナ駐屯軍 (Army Stationed in Indochina, i.e., the Japanese Indochina Army) Chief of Staff Major General Kawamura

⁴⁸ Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945*, 158.

⁴⁹ David G. Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 50.

⁵⁰ Thorne, 337.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 590-91.

川村 flew to Tokyo to advise his superiors: “Disturbance will be inevitable sooner or later in French Indochina. Hence, we must now firmly make up our minds for a military takeover.” In response, the Saikō Sensō Shidōsha Kaigi 最高戦争指導者会議 (Supreme War Leadership Council, or Supreme War Council) drafted a plan for the military takeover of the French administration of Indochina. However, the Daihonei 大本營 (Imperial Headquarters) preferred that the status quo be maintained and ordered that no action be taken. Throughout the year, the trend of the war changed dramatically against the Japanese and the rest of the Axis Powers.

In obvious recognition of this trend, the French colonial administration became increasingly bold. They began by cutting Japanese demands for currency to offset military expenses in Indochina in half. Sachiko Murakami details the increasing transparency of French Colonial Government and military’s reaction to wartime events from the Japanese perspective.⁵²

A mass arrest of pro-Japanese natives had begun with the Allied landing in Normandy in June 1944. By the time Paris was liberated by the Allied forces in late August, the government generally had gotten bold enough openly to notify the Japanese authorities of its plan for celebration! Meanwhile the French high command was training its forces for defensive operations in the northern highlands and for hit-and-run attacks in the South, apparently with the Japanese army as their potential enemy. During the Allied bombing

⁵² Sachiko Murakami, “Japan’s Thrust into French Indochina, 1940-1945,” Ph.D. Dissertation (New York University, 1981), 497-501; Kiyoko Kurusu Nitz, “Independence without Nationalists? The Japanese and Vietnamese Nationalism during the Japanese Period, 1940-45,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 15,1 (March 1984), 124. In translating 最高戦争指導者会議 into English, Murakami abbreviates it as “Supreme War Council,” while Kiyoko Kurusu Nitz’s translates it as “Supreme War Leadership Conference.” The Gozen Kaigi 御前会議 (Imperial, Headquarters-Government Liaison, Conference) was formed on November 19, 1937, before the Imperial Headquarters was formed on November 27. The Supreme War Leadership Council replaced the Gozen Kaigi in August 1944. Gozen Kaigi was aimed at coordinating the wartime activities of the War and Navy, while the Imperial Headquarters acted as the central institution for the emperor’s authority. See Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000), 327, 387.

not only were French anti-aircraft positions extremely reluctant to open fire on American planes but French government officials in the affected areas would tell the natives that they would not have suffered if Japanese forces had not been stationed in French Indochina. Even Admiral Decoux was said to have predicted, in his speech delivered at the fourth anniversary of the organization of the Foreign Legion, on August 30, 1944, that France would soon restore her sovereignty and reunite with her colonies.⁵³

Though he does not say when, David Marr adds that the Japanese “possessed evidence that French port officials and coastal watch personnel were secretly providing detailed information to the Allies on cargoes, shipping movements, and battle-damage assessments.”⁵⁴ Still, the Supreme War Council continued to reiterate the policy of “peace in French Indochina under any circumstances” adopted at the beginning of the year by the Imperial Headquarters as late as August 26, about the time Paris was liberated.⁵⁵

The course of events in Indochina and Paris during August and September seem to have finally forced the Supreme War Council to alter its position. By virtue of his *de facto* position as leader of the French, on August 30, General de Gaulle repudiated all agreements made by the Vichy Government with the Japanese.⁵⁶ Although Vichy French Ambassador to Japan Henri Cosme told Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru that both he and Governor General Decoux would resign if a future *de jure* French government would refuse their advice to maintain friendly relations with the Japanese, the Supreme War Council again considered wresting complete control of Indochina from the French on September 19. “If the governor general of French Indochina continues to cooperate

⁵³ Murakami, 500-01.

⁵⁴ Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 43.

⁵⁵ Murakami, 502.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 501. De Gaulle’s Comité Nationale Français (French National Committee or CNF) was not recognized as “temporary *de facto* authority for civil administration in France” until October 23, 1944 and, despite several national elections, the government remained “provisional” until late in 1946 when a constitution was approved by the electorate (see also Chapters 7 and 14).

with Japan,” they declared in part, “the present condition shall, in general, be maintained,” but if the “top echelon” of the French colonial administration resigned or the French government and military authorities rose in revolt, the Japanese high command would take control of Indochina.⁵⁷

Major General Tsuchihashi Yūichi 土橋 有一 arrived in Sài Gòn on November 14 to take charge of the Indoshina Chūtongun which was renamed the Dai Sanjūhachi Gun 第三十八軍 (38th Army) to reflect its new “combat” status. Before 1945, the Japanese had operated an intelligence unit in Indochina called Ishida *kikan* (Ishida organ). In January, under Tsuchihashi, its activities were expanded and it was renamed Yasu *butai* (Yasu unit, also known as Yasu *kikan*



General Tsuchihashi Yūichi⁵⁸

or Yasu *tai*). According to Kiyoko Kurusu Nitz, it “trained the Vietnamese *heihotai* (army auxillary), organized Moi tribes, commanded the Vietnamese army, and devised plans against Viet Minh activities.”⁵⁹ On the 21st, General Tsuchihashi left Sài Gòn

⁵⁷ Ibid, 502.

⁵⁸ Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 42.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 504; Nitz “Independence without Nationalists? The Japanese and Vietnamese Nationalism during the Japanese Period, 1940-45”: 119, 126; Tønnesson 241, 251. Tønnesson relies on French source. Neither Nitz nor Tønnesson provide the Japanese spelling for Yasu *butai* (*yasu* may refer to a fish spear or harpoon and *butai* is probably 部隊 or “unit”), its variants, or Ishi *kikan*, however it is possible to speculate that Colonel Ishida 石田 (Nitz uses Lieutenant Colonel) was responsible for Ishida *kikan* 器官 (organ) due to his name, he was listed as one of the six founders of Yasu *tai*, and he was the commander of the unit’s Nambu 南部 (southern region) for the Yasu *tai*.

incognito for a three-week tour of Indochina. He dressed in a lieutenant's uniform and changed cars and license plates several times to maintain security.⁶⁰

Matsumoto Shunichi 松本俊一 arrived 10 days after Tsuchihashi to replace Ambassador Yoshizawa Kenkichi. Ambassador Matsumoto immediately cabled Foreign Minister Shigemitsu to argue several points, principally that a military takeover of Indochina would threaten its use as a major supply depot. He also believed that the Japanese should aid the national aspirations of "Annam, Cambodia, and Laos," and, in the case that a military occupation was inevitable, he did not believe the embassy staff should be placed under the Army's command as an occupation administration.⁶¹ Thus, by the beginning of 1945, the Japanese had moved closer to taking over the administration of Indochina from the French, but a final decision would be held off until agreement on such an action was reached between Tsuchihashi and Matsumoto, who still held reservations about the idea.

Meanwhile, the U.S. had been intercepting diplomatic signals between Sài Gòn and Tokyo and had a fair idea of what the Japanese were considering. Japanese diplomatic signals were enciphered on a machine called *Purple* and information gathered from the deciphered code using an American copy of this machine was called *Magic*. The path towards breaking these codes began as early as the winter of 1928-1929 when surveillance conducted by various agencies of foreigners had noticed suspicious activities of Japanese tourists using the Japanese Imperial Railway's New York headquarters. An investigation of Japanese naval and military officers posing as civilians who were noticed

⁶⁰ Murakami, 501.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 514.

delivering parcels to this building led to eventual acquisition and translation of the Japanese code book—the *Red Book*. A Red Machine was developed to decipher Japanese codes based on this book. By late 1937, the Japanese had developed a newer, more complex code with a typewriter machine they called the *97-shiki O-bun In-ji-Ki*, which the Americans referred to as *Purple*. “Long after the Americans had broken the Red Machine,” explains Ronald Lewin, “the Japanese would transmit the same signal in both the *Red* and *Purple* cipher.” This provided the basis for perfecting a *Purple Machine*.⁶²

Stein Tønnesson offers the provocative, albeit speculative argument that President Roosevelt, who had a clear dislike for colonial rule and French colonial rule of Indochina in particular, may have used an invasion plan as the basis for a oral directive to “some of his closest collaborators or key commanders...to make certain moves,” in particular, Admiral Halsey’s air raid of southern Indochina’s coast in January, “that would encourage Japanese fears of a US Indochina invasion” and provoke a coup. Had the March coup d’état (also referred to as a *coup de main* or *coup de force*) not occurred, Tønnesson asserts, then the Việt Minh would not have been able to initiate their “August Revolution” because the French administration and army would have still been in place to fight them off (see Chapter 10).⁶³

⁶² Ronald Lewin, *The American Magic: Codes, Ciphers and the Defeat of Japan* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1982), 14, 15, 22-25, 32-33, 38-39. (italics added) Intelligence from Japanese naval and military signals was known as Ultra. The Purple machine the Americans built using brass was an improvement on the Japanese version, which used copper parts that wore down quicker leading to garbled texts.

⁶³ Tønnesson, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and the French Loss of Indo-China, 9 March 1945.” Unpublished paper presented at a Symposium on the First Indochina War, at the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, in Austin, Texas, 1-3 November 2002, [http://www.prio.no/staff/Stein/FDR_and_Indochina_\(Austin%20](http://www.prio.no/staff/Stein/FDR_and_Indochina_(Austin%20)

While Tønnesson's latter assertion may be true, it is impossible that Roosevelt could have predicted the rise of the Việt Minh during the year. Even those closer to the events in Indochina could not have anticipated it, and there is no reason to believe Roosevelt was better informed than anyone else. Tønnesson's argument also lacks an understanding of Roosevelt's attitude about the Allied Powers' position in the post-war world and trusteeship which is covered in the next two chapters. In short, given the framework for his thinking at the time about trusteeship for Indochina, his plans would not have required approval of the French Indochina Government or their removal by the Japanese. However, the *Magic* intercepts provide us with a window into what Roosevelt and other Americans who had access to the information may have known about discussions and planning the Japanese in Indochina conducted with Tokyo.

The *Magic* diplomatic summaries reveal that Japanese suspicions of the French were leading to changes in the character of their "occupation." The January 5, 1945 summary included Japanese Ambassador Matsumoto's account of an interview of Governor General Decoux he conducted on December 13, 1944 in which his questions were a clear test of the Decoux's loyalty to the de Gaulle Government in Paris. Decoux stated that his position was identical with Ambassador Cosme's. He told Matsumoto that he viewed de Gaulle as a "dissident," and that his government was transitional until such time as prisoners of war returned and a elections were held to establish a legitimate government. When asked why the Consultative High Council had been changed to the

paper).pdf (accessed on July 11, 2004). Tønnesson first made this supposition in *The Vietnamese Revoltuion of 1945: Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh and de Gaulle in a World at War* (London: Sage Publications, 1991), 194-96. The U.S. did in fact put a diversionary plan called *Carbonado* into effect to make the Japanese think they were preparing to launch an offensive into southern China—see Chapter 11.

French Indochina Council, Decoux explained that this was done in response to complaints that since the former was composed entirely of officials, the aim in setting it up to avoid “a purely personal government” was defeated. He had opened the body up therefore to include civilians, and added that retired General Mordant had been made Vice President of the Council because he “was well versed in Indo-Chinese questions.” In this way he tried to deflect attention from the fact that the Council had replaced him as the true French governing authority in Indochina.⁶⁴



Admiral Jean Decoux⁶⁵

In a New Year's address, Decoux referred to the previous year as one “so anxiously awaited” when France “recovered its unity and evinced its vitality and its cohesion,” before asking the residents of the colony to “stand together in the behalf of our recovered Fatherland.” After having learned that Matsumoto filed a protest with Decoux over this speech, Foreign Minister Shigemitsu requested

further information on this episode on January 25.⁶⁶

On January 3, Matsumoto made a formal request of Decoux for 300 million yen (later reduced to 270 million) to cover Japanese military expenditures in Indochina for the first three months of 1945. This was more than three times the amount agreed to for

⁶⁴ No. 1016, 5 January 1945, A2, A3 and A5, *Intercepted Japanese messages: Operation “Magic,”* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., [1979?], microfilm).

⁶⁵ Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 15.

⁶⁶ No. 1044, 8 February 1945, 1-4, *Intercepted Japanese messages: Operation “Magic.”*

the last two months of 1944 and four times the monthly rate agreed to for the first five months of the year. At one point, Decoux told the Japanese Ambassador, according to the *Magic* summary, that such an exorbitant charge was “not based on any sober estimate or *it conceals unavowed purposes.*” A statement by Foreign Minister Shigemitsu that only half of the requested amount would be needed in January, but that the amount would “undoubtedly increase” in “February and later months,” was viewed as an ominous warning.⁶⁷

Mordant also expressed concern when he met with Terauchi on the December 31 that the “current strengthening of Japanese forces ... not only in northern Indo-China but also in the Mekong River basin” made French colonial officials worry that it suggested a “possible change in Japan’s strategic policy.” American analysts believed that the increase suggested the Japanese were preparing to double their military strength from an estimated three divisions to six divisions.⁶⁸ By January 17, Matsumoto notified Decoux of the Imperial Headquarters’ decision to increase the Japanese Army strength in northern Indochina. In a report of these discussions, Matsumoto wrote, “I am impressing these facts on the officials here, but their shock at receiving the demand is great. We must watch their moves from now on.” After General Aymé “vehemently denied the possibility of Allied landings,” General Kawamura reiterated Matsumoto’s explanation that it was purely a military decision.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ No. 1038, 27 January 1945, A1, A4, A5.

⁶⁸ No. 1038, 27 January 1945, 3; No. 1055, 13 February 1945, 6, *Intercepted Japanese messages: Operation “Magic.”*

⁶⁹ No. 1033, 22 January 1945, 5-7; No. 1036, 25 January 1945, 2; No. 1038, 27 January 1945, *Intercepted Japanese messages: Operation “Magic.”*

In a report on Admiral Halsey's bombing raid on southern Indochina, the Japanese noted that the French were shocked by "the numerical superiority of the American Air Force," and that Indochina was soon to become "a battleground." Two days before the raid, the Japanese had begun evacuating French from the coast in anticipation of bombing raids and stepped up these evacuations after Halsey's raid.⁷⁰

Magic summaries revealed that after Halsey's raid on January 12, Matsumoto moved closer to agreement with Tsuchihashi, but a difference still existed. Matsumoto had been converted to Tsuchihashi's thinking later in the month, but *Magic* intercepts reveal much more urgency among Japanese officials in Indochina to stage a coup than on the part of authorities in Tokyo. On January 25, Ambassador Matsumoto transmitted to Tokyo a "general outline" of a plan drawn up by the Japanese military authorities in Indochina to take full control of the colony. In transmitting the plan, Matsumoto asked that it be approved so that it could be carried out "without delay," and expressed concern that the plan would face opposition from political and military leaders in Tokyo. He based his desire to stage a coup d'état on Decoux's "extremely defiant attitude" towards Japanese demands for operating expenses for the military, and the fact that reinforcements in Indochina in preparation for a counterattack against a threatened Allied invasion of South China from the sea "is causing considerable irritation" amongst the French.⁷¹ On January 27, the Vice Chief of the Japanese Army General Staff sent a "forecast" of the war to military attachés in Europe which predicted "The Allies will very

⁷⁰ No. 1027, 16 January 1945, 3; No. 1034, 23 January 1945, 9-10; No. 1036, 25 January 1945, 3, *Intercepted Japanese messages: Operation "Magic."*

⁷¹ No. 1044, 8 February 1945, 1-3, A2-A5, *Intercepted Japanese messages: Operation "Magic."*

probably land in the Malay Peninsula during the spring or summer, and operations will probably also be undertaken against French Indo-China.”⁷² So viewed from within the context of Japanese planning for Southeast Asia, Halsey’s raid did not look to all like an immediate threat, but as an ominous sign of future allied operations.

As recently as mid-January 1945, OSS reports had been emphasizing Japanese troop movements through Indochina for battles in the Philippines a month earlier. By early February, however, the French in Indochina were sharing their concerns about different Japanese troop movements even with the Americans.⁷³ A message to Donovan on February 5 reported that a “French Intelligence officer notified the OSS in Calcutta that the Japanese were sending a new division into Indochina, 6,000 of which had already arrived.”⁷⁴ A few days earlier, according to a message forwarded to the State Department by Ambassador Patrick Hurley in Chongqing, the French Military Attaché told General Wedemeyer that the:

Japanese are now assuming a more exacting and arrogant role in Indochina where they are concentrating stronger forces. Should they demand that French troops disarm and disband, those who can will disperse into hills where they will continue to conduct underground and guerilla activities, but some units may be compelled to retire to Yunnan. In such events, they would urgently require medical and communications equipment.

General Wedemeyer reports he has maintained non-committal policy vis-à-vis Indochina. In this particular instance he states he informed French Military Attaché that situation latter described was probably well known to leaders of French and American Governments and that it would have to be dealt with by competent higher authorities.

⁷² No. 1040, 29 January 1945, 1-2, *Intercepted Japanese messages: Operation “Magic.”*

⁷³ “Recent Troop Movements and Dispositions of Enemy Forces,” Russell E. Stevens, Jr. for John Wickham, 15 January 1945, Folder Y-2400, Box 374, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA; Murakami, 505. Japan surrendered Leyte Island on December 19, 1944.

⁷⁴ To 109 from Heppner, 5 February 1945, Reel 90, M1642, NARA. Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945 : Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh, and De Gaulle in a World at War*, 182 n. 15. According to Stein Tønnesson, the 37th Division was transferred from southern China into Tonkin in January, and the 22nd Division was transferred in a while later to reinforce the 21st Division.

This Embassy has consistently advised the French here that policy on Indochina must originate in Washington and Paris, not in Chungking. Wedemeyer states that French are voluntarily furnishing valuable information to his headquarters and 14th Air Force and would like this to be continued.⁷⁵

While Tsuchihashi was on his tour of Indochina, the Supreme War Council decided on February 1 that the military had to take complete control of Indochina, citing the “U.S. military activity in the Indochina area.” Nevertheless, the evidence reveals that it was actually an accumulation of events, including a deep concern for the reliability of the French colonial administration and French Indochina Army, that led to the Japanese action. Upon his return to Sài Gòn from his tour on the 13th, Tsuchihashi was told to prepare for Operation *Bright Moon*, the secret, forceful takeover of the French administration of Indochina, and the disarming and imprisonment of French soldiers.⁷⁶ There is no doubt that Halsey’s raid contributed to the Japanese decision to proceed with the *Bright Moon*, but it was only one of the numerous issues.

Tønnesson asserts that Roosevelt and Churchill were avid readers of the *Magic* summaries, but “there is no indication that anything was done to warn the French of what was about to happen.”⁷⁷ It was not until February 21st, that American analysts of *Magic* intercepts concluded that Japan’s Supreme War Council had decided on the first of the

⁷⁵ *FRUS, 1945, VI, 296-97.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid, 512, 520.*

⁷⁷ Tønnesson, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and the French Loss of Indo-China, 9 March 1945”; *The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945*, 195; and Murakami, 499, 508, 521. Tønnesson does not make clear why he changed his belief that the decision to proceed with the coup was made “two weeks” (*The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945*) after Halsey’s raid to January 17 (“Franklin D. Roosevelt and the French Loss of Indo-China, 9 March 1945”) Although Murakami mentions that an “Army-Navy Agreement on Military Takeover of French Indochina and its Defense Thereafter” was “adopted on January 17, at Imperial General Headquarters,” a similar “agreement” had been drafted a year earlier on January 28, 1944, but it was clearly only a contingency plan. Murakami makes it clear that the decision to proceed with *Bright Moon* was made on February 1 and Tsuchihashi was notified on the 13th. A decision made nearly three weeks after Halsey’s raid, rather than five days, suggests that the event was not quite as pivotal as Tønnesson believes, though clearly it was one of many factors that precipitated it. President Franklin Roosevelt’s position on colonialism is examined in depth in the following two chapters.

month to go ahead with the coup d'état in Indochina. At this point, the Supreme War Council left the exact timing of the operation "to the discretion of the local military authorities." The Americans anticipated that it would occur before the end of the month.⁷⁸ On the 28th, the Supreme War Council decided Operation *Bright Moon* should be initiated between March 5th and 10th; Governor General Decoux was to be served an ultimatum and he would be given two hours to respond; and General Tsuchihashi in consultation with Ambassador Matsumoto would decide if his response constituted acceptance or not.⁷⁹ Another *Magic* summary revealed that Foreign Minister Shigemitsu informed the Japanese Ambassador to the Soviet Union Satō Naotake 佐藤尚武, and Ambassador to Germany Ōshima Hiroshi 王島博, on March 2 and 3 respectively, of plans for a coup in Indochina.⁸⁰ Finally, the *Magic* summary for March 9, stated: "Showdown in Indo-China expected today," explaining that Shigemitsu had informed Ambassadors Satō and Ōshima that the French colonial authorities were to be presented with demands at 10 p.m. The American analysts pointed out that since the French were not expected to agree to the terms, the Japanese had been planning to launch a surprise attack "shortly after presenting the demands."⁸¹

Tønnesson appears to be correct that information from *Magic* was not shared with the French, but this is really no surprise given Roosevelt's prior experience with de Gaulle's people failing to maintain secrets and acting independently of Allied plans, as

⁷⁸ No. 1063, 21 February 1945, 6; 1068, 26 February 1945, 5; No. 1070, 28 February 1945, 2-3, *Intercepted Japanese messages: Operation "Magic."*

⁷⁹ Murakami, 522.

⁸⁰ No. 1073, 3 March 1945; No. 1075, 5 March 1945, *Intercepted Japanese messages: Operation "Magic."*

⁸¹ No. 1079, 9 March 1945, 1-2, *Intercepted Japanese messages: Operation "Magic."*

will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. There is little doubt that informing the French of what had been learned from the intercepts was not worth the risk to the war effort against the Japan, since no one at the time believed the French who had collaborated with the Japanese for the duration of the war could effectively resist them. After all, Donovan had forwarded a message to Roosevelt from the OSS chief at SEAC headquarters in Kandy, Ceylon on July 18, 1944 that "Information has reached us that before long the Japanese intend to disarm French troops in French Indo-China. Only those troops which are posted near the frontier can be expected to offer any resistance."⁸² If there is a surprise, it is that the British, being co-colonialists in Southeast Asia, did not inform de Gaulle of the information derived from *Magic*, suggesting that if the information was withheld, it was done so with their consent.

The French had drawn up plans for responding to a Japanese attack, and these plans reflected the physical locations from which they drew inspiration and influence. From inside Indochina, Mordant and Aymé's later plans were relatively ambitious, aiming to maintain a line of defense in the Tonkin Delta. Their plan was reliant upon the hope that Chennault's 14th Air Force would offer them air support and the Chinese would secure their southern border region with Tonkin. Blaizot, from SEAC headquarters in Kandy, and Crèvecoeur, from India, realized that the Americans had up to this point offered stiff resistance to their mission, therefore, they favored a guerilla strategy, based

⁸² Memorandum for the Joint Chiefs of Staff from William J. Donovan, Director, 18 July 1944, Reel 18, M1642, NARA. SEAC headquarters moved to Kandy in April.

on the approach the British had used in Burma, whereby the best units would retreat and harass the Japanese from the highlands.⁸³

When two additional Japanese divisions moved into Tonkin from China by early 1945, Mordant and Aymé realized the futility of their earlier ambitious goals.⁸⁴ Two days before the coup, a *Magic* summary stated, the Japanese authorities had evacuated 1,269 French military families away from the coastal area, half of which were from Sài Gòn though it was not disclosed where the rest were from (presumably the other population centers of Hà Nội and Huế), and 489 civilian families.⁸⁵ While this may have been to protect them from future American bombing raids, the French may have also interpreted the action as preparation for a threatened Japanese attack.

In the days leading up to Operation *Bright Moon*, French officials in Indochina had information that a coup was imminent, but it was difficult to separate fact from fear-induced rumors, as described by David Marr:

On the 5th, word arrived at General Aymé's office of Chinese employees at a gambling den having overheard Japanese soldiers talking of disarming the French in a few days' time. On the evening of the 8th, the Tonkin Sûreté compiled and urgently circulated a report predicting a Japanese attack on one of the next three nights. Japanese nationals had been observed stocking up on scarce commodities and evacuating homes or shops close to the Hanoi Citadel, where fighting was most likely to occur. Ammunition had been distributed to Japanese troop units. Among the Annamites, rumors circulated that independence would be proclaimed on 10 March. Local tailors were discovered sewing batches of armbands for the Kenpeitai to distribute to Annamite auxiliaries.⁸⁶

⁸³ Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945*, 159-60.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 159. Rather than emphasize the reality that the Americans had been resistant to British efforts to aid the French, Tønnesson attempts to buttress his argument (below) that Roosevelt provoked a Japanese coup by explaining why it was reasonable for the French to expect a possible Sino-American invasion of Indochina.

⁸⁵ No. 1027, 16 January 1945, 3, *Intercepted Japanese messages: Operation "Magic."*

⁸⁶ Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 52-53.

Mordant and Aymé chose to ignore such warnings as rumors. General Sabattier chose the wiser path of placing his troops on armed “exercise” beginning on the evening of March 8. Apparently fearing Sabattier’s exercises might provoke the Japanese, Mordant ordered him to cancel these activities the following morning, but the order was ignored by some units.

Operation *Bright Moon* was carried out on the night of March 9. Ambassador Matusmoto delivered the ultimatum to Decoux. Sporadic fighting occurred in different areas of Indochina even before Tsuchihashi decided that Decoux’s attempts to qualify the terms could not be considered unconditional acceptance and ordered the attack. There was little resistance in Cochinchina and Cambodia. At Hué, a well planned attack on the Citadelle was led by “a Japanese commando unit disguised as Vietnamese civilians.” “Elsewhere in Annam,” adds Marr, “several thousand colonial troops fled westward toward the hills, to no avail, as food soon ran short and native soldiers abandoned their French officers and NCOs.”⁸⁷

The strongest resistance occurred, if not according to plan, in Tonkin. This was also the location later for the most widespread reports of atrocities, most of which, but not all, were committed by new Japanese arrivals from southern China. At 6 p.m. on the 9th, the Japanese brigade commander in Lạng Sơn, Colonel Ikarri, invited Résident Auphelle and General René Lemonnier, commander of the Third Tonkin Brigade, to dinner. General Lemonnier politely declined, but Colonel Robert along with about ten

⁸⁷ Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 54-57. David Marr provides the most satisfying detail of events, including the explanation that “Japanese sources often use Tokyo time (two hours later)” instead of the local time in Indochina.

officers, including Lieutenant Amiguet, Major Leivy and Inspector of the Native Guard Bousquet, attended along with three officials accompanying Auphelle. At the end of the meal, about 8 o'clock, they were bound and taken off to the local prison. An hour later, Japanese soldiers attacked the Lạng Sơn Citadel, where fighting continued until 5 p.m. the following day. General Lemonnier had surrendered by noon, but refused to order subordinate units to do so. Résident Auphelle and General René Lemonnier, Colonel Robert, another senior officer, and "a corporal of the Legion" were beheaded on the 12th. Hamada, a former merchant in Sài Gòn and chief Japanese interpreter, reported that all soldiers (300-400) in Lạng Sơn had been killed, along with women and children. Forty Frenchmen, including six officers, from Fort Brière de l'Isle, southwest of Lạng Sơn, were reported to have been machine gunned to death after surrendering.⁸⁸

There were also reports of Japanese atrocities at Thái Nguyên and Hà Giang (east of Lào Cai). At the Legion quarters in Hà Giang, "long after the cessation of firing—all the European noncoms [non-commissioned officers] and officers of the garrison massacred with blows of pickaxes, hammers, buried alive, etc." Defenders of a fort at Hà Giang were taken to the edge of a river and shot by a machine gun. The Japanese then stabbed the bodies with bayonets (a colonel who survived was captured on the 13th and killed). There were also reports of "wholesale rape" at Hà Giang by units of the 37th Division under the overall command of General Nagano 長野. The 37th Division and units which committed atrocities at Lạng Sơn had reportedly arrived from southern China

⁸⁸ (War crimes documentation gathered by Lieutenant John L. Irving and Captain Banks between 22 August and 9 September), 19 September 1945, Folder 371, Box 47, Entry 140, RG 226, NARA; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 59. In their report, Lt. Irving pointed out that their investigation was abruptly halted before they could complete it by their superior, Captain Archimedes Patti (see Chapter 12).

in January or February. The 62nd Regiment, responsible for crimes at Thái Nguyên, was under the command of Tazoe Masanobu 田添正信 and stationed at Vĩnh Yên. This regiment was part of the 21st Division, which had been in Tonkin since April or May, 1944. Other accounts of wanton cruelty included beatings and torture such as a former lieutenant of the Legion who suffered twisting of the testicles until the vessels were ruptured, and women, children and babies found dead from bayonet wounds. There were widespread accounts of rapes, one notably sadistic case was reported in Hải Dương: “Mme Sabattier raped in her house in the presence of her children by 120 Japanese during 20 days. Became partly insane and had to stay for some time under observation in the hospital.” David Marr tells us that similar atrocities were committed at Đồng Đăng where, after fighting, “the Japanese commander ordered the senior French surviving officer to kneel in front of his own troops, who watched stupefied as he was executed.” By the morning of the 13th, the Japanese beheaded or bayoneted 53 other survivors to death.⁸⁹

Generals Mordant and Aymé were more fortunate. Although captured, they were merely imprisoned. Sabattier, whose account is summarized by Tønnesson, had “left his staff, radios and troops and retreated on foot along the Black River to Lai Chau, with three officers, an interpreter, his driver, and two soldiers of a Thai minority.” He joined the Second Tonkin Brigade commanded by General Marcel Alessandri at Điện Biên Phủ on March 29. Francois de Langlade and French intelligence chief, Colonel Passy, flew in to notify Sabattier that de Gaulle had appointed him to replace Mordant as Délégué

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Général. Alessandri's soldiers made up the largest single group of the estimated 5,700 French Indochina Army's soldiers, 2,469 of which were European, who made it into Yunnan province in April and May.⁹⁰

After the coup, Roosevelt authorized Blaizot to "have a status with the military authorities in the theater of operations concerned," but Wedemeyer did not take this as an order to permit the French General to be attached to his command in China. Crèvecoeur was placed under the DGER in April 1945. In May 1945, Blaizot's Corps Léger d'Intervention were transported from Algiers to Ceylon under a different commander and renamed the 5^{ème} Régiment d'Infanterie Coloniale (RIC, or Colonial Infantry Regiment) where they waited out the war, forcibly mothballed, as it were, for use afterwards to re-impose colonialism in Indochina.⁹¹

CONCLUSION

President Roosevelt, Secretary of State Hull, OSS Director Donovan, General Wedemeyer, and OSS representatives at SEAC recognized and resisted Franco-British aims to reestablish French colonial rule in Indochina in the guise of defeating the Japanese. The Americans and their allies relied on GBT's intelligence network in Indochina, which depended on French military and civilian agents, but was isolated from

⁹⁰ Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945*, 239, 241, and 317-18; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 60-61. Marr, always sensitive to the plight of the Vietnamese, states that Alessandri "decided to disarm his Indochinese riflemen and leave them behind to their own devices. This may have relieved some of them, but it undoubtedly hurt others deeply, and it was soon being sued by Vietnamese nationalists to symbolize the perfidiousness of French colonialism." Minutes of Conference Held at American Headquarters, 27 June 1945, Folder 215, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA. In June, Alessandri stated that there were "300 officers, 1,800 European troops and 3,300 Indo-Chinese in China."

⁹¹ Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945*, 258-59, 321.

Allied politics due to its independent leadership. As a result, GBT had been successful in avoiding the political intrigue that doomed the Meynier Group. However, the newly “converted” Vichy leaders of the French Indochina Army decided to base their resistance organization on Gordon’s existing intelligence network by forcing it to report to them rather than GBT in China. Recognizing his Indochina operation was endangered by efforts he saw myopically as Mordant’s “campaign,” Laurie Gordon, who was not antagonistic to long-term French aims in Indochina, appealed to Washington, D.C. for support. While it is unlikely GBT could have withstood a determined effort to build a de Gaullist resistance movement on the ground in Indochina, Mordant was not determined and the resources made available to him seem to have been scant at most. Before this battle between the Americans, the French and British, and the GBT could be resolved, GBT and de Gaullist intelligence networks in Indochina were wiped out by the Japanese coup.

Cracks in the Anglo-American alliance over Indochina surfaced in 1944. We will see in the next three chapters that differences over the postwar order began even before the U.S. entered the war and had its roots in the varying economic cultures of the two countries. Churchill’s resistance to various members of his government clamoring to support their neighboring pre-war colonial power against American anti-colonialism, despite the attention given it in this chapter, was an uncharacteristic moment for the British Empire’s most ardent supporter. British division over Indochina paled in comparison to the opposition from political and military leaders to Roosevelt and his handful of supporters on the colonial issue. These next three chapters examine the

American diplomatic influences, trends, and debates during World War two on the colonial issue and Indochina.



President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill and Sumner Welles (standing without hat) at the Atlantic Conference, August, 1942¹

Winston, this is something which you are just not able to understand. You have 400 years of acquisitive instinct in your blood and you just don't understand how a country might not want to acquire land somewhere if they can get it. A new period has opened in the world's history, and you will have to adjust to it.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt²

It is natural on the part of the Americans to [favor] the Annamese; by eliminating French competition in the economic field not only will the U.S. have conquered [a] new and interesting market but through dealing only with the native population a far inferior quality of goods will be saleable, in fact a market will have been found for all the junked war materials that can be used on a peacetime market.

Mr. Martin, colon , September 1945³

Chapter 6

American Foreign Affairs & FDR: From Social Darwinism to Atlantic Charter

Franklin D. Roosevelt was born in the 1882, during the decade when the French were consolidating their conquest of Việt Nam. He grew up in an era when Social Darwinism was a popular explanation for the Imperial Age. As John Hay's Open Door notes began to influence foreign policy—as it would for the century to come—and

¹ Project Gutenberg, www.gutenberg-e.org/osc01/images/osc03g.html (accessed April 24, 2005).

² *The Diaries of Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., 1943-1946*, edited by Thomas M. Campbell and George C. Herring (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975), 40.

³ Altman, "French sentiments and rumors," 24 September 1945, Folder 1271, Box 129, Entry 144, RG 226, NARA.

eclipsed America's short phase of imperialist growth, the future president reached maturity. As president, even before American entry into World War II, Roosevelt, working informally through an under secretary, rather than the Secretary of State, negotiated an agreement with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill on foreign policy principles, known as the Atlantic Charter, with the hope of ending colonialism through free trade and self-determination, concepts embodied in the Open Door policy and the ideas of Woodrow Wilson. The dilemma that Roosevelt faced, though, was that his key ally was, at heart, a strident imperialist. While victory in the war was foreseeable prior to Roosevelt's death in 1945, victory in the ideological contest over the future of colonial empires proved elusive. The self-proclaimed, exiled leader of the French resistance, Charles de Gaulle, held even more desperately to the idea of empire, because for him, it was the key to reestablishing his country's greatness. He remained reliant upon British aid and support for his own position as well as in the quest to recapture colonial possessions in the attempt to restore France to an ideal of prewar glory.

ROOSEVELT, THE OPEN DOOR POLICY & WILSONIAN SELF-DETERMINATION

President Roosevelt made direct references to America's Revolutionary War in discussions with Churchill over colonialism, and analogically in addresses to the nation about progress in the war. British colonialism in America, of course, was fundamentally different from the kind practiced in Southeast Asia, but his rhetoric sent messages to those who sought freedom, as well as those who sought to maintain freedom previously won. Colonialism in America relied on colonial settlers and their offspring whose

numbers rapidly dwarfed the native inhabitants. After this group revolted against England, increasing numbers of Europeans continued to arrive to share in the prosperity of this resource-rich land. Population pressures resulted in an affirmation of a divine right, Manifest Destiny, to expand their territories westward to the Pacific Ocean, similar in some sense to the Vietnamese *nam tiến*, or southward expansion. In an 1893 speech before the American Historical Association, Frederick Jackson Turner cited an innocuous government bureau document which marked the end of 1880s as, in his words, “closing of a great historic movement. Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West.”⁴

In response to economic crises in the 1890s, argues William Appleman Williams, a consensus emerged favoring expansion to capture markets for merchandise and services and “to stifle unrest, preserve democracy, and restore prosperity.”⁵ Richard Hofstadter has examined some of the literature promoting Social Darwinism, which adapted the biological concepts of Darwinism to existing social ideologies, in the late nineteenth century. For example, an 1885 work authored by Reverend Josiah Strong who, employing “an economic argument for imperialism,” foresaw a “survival of the fittest,” whereby the races of the world would compete for the few remaining “unoccupied lands.”⁶ Another articulator of Social Darwinism was John Fiske, who, earlier in 1880, developed the Anglo-Saxon thesis in which he argued that the U.S. had resolved the political deficiencies of the ancient Roman Empire through the system of local self-

⁴ Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History, 1893,” *Modern History Sourcebook*, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1893turner.html> (accessed July 11, 2004).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 22-27.

⁶ Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought, 1860-1915* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944), 153-54.

government and principle of representation. Warfare would end, according to Fiske, when this “Aryan” system was dispersed throughout the world.⁷ So the crises of the 1890s provided the impetus for expansion into Hawai’i, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, and these ideas of Social Darwinism provided an economic explanation, mixed with paternalism, for why these areas need not be integrated in the way contiguous land areas and Alaska were in the past.⁸ There remained, however, unease in some quarters of America over colonial expansion.

The colonial expansionist phase of the 1890s was rapidly replaced with the Open Door Policy based on notes authored by Secretary of State John Hay. Williams characterizes the Open Door Policy as “non-colonial imperialism.” Hay’s notes resolved debate over imperialism in America, according to Williams, through an approach that sought to utilize America’s economic supremacy rather than military force “to extend the American system throughout the world without the embarrassment and inefficiency of traditional colonialism.”⁹ Naturally, a foreign policy based on the Open Door notes ran into conflict with policies favoring exclusive rights over “spheres of influence” as in semi-colonized China or in the British, Dutch, and French colonial areas of Southeast Asia. Though the thrust of rhetoric behind the Open Door policy was for open markets,

⁷ Ibid, 152.

⁸ Hawai’i was, of course, officially integrated into the U.S. in 1959, by which time, the colonial structure of the economy, emphasizing plantations, had declined from its earlier preeminence though its legacy on the social fabric of this state still distinguishes it from the mainland.

⁹ William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1962), 43, 49. It was only after Williams completed this work that countries such as Japan and the “four tigers” of Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea rapidly industrialized to, for some duration and on some scale, actually challenge the economic dominance that the U.S. had previously maintained in eastern Asia.

conflicts were most notable over the other side of the trade equation, access to natural resources.

Self-determination was a concept that extended naturally from the anti-monopolistic approach of the Open Door policy. Woodrow Wilson had introduced his post-World War I plan to Congress on January 8, 1919 just prior to going to Paris for peace talks. The fifth point of his 14-point plan provided for the “adjustment of colonial disputes consistent with the interests of both the controlling government and the colonial population.” He later clarified his explained his position on colonialism by saying,

Self-determination is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril...Every territorial settlement involved in this war must be made in the interest and for the benefit of the populations concerned, and not as a part of any mere adjustment or compromise of claims amongst states.¹⁰

Wilson was an “idealist” pitted against his “realist” European allies, Great Britain, France, and Italy. The four allied leaders, Wilson, and the three allied premiers, David Lloyd George of Great Britain, Georges Clemenceau of France, and Vittorio Emanuele Orlando met confidentially to settle the major points of the conference. Upon returning to the conference on March 14, Wilson was forced to compromise on the self-determination issue by agreeing to a graded mandate system for all conquered territories. In effect, the allies had forced him to accept their decision to divide the spoils of war amongst themselves. Wilson also made the mistake of not including Republicans in his delegation to the conference. Two months after Wilson suffered a stroke while campaigning for the Treaty of Versailles, the Republican Senate rejected the treaty and

¹⁰ Charles Homer Haskins, “The New Boundaries of Germany,” *What Really Happened at Paris* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1921): 37.

the organization Wilson hoped would maintain postwar world stability, the League of Nations. Roosevelt later adopted Wilson's concept of self-determination as a goal, but would attempt to overcome the procedural failures of his predecessor.¹¹

THE U.S. AND COLONIAL SOUTHEAST ASIA

Long before World War II, the U.S. had pursued an Open Door policy in Southeast Asia, as in 1920 when the U.S. Government intervened on behalf of Standard Oil to force the Dutch to permit the company access to the oil reserves of their colony in the East Indies. In resisting the U.S.'s demands to open up oil concessions to American oil companies based on the principle of "reciprocal arrangements," Dutch government official M. van Karnebeek argued, according to an American diplomat in The Hague, "that the situations of the United States and of the Netherlands respectively were wholly different: the United States was a great Power which easily could look after its own interests, whereas Holland was a small Power which had to be very careful in its dealings with foreign countries, especially within the colonial empire; otherwise its colonial possessions might pass under the political control of other Powers." "Of course," M. van Karnebeek was reported to have diplomatically added, "we have nothing to fear from America, but that does not mean that we have nothing to fear from others."¹² Such sentiments, often without the diplomatic face-saving, would be repeatedly articulated by

¹¹ Samuel F. Bemis, "The First World War and the Peace Settlement," *Wilson at Versailles*, edited by Theodore P. Greene (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1957): 12-13.

¹² The Minister of the Netherlands (Phillips) to the Secretary of State, The Hague, 22 July 1920, *FRUS, 1920*, volume III (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1936), 273. See pages 260-91 for the diplomatic correspondence related to this affair.

British and French defenders of colonialism during the course of World War II. The Dutch agreement to grant the Standard-Vacuum Oil Company oil concessions in their colony was a compromise solution, and no other American oil companies were permitted similar access. By 1941, Standard-Vacuum Oil Company (Standard Oil had merged with Socony Mobil Oil Company in 1933) was producing 25 percent of the oil in the Dutch East Indies, seemingly confirming the thrust of M. van Karnebeek's fear.¹³ Colonial control—this time British and French as well as Dutch—of two other commodities in Southeast Asia extended what had been merely a concern for expansion of economic opportunity to one of vital interests as the threat of global wars engulfing the U.S. increased by the late 1930s.

Franklin Roosevelt, Sumner Welles, and other Americans had reasons to associate European colonialism with the origins of the war in Europe and expanding Japanese hostilities in China. As was discussed in Chapter 3, Japan mimicked Western European colonial practices in their attempt to catch up to and compete with the Western Powers. Economically protective colonial policies of Great Britain and France during the 1930s, argues David E. Kaiser, also pushed Eastern Europe and Germany closer together, thus facilitating Germany's quest to overturn post-WWI settlements (which included stripping them of their colonies) through rearmament for a war of conquest.¹⁴ The Americans had more direct reasons to be antagonistic towards colonialism as well. The U.S. consumed

¹³ Robert J. McMahan, *Colonialism and Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 48-49. Williams, 22-23. Even before the Open Door notes, the Cleveland Administration had intervened in the Brazilian Revolution of 1893 when Naval ships were sent to defeat the rebels at the behest of the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey.

¹⁴ David E. Kaiser, *Economic Diplomacy and the Origins of the Second World War* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 316-18.

about half of all rubber produced worldwide by 1940, nearly all of which was produced in colonial Southeast Asia.¹⁵ As was mentioned in Chapter 3, colonial Southeast Asia also provided ninety percent of America's supply of crude rubber and seventy-five percent of its tin.¹⁶

Initially, pre-war cartels were formed for both tin and rubber to control market production and prices voluntarily. After this failed, the British government took the lead in trying to enforce discipline. The Dutch and French imperial governments, who with the British comprised the dominant forces in these two commodities, eventually joined in as well.¹⁷ By 1931, the tin cartel controlled ninety-three percent of world production.¹⁸ Although rubber originated in South America, colonial plantations developed in Southeast Asia were so successful that they accounted for 97.32 percent of all production by 1930 and 96.79 percent in 1940. The Netherlands East Indies (NEI) had initially demurred from joining the cartel, claiming in part, that they were worried about the repercussions Holland, which was receiving loans from the U.S., would face. By 1934 both the NEI and French Indochina joined the rubber cartel.

¹⁵ Ervin Hexner, *International Cartels* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1945), 281-82. Although rubber had originated in South America, by 1930 97.32 percent of its world production was in Southeast Asia and 96.79 percent in 1940.

¹⁶ Gary R. Hess, *The United States' Emergence as a Southeast Asian Power, 1940-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 10.

¹⁷ Hexner, 240-41, 282-83. When voluntary market controls failed to decrease stocks and lower prices of rubber, growers manipulated public opinion in Great Britain because as much as 250,000 people in England owned rubber stocks. In 1921, the Colonial Office in London appointed a committee chaired by Sir James Stevenson to examine the rubber industry. By the end of following year, colonial administrators implemented the Stevenson Committee's proposals for compulsory regulation of rubber growing. Formed in July 1929, the Tin Producers' Association was made up solely of "tin mining interests in the British Empire." Bolivian and Dutch East Indies producers later joined the Association, and after the latter threatened to leave due to poor discipline, an agreement was formed between the governments of the Netherlands, Nigeria, the Federated Malay States, and Bolivia.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 243.

The market controls of the rubber cartel did not go unnoticed by Secretary of State Cordell Hull who, in 1937, complained about resulting “stock shortages, speculative prices, and inadequate releases of rubber.”¹⁹ Further objections by the U.S. to both of these cartels led to concessions for its pre-war efforts to build up stocks of these commodities. American diplomats negotiated with their British counterparts to get the rubber cartel, the International Rubber Regulation Committee (IRRC), to agree to barter 600,000 bales of cotton for 85,000 tons of rubber in 1939, and additional agreements were made through 1941.²⁰ The U.S. had unsuccessfully attempted to include a similar barter agreement for tin in 1939, but in 1940 and 1941 they did reach agreements with the tin cartel, or International Tin Committee (ITC), which permitted for stockpiling of tin while insuring “orderly” liquidation of these reserves.²¹ It was in this environment that President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill met in August 1941 to discuss an agreement on principles of foreign policy, singling out Nazi Germany by name as the threat to these principles.

THE ATLANTIC CHARTER

Roosevelt did not always have an internationalist approach to foreign policy issues. He admitted this in an article he apparently co-wrote with Sumner Welles for the journal *Foreign Affairs*, which was published under Roosevelt’s name about the same

¹⁹ The Secretary of State (Hull) to the Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Bingham), March 8, 1937, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, (hereafter *FRUS*), 1937, volume I (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1954), 891-93.

²⁰ Hexner, 291.

²¹ *FRUS*, 1939, volume II (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1956), 234-36, 245; Joseph S. Davis, “Experience Under Intergovernmental Commodity Agreements, 1902-45,” *The Journal of Political Science* 54,3 (June 1946): 196.

time he was nominated at the Democratic convention to be Alfred E. Smith's vice-presidential running mate in 1928.²² In listing some of the recent achievements of American foreign policy, the article's authors argued the Open Door policy "had much to do with preventing the despoiling of the falling empire of the Manchus," the use of Boxer Indemnity funds for educating the Chinese increased American moral currency, and American policy to educate Filipinos for self-government "was the precursor of the "mandate" principle found in the Covenant of the League of Nations."²³ The greater part of the article, however, was devoted to a discussion of American military intervention in Haiti and Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic).

Roosevelt admitted taking part in the American military intervention on these two islands in the Caribbean while assistant secretary of the Navy during the Wilson Administration. The error being, the authors wrote, "not that assistance of some sort was not necessary; it was the method which was wrong." The other American republics unanimously disapproved of the intervention, they argued, since the U.S. based its right to intervene in the sovereign internal affairs of these two countries merely because it was powerful enough to do so. Instead, the U.S. should work in concert with the other American republics, rather than act unilaterally. This was Roosevelt's first national

²² Christopher D. O'Sullivan in his *Sumner Welles: Postwar Planning, and the Quest for a New World Order, 1937-1943* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/osc01/frames/fosc01.html> (accessed on 25 August 2004); Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Our Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 6,4 (July, 1928): 573-86. Frank Freidel, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Ordeal* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1954), 237. Roosevelt Biographer, Frank Freidel, informs us that Norman Davis (see below), Hamilton Fish Armstrong, who was the editor of *Foreign Affairs*, and Sumner Welles "did much to influence Roosevelt in the direction of Latin American policy based more on co-operation than force," ideas which formed the basis for the 1928 article in the journal *Foreign Affairs*.

²³ Roosevelt conveniently sidestepped the fact that American occupying forces had to battle the Filipinos for control of the islands for three years to force them to understand that the Americans were needed to teach Filipinos how to govern themselves.

articulation of the internationalist approach he and Welles would take in response to the conflict in Europe that spread to Asia and evolved into World War II.

While seemingly scorning the go-it-alone approach to foreign policy, President Roosevelt preferred micromanagement to using the institutions of the Executive Branch. In describing this management style, Admiral William Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, said, President Roosevelt “had little confidence in some of his executive departments, and therefore took detailed action with his own hands, assisted when necessary by some of his personal secretaries.”²⁴ The President was reported to have said that he would give Patrick Hurley, Roosevelt’s emissary and ambassador to China from 1943-1944, assignments that he would never give a man in the State Department, because he was loyal.²⁵

Sumner Welles’ was an exceptional “personal secretary,” as Christopher O’Sullivan notes, since his “contribution in the area of foreign affairs would prove similar to the service the Brain Trust provided Roosevelt in the realm of domestic economic policy.”²⁶ From childhood, Welles’ family had a close relationship with Eleanor Roosevelt. He participated in Eleanor’s wedding to Franklin and shared a room with her brother at Groton School in Massachusetts. He drew closer to both Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt in the 1920s, personally as well as politically, acting as a foreign

²⁴ William D. Leahy, *I Was There: The Personal Story of the Chief of Staff to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1950), 5.

²⁵ Elliott Roosevelt, 204; Acheson, 47. Dean Acheson opined: “One often reads of Franklin Roosevelt that he liked organizational confusion which permitted him to keep power in his own hands by playing off his colleagues one against the other. This, I think, is nonsense. Such is a policy of weakness, and Roosevelt was not a weak man. Furthermore, it did not keep power in his own hands; it merely hindered the creation of effective power by anyone.”

²⁶ O’Sullivan.

policy advisor to Franklin Roosevelt by 1928.²⁷ After becoming president, Roosevelt chose the elder, more politically seasoned, and politically favorable Cordell Hull over Welles for Secretary of State. Welles was made Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America, but his influence belied his title, even after becoming Under Secretary in 1937.

Under Secretary of State Welles was Roosevelt's personal advisor for postwar stabilization and one of the most important initial architects for the United Nations. Ironically, Welles, the person in the State Department who benefited most from the President's predilection for working outside the system, recognized the danger of this practice. Welles later wrote, "It was very rare indeed that President Roosevelt could be persuaded to bring into White House conferences on foreign policy any of those State Department specialists who had devoted a lifetime to the study of some particular country or region, and who could have given him the detailed information and authoritative viewpoint that he very frequently lacked."²⁸

The Atlantic Charter, signed by President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill four months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, at Placentia Bay, Newfoundland, was based on a draft composed by Welles, and reflected FDR's thinking on the colonial issue. The third and fourth articles of the joint declaration, specifically, are the keys to understanding his reasons for vocally opposing colonialism:

Third, they [the signatories] respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them;

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Sumner Welles, *The Seven Decisions that Shaped History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), 216.

Fourth, they will endeavor, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment by all States, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity;²⁹

After Roosevelt had passed away and the war had been successfully concluded, Sumner Welles recalled that the President had told him the Atlantic Conference “should be utilized to hold out hope to the enslaved peoples of the world,” and that “he was firm in the conviction that equal opportunity to enjoy the world’s natural resources must be available to all peoples.”³⁰ Roosevelt appeared to have a genuine concern for dependent peoples that went beyond a desire for colonial resources, but there was also a concern that tensions in the colonial world would lead to future wars unless the dependent peoples were liberated. Still another concern was that colonial powers might repeat what Japan had done in fortifying its islands in the Pacific for carrying out a war.³¹

Welles’ British counterpart, Sir Alexander Cadogan had proposed a draft joint resolution, but it was completely reworked by Welles and approved with minor modifications by the President before presented as a counter proposal to Churchill and Cadogan in a conference also attended by Harry Hopkins.³² Churchill suggested that in the third article, “sovereign rights and” be inserted before “self-government,” and all agreed. Then, after reading the fourth article, Churchill asked if it was meant to apply to the Ottawa Agreements of 1932, that established preferential trade within the British

²⁹ “The Atlantic Charter,” *The Avalon Project at Yale Law School*, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/wwii/atlantic.htm> (accessed July 25, 2004).

³⁰ Sumner Welles, *Where Are We Heading?* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1946), 6.

³¹ Japan, like Great Britain and France, had abused its position as a “mandatory” over the former possession of the German Empire by treating them as colonies. The Japanese fortified several islands in the Pacific, turning them into military bases from which they could carry out their war.

³² Welles’ notes of the Atlantic Conference are given in *FRUS, 1941*, I, 345-367. The discussion here of the Atlantic Conference is taken from there and Welles’ *Where Are We Heading?* (1946).

Empire. In Welles' mind, these agreements were anathema to the U.S. trade policy because they "were designed to force every component part of the British Empire, covering a quarter of the globe, to trade solely within that area." Two days earlier, Cadogan had told Welles"—off the record—that he had been "bitterly opposed to the Ottawa agreements" but was not sure what Churchill's position would be.

Churchill's position, it was immediately learned, was that he was in no position to unilaterally abrogate the agreements without the affirmation of the Dominions. At this point, Harry Hopkins suggested that the article be rephrased to satisfy Churchill, but Welles argued it was not simply a matter of rephrasing but "a question of vital principle which was involved." Roosevelt suggested that Churchill and Cadogan reword the article, and then present their reworked draft to Welles for completion. While the Prime Minister and his Under Secretary of State were working on revising the article, Roosevelt sent Welles a note that he wanted to maintain the minimum wording "access to raw materials." Both the President and Welles were satisfied with the Churchill-Cadogan revision in as much as it was "far broader and more satisfactory than the minimum" the President had instructed Welles to demand, and he felt it was more than Churchill originally had been willing to agree to.

Whereas the diplomat Welles describes formal meetings, the President's son, Elliott Roosevelt, recorded "confidential talks he heard at the meals to which he was brought by his father." A clearly displeased Winston Churchill would later write, adding, "I have no recollection of these private and informal interchanges where conversation

was free and unguarded.”³³ From Welles’ account, we are led to believe that discussions of empire were limited to the Ottawa Agreements, but Elliott Roosevelt reveals the beginnings of the strain which would pull at the Roosevelt-Churchill relationship throughout the war. Roosevelt, who was a proponent of the Open Door foreign policy, told Churchill that “one of the preconditions of any lasting peace will have to be the greatest possible freedom of trade.” When Churchill tried to defend the trade agreements of the British Empire, Roosevelt argued that “it’s because of them that the people of India and Africa, of all the colonial Near East and Far East, are still as backward as they are,” and characterized British colonial policies as relics of the eighteenth century. Churchill asked sarcastically who Roosevelt was referring to, and received this lecture in response:

Whichever of your ministers recommends a policy which takes wealth in raw materials out of a colonial country, but which returns nothing to the people of that country in consideration. *Twentieth-century* methods involve bringing industry to these colonies. *Twentieth-century* methods include increasing the wealth of a people by increasing their standard of living, by educating them, by bringing them sanitation—by making sure that they get a return for the raw wealth of their community.³⁴

³³ Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, volume 4, “The Hinge of Fate” (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), 680, 685. Churchill also disputes two incidents recorded by the President’s son, one in which he argues that he did not try to stop de Gaulle from coming to Casablanca and another incident involving the words “unconditional surrender.” In “In the Churchill Museum” (*The New York Review of Books*, 8 May 1987, 22-27), Timothy Garton Ash, reminds us to always be critical of memoirs as a source of historical information and quotes Churchill’s comment that “History will bear me out, particularly as I shall write that history myself.” Ash argues that “in writing the *Second World War*, Churchill consistently played down Anglo-American wartime controversy.” “His purpose,” according to the Ash, “was to confirm and strengthen a ‘special relationship’ between the United States of America and the British Commonwealth and Empire,” against the Soviet Union “as best guarantee of Britain’s continued presence at the top table of great powers in the postwar world.” Elliott Roosevelt, xiii-xviii. Elliott Roosevelt explains that he “had no intention of writing about” incidents he wrote about at the time they occurred, but was impelled to write after events unfolded after his father died such as the growing division between the Soviet Union and the Americans and British. Elliott’s knowledge of the events covered in his book are based on his role as the President’s confidante at the meetings he attended, “Father wanted and needed someone whom he knew well and trusted, a member of his family.” While the accuracy of the exact phrasing of discussions Elliott witnessed or took part in may be questioned, we have no reason to challenge the veracity of the arguments they reveal anymore than we might of a paraphrased account.

³⁴ Elliott Roosevelt, 35-36.

Churchill also questioned Roosevelt's condemnation of British imperialism by asking him about the Philippines. The President responded by returning to his discussion of twentieth-century methods similar to a point made in the 1928 *Foreign Affairs* article: "They get their independence, you know, in 1946. And they've gotten modern sanitation, modern education; their rate of illiteracy has gone steadily down."³⁵

Elliott Roosevelt's recollection has indirect support in extensive discussions in August, just before the Atlantic Conference, and renewed in November 1941, involving the Ambassador to the United Kingdom John Gilbert Winant, Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs Wallace Murray, Assistant Secretary of State Adolph A. Berle, Secretary of State Hull and Welles over whether or not to propose dominion status for India to the British. Welles believed if the President were "disposed to take the matter up I should imagine that he would wish to *discuss it in a very personal and confidential way directly with Mr. Churchill.*" Secretary Hull agreed with him, though the other officers mentioned favored pressuring the British to grant dominion status. Winant believed that it would help quiet charges "of imperialism against England in the United States," which weakened public support for Britain. Murray and Berle agreed with Winant and suggested the possibility of a defensive alliance, which the United States would help supply, being formed between India, Australia, New Zealand and China. Winant wanted a pledge that dominion status would be granted at the end of the war, whereas Murray and Berle believed that dominion status should be granted immediately.³⁶

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ "The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant) to the Secretary of State," 1 August 1941;" "Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State (Berle) to the Under Secretary of State (Welles)," 5 August 1941; "Draft of a Telegram to the Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant)," 5 August 1941;

This discussion is also important because many of the arguments that Welles used against supporting immediate dominion status for India were later used by his opponents in the State Department on the issue of trusteeship. Welles praised the British colonial civil service in India as “the highest caliber.” He noted that these officials warned that any “change in the status of India would immediately create internal dissension in India on a very wide scale.” He could not believe “that any officials in our own Government are sufficiently familiar with Indian Affairs to make it possible for their judgment and recommendations to be put up against the judgment and recommendations of the competent British authorities.” Finally, he challenged Winant’s assertion from an August, pre-Atlantic Charter memo about American public opinion by asserting that only the “extreme fringes of the Left Wing such as the Communist Party and extremist in the Irish-American community were opposing Great Britain.” It is not clear why Welles seemingly contradicted his attitude towards colonialism on this particular issue. He had started his memo by saying that the Atlantic Charter applied to India, but he closed his memo by stating that he was against intervention unless it was required “from the standpoint of our own policy, and of our national defense.”³⁷

Meanwhile, in the same month the Charter was signed, Labour Party member and British Lord Privy Seal, Clement Attlee, told an audience of West African students in

“Memorandum by the Under Secretary of State (Welles) to the Secretary of State,” 6 August 1941, *FRUS, 1941*, volume III (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1959), 178-81. (italics added)

³⁷ “Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs (Murray),” 7 November 1941; “Memorandum by the Under Secretary of State (Welles) to the Secretary of State,” 15 November 1941, *FRUS, 1941*, III, 184-87. Thorne, 146. Welles was wrong about American public opinion according to a survey held a month later which revealed that “one quarter of the American public” was “more or less anti-British.”

London that the Atlantic Charter “applied to all people of the world,” and “all races of mankind.”³⁸ On September 9, Prime Minister Churchill attempted to set the record straight. He told the British House of Commons his meeting with Roosevelt at the Atlantic Conference concluded an agreement to approach to assist Russia resist Hitler, a policy approach to contain further Japanese “encroachment in the Far East,” several technical military matters, and the Eight-Point Declaration.” After providing this explanation that emphasized the meeting was about international security, and reading the preamble which includes the words “better future for the world,” Churchill had emphasized that the “Joint Declaration” was really only aimed at “Nazi tyranny.” Then he reasoned the Atlantic Charter did “not qualify in any way,” for example, policy statements on India and Burma, adding:

We had in mind, primarily, the restoration of the sovereignty, self-government, and national life of the States and nations of Europe now under the Nazi yoke, and the principles governing any alterations in the territorial boundaries which may have to be made. So that is quite a separate problem from the progressive evolution of self-governing institutions in the regions and peoples which owe allegiance to the British Crown.³⁹

In examining the flaws of what he recognized as “quite obviously an American document,” a Member of Parliament, Henry Strauss, criticized “the mention of access on equal terms to the raw materials of the world,” in the fourth article of the Charter. He then explained this phrase “has been read in some quarters as lending some support to the German lie, very much propagated by Hitler and other German leaders, that the Germans

³⁸ Thorne, 61. Attlee was a member of the coalition, led by Churchill, involving the Labour and Conservative Parties.

³⁹ *Parliamentary Debates*, Fifth Series—Volume 374 (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1941), columns 67-69.

were debarred before the war from raw materials in non-German territories,” before attempting to refute it.⁴⁰ Another MP, Major Petherick, wondered about the need for the declaration, reminding his colleagues of President Wilson’s 14 Points, saying, “It cannot be claimed that those points have really been productive of satisfactory results.”⁴¹ MP Earl Winterton spoke about the “great delay in realizing the importance of the Empire” for its contribution to “production” in the war effort. He told the House “we have a great untapped supply of fighting strength” in a potential 2,000,000 Indian and African “fellow-subjects” under arms, and compared the potential munitions production in the colonies with that of the United States.⁴² Clement Attlee, who was present, spoke briefly in support of “complete national unity in the war effort,” and did not mention his earlier different interpretation of the Charter from the Prime Minister’s.⁴³

After the United States had entered the war, Churchill sent Roosevelt a note on February 7, 1942 which revealed his design to make concessions on the fourth article concerned with free trade while maintaining the British Union:

The great majority of the Cabinet felt that if we bartered the principle of imperial preference for the sake of lease-lend we should have accepted an intervention in the domestic affairs of the British Empire, and that this would lead to dangerous debates in Parliament as well as to a further outbreak of the German propaganda of the kind you read to me on the second night of my visit about the United States breaking up the British Union. We should only play into the enemy’s hands if we gave the slightest colour to all this nonsense. On the other hand we are all for sweeping away trade barriers and it is

⁴⁰ Ibid, cols. 98, 103. MP Price supported his contention that Germany had access to raw materials, adding that the problem in the previous 15 years had been how to dispose of the materials. Still another MP, Sir Percy Harris, recognized “the British-speaking [i.e, English-speaking] democracies control the greater part of the food and raw materials of the world,” and so the British Commonwealth had to be prepared to set an example after the war “to adjust its economic system to the general economic needs and necessities of mankind.

⁴¹ Ibid, col. 109.

⁴² Ibid, col. 121.

⁴³ Ibid, cols. 149-52.

quite likely that we shall be willing to go further than Congress in this direction. Our whole aim is to work with you in constructing a free, fertile economic policy for the postwar world. I hope most earnestly therefore that you will make allowances for all these difficulties and try to help forward the suggestions being made by us through the Foreign Office and State Department.⁴⁴

Roosevelt's response a few days later: "I told you when you were here last, I have great confidence that we can organize a different kind of world where men shall really be *free economically as well as politically*," revealed that he would hold firm on Article 3.⁴⁵ Nearly two weeks later, in an evening radio address given on February 23, 1942, he clarified his interpretation of the agreement with Churchill: "The Atlantic Charter applies not only to the parts of the world that border the Atlantic, but to the whole world; disarmament of aggressors, self-determination of nations and peoples, and the four freedoms—freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want, and freedom from fear."⁴⁶

Ignoring Elliott Roosevelt's account that the President had mentioned India when he condemned colonialism in discussions with Churchill at the Atlantic Conference, the Prime Minister wrote that he had discussed India with FDR for the first time in December 1941 at Washington, D.C. "I reacted so strongly," Churchill stated in his memoirs, "and at such length that he never raised it verbally again."⁴⁷ However, Ambassador Averell Harriman, serving as the President's special representative, brought up the issue of a new approach to India on February 26, 1942, and Roosevelt did so himself from a safe

⁴⁴ *Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*, edited by Francis L. Loewenheim, Harold D. Langley and Manfred Jonas (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1975), 176.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 176-77.

⁴⁶ "President Roosevelt's Address to Nation on America's Progress in War," *The New York Times*, 24 February 1942, 4.

⁴⁷ Churchill, 209. Ironically, India had obtained its independence in August 1947, roughly three years before this volume of Churchill's war memoirs was published.

distance in a cable a month later on March 20.⁴⁸ Roosevelt attempted to soften the message this time by prefacing it with: “Of course this is a subject which all of you good people know far more about than I do and I have felt much diffidence in making any suggestions concerning.” Then he tried to present the development of American politics, again making a reference to the eighteenth century, from the Articles of Confederation through the Continental Congress to the Constitution of 1789 as a model for what could be implemented in India. The hope was that this “might cause the people of India to forget past hard feelings, and to become more loyal to the British Empire, and to emphasize the danger of domination by the Japanese, and the advantages of peaceful evolution as contrasted with revolutionary chaos.”⁴⁹

In May, the *New York Times* quoted from a speech Sumner Welles gave to a Memorial Day audience at Arlington Theater in support of a broad interpretation of Article 3 of the Atlantic Charter when he stated: “If this war is in fact a war for the liberation of peoples it must assure the sovereign equality of peoples throughout the world,” before declaring:

The age of imperialism is ended. The right of people to their freedom must be recognized as the civilized world long since recognized the right of an individual to his personal freedom. The principles of the Atlantic Charter must be guaranteed to the world as a whole—in all oceans and in all continents.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Gary R. Hess, *America Encounters India 1941-1947* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 36-37.

⁴⁹ Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 511-12.

⁵⁰ Frank L. Kluckhohn, “Welles Predicts Post-War World Policed by Allies,” *The New York Times*, 31 May 1942, 1.

On October 27-28, 1942, *The New York Times* ran several articles related to the Atlantic Charter initiated by Wendell Wilkie's national radio address on the evening of October 26. Wilkie had returned from an international trip made as "plenipotentiary" of President Roosevelt, but also, as he noted, a private citizen on an American Army air transport plane. He told his audience that 200 million Russians and 450 million Chinese were "bewildered and anxious" because though they knew why they were fighting, but they were not so sure why Americans were. "Many of them have read the Atlantic Charter," Wilkie said, "Rightly or wrongly, they are not satisfied. They ask: What about a Pacific Charter? What about a World Charter?" "Freedom," he stated, "means the orderly but scheduled abolition of the colonial system." Appearing defensive when asked about the comments by Wilkie, his 1940 presidential election opponent, Roosevelt reminded reporters that the Atlantic Charter was merely given this name due to where it was signed and both Secretary of State Hull and he had said on numerous occasions that "the Atlantic Charter applies to all humanity."⁵¹

Roosevelt had a reason to be defensive, as he had been applying a contradictory policy on the colonial issue where Vichy France was involved. While President Roosevelt and Sumner Welles were making statements to clarify the scope of the Atlantic Charter, the State Department, including Welles, personal representatives of President Roosevelt, and the President himself made pronouncements directed at Vichy France on

⁵¹ "Text of Wilkie's address to the nation renewing his plea for a second front," 27 October 1942, page 8; "Charter says, 'All,' President replies," "Charter refers to 'All peoples,'" "Empire views stir British," "Editorial praises his criticism," 28 October 1942, page 4, *The New York Times*.

several occasions which clearly contradicted the Atlantic Charter.⁵² The British Government recognized de Gaulle as “the leader of all Frenchmen wherever they may be” after Pétain signed an armistice with the Germans in June 1940.⁵³ The Roosevelt Administration, instead, continued to recognize the Vichy Government and supported the maintenance of its empire. Beginning before the Charter was signed, on June 5, 1941, Secretary of State Hull issued a press release in which he stated: “In collaboration with the French Government we have arranged for the maintenance of the economic stability of the French North Africa territories by providing facilities for increasing trade and the purchase from us of commodities urgently needed by the people of North Africa with a view to maintaining their previous status as an integral part of the French Empire.”⁵⁴ Sumner Welles, as Acting Secretary of State on August 2, extended this recognition when he announced: “This Government, mindful of its traditional friendship for France, has deeply sympathized with the desire of the French people to maintain their territories and to preserve them intact.”⁵⁵

This policy of acknowledging Vichy French sovereignty over its colonies did not change for more than a year after the Atlantic Charter was signed. President Roosevelt sent a letter to Marshal Pétain on December 27, 1941 stating “I again repeat that as long

⁵² Peter Dennis, *Troubled Days of Peace: Mountbatten and South East Asia Command, 1945-46* (Oxford: Manchester University Press, 1987), 25. Dennis, for example, states: “Roosevelt’s stance, especially when he contrasted the moral basis of American policy with the opportunistic, self-interested outlook of the other powers, sat uneasily with the fact that of all the states fighting against the Axis, only the United States had ever recognized the Vichy government in France, and had maintained an ambassador there until the American entry into the war in December 1941.”

⁵³ Thorne, 109.

⁵⁴ Secretary Hull press release, 5 June 1941, Folder France Colonial Possessions, Box 172, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, 1900-1966, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California.

⁵⁵ Department of State press release, No. 374, 2 August 1941, Folder France Colonial Possessions, Box 172, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution.

as French sovereign control remains in reality purely French, subject solely to the limitations of the Armistice Agreement, the Government of the United States has no desire to see existing French sovereignty over French North Africa or over any of French colonies pass to the control of any other nation.”⁵⁶ December On March 2, 1942, the State Department released to the press a message to the High Commissioner of New Caledonia which maintained the consistency of the two earlier messages in the following words: “The policy of the Government of the United States as regards France and French territory has been based upon the maintenance of the integrity of France and of the French Empire and of the eventual restoration of the complete independence of all French territories.” On April 13, Acting Secretary of State Sumner Welles rearticulated to the French Ambassador his and the State Department’s earlier messages that “as this Government has informed Your Excellency’s Government upon several occasions, the Government of the United States recognizes the sovereign jurisdiction of the people of France over the territory of France and over French possessions overseas.” Coinciding with Operation *Torch*, the invasion of Vichy-controlled northwest Africa, President Roosevelt delivered a radio message on November 7 in which he told the French people “We assure that once the menace of Germany and Italy is removed from you, we shall quit your territory at once.” A similar message was released from the White House the same day. The following day, the President sent a message to Marshal Pétain reminding

⁵⁶ Draft of a Letter from President Roosevelt to the French Chief of State (Pétain), 27 December 1941, *FRUS, 1941*, volume II (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1959), 205-06.

him that “I need not tell you that the ultimate and greater aim is the liberation of France and its Empire from the Axis yoke.”⁵⁷

Roosevelt’s decision to recognize and even collude with the Nazi-collaborationist government at Vichy was predicated on two provisions of the armistice. Vichy retained independent control over its colonies and its navy. While mentioning northwest Africa in his statement of June 5, the Secretary of State suggests that the importance of this area is economic. This was subtle deception as Sumner Welles later explained:

What was paramount in Roosevelt’s mind was the security of the British and French fleets. With the major part of our own navy necessarily concentrated in the Pacific, continued Anglo-American supremacy was his primary concern. Were Hitler to obtain the bulk of the French fleet, that supremacy would be ended.⁵⁸

In sacrificing his principle on self-determination for colonies in the short-term, Roosevelt was, as he would throughout the war, maintaining the primacy of military strategy. “Roosevelt decided he would try to keep the Vichy Government from consenting to Hitler’s use of any French naval vessels against Britain,” added Welles, “and from agreeing to any German encroachment upon French authority in [West and] North Africa. He wanted to make it clear that the United States intended to enforce the resolution adopted by all the American republics at Havana in 1940 that no Western Hemisphere

⁵⁷ Department of State press release, No. 85, 2 March 1942; Note from the Acting Secretary of State to the French Ambassador, 13 April 1942; Statement by the White House, 7 November 1942; Radio message from President Roosevelt to the French people, 7 November 1942; Message from the President to the Chief of the French State, 8 November 1942, Folder France Colonial Possessions, Box 172, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution.

⁵⁸ Sumner Welles (1951), 33.

territories held by a non-American power might be transferred to any other non-American power.”⁵⁹

Roosevelt had appointed retired Admiral William Leahy as Ambassador to Vichy to serve as “a ‘watchdog’ and to try to prevent France from extending any aid to Germany beyond what was required by the armistice agreement.” The appointment of a Navy man was no mistake. Roosevelt “and I both knew the importance of the French Navy to the defense of the Western Hemisphere,” recalled Leahy. “I was to seek renewed pledges that under no circumstances would the fleet fall into German hands and to stress that its preservation would be vital to the preservation of the Empire and restoration of French autonomy.”⁶⁰ In his letter to Petain of December 27, 1941, Roosevelt had stated, “You will readily understand that France shall continue to exercise jurisdiction free from foreign domination over its own territories and possessions.”⁶¹

In his memoirs, Charles de Gaulle recalls that a few months after Pétain’s surrender to Nazi Germany, he saw in the “vast spaces of Africa” the possibility that “France could in fact re-create for herself an army and a sovereignty.”⁶² After obtaining the allegiance of the African leader of French colonial Chad, de Gaulle’s dream received encouragement. He then set his sights on Dakar. President Roosevelt’s personal representative in northwest Africa, Robert Murphy, tells us Dakar was the largest naval base at the western tip of the African continent in colonial French West Africa, “and it

⁵⁹ Ibid, 34.

⁶⁰ Leahy, 8-9.

⁶¹ Draft of a Letter from President Roosevelt to the French Chief of State (Pétain), 27 December 1941, 205-06.

⁶² Charles De Gaulle, *War Memoirs: The Call to Honour, 1940-42*, translated by Jonathan Griffin (New York: The Viking Press, 1955), 105.

was feared that the Germans would try to establish themselves and a submarine base there.” “If they were to capture that base,” adds Murphy, “German submarines [what Roosevelt referred to as the “rattlesnakes of the Atlantic”] would menace American and Allied shipping.”⁶³ Dakar is only 1864 miles from the Americas at the eastern tip of Brazil. By comparison, Chicago is 1749 miles from Los Angeles.

De Gaulle did not command the kind of force necessary to take the base, so he solicited help from the British to shoulder the naval burden. Churchill agreed with him to attempt a seizure of Dakar because, according to de Gaulle, it would mean that the naval base along with “large French forces” would be “brought back into the war,” particularly “in the hard Battle of the Atlantic.”⁶⁴ The joint British and Free French siege force attacked Vichy French-controlled Dakar on September 23, 1940, but were forced to retreat in humiliating defeat after two days. Robert Murphy arrived at Dakar three months later and spoke with the Vichy French High Commissioner, Pierre Boisson. Boisson, who had lost a leg in the First World War fighting the Germans, blamed de Gaulle for miscalculating the situation. De Gaulle had sent a staff officer to foment a mutiny amongst Boisson’s junior officers. When Murphy spoke with these officers, “everyone showed sympathy with the British cause, coupled with admiration for British courage, but much as these men wished to see Britain win the war, they felt that French Africa was their sole remaining trump and that it must be played only on a well-timed,

⁶³ Robert Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1964), 76; Leahy, 56. Dakar is in modern-day Sénégal.

⁶⁴ De Gaulle, 115.

carefully planned basis.” “A premature move,” they warned, “could easily lead to German blockade of the western Mediterranean.”⁶⁵

Roosevelt, according to Murphy, felt that de Gaulle “had started what amounted to a French civil war, putting his own ambitions above French and Allied interests.” “Roosevelt never lost the distrust of De Gaulle’s judgment and discretion which he formed then,” but de Gaulle arguably had no other choice than to challenge Roosevelt’s pro-Vichy policy if he was to gain legitimacy for his own fledgling Free French organization.⁶⁶ Shortly after the U.S. entered the war a little more than a year later, de Gaulle attempted to seize control of another possession from Vichy.

Leahy was ordered to negotiate with the Vichy French by offering economic assistance for the French West Indies and French Guiana in exchange for assurances that warships in ports there would be immobilized, and that \$245 million in gold held at Martinique would be kept out of the hands of the Germans.⁶⁷ On December 16, 1941, the U.S. concluded an agreement with Vichy French Admiral Robert in Martinique to neutralize French colonial possessions in the Western Hemisphere. Included in the agreement were two small islands off the coast of Newfoundland, Miquelon and St. Pierre, the latter of which held a powerful transmitter which the Americans worried could be used to broadcast weather reports and other information to German submarines.

After learning of the agreement, de Gaulle ordered Admiral Emile Muselier to seize St. Pierre and Miquelon, which he did at the head of a small force in less than a half

⁶⁵ Murphy, 77.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 76.

⁶⁷ Leahy, 9, 47.

hour without a shot being fired. Secretary of State Hull publicly condemned the “action taken by the so-called Free French.” Prime Minister Churchill then gave a speech at Ottawa in which he praised de Gaulle’s followers while condemning the Vichy French. An incensed American public, still reeling from the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor less than a month earlier was widely critical of Hull, giving de Gaulle the propaganda victory which eluded him a year earlier.⁶⁸

There appear to be only two other noteworthy occasions where the Roosevelt Administration supported France’s right to maintain its colonial possessions around this period. The first pledge was made in a letter to General Henri Giraud as part of the negotiations for him to hand over the French navy in preparation for Operation *Torch*. Robert Murphy wrote to Giraud on November 2, 1942: “It is thoroughly understood that French sovereignty will be reestablished as soon as possible throughout all the territory, metropolitan, and colonial, over which flew the French flag in 1939.” Much later, after Giraud had been ousted from a leadership position by de Gaulle, President Roosevelt informed his Joint Chiefs of Staff that Murphy had exceeded his authority, that France would not get back some of her former colonial possessions and “he had grave doubts as to whether Indo-China should be returned.”⁶⁹ At Anfa, three miles south of Casablanca during the conference there in January 1943, Roosevelt met with Charles de Gaulle.

⁶⁸ Sherwood, 479-88.

⁶⁹ *FRUS, 1942*, volume II (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1962), 412-22. *FRUS, 1944*, volume III (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1963), 769-70. Secretary of State Hull sent an enclosure with an inquiry to the President about statements he had learned Roosevelt had made in Cairo about a possible plan for trusteeship for Indochina. This enclosure lists several of the statements representatives made to the French supporting their claims to their colonies including two additional statements, one made to Pétain and the other made to Admiral Esteval, Resident General of Tunis, made on the occasion of the landing of American forces in Operation Torch.

During their conversation—a summary of Roosevelt’s statements alone survives because an American naval captain could not hear de Gaulle’s comments well enough to record them—Roosevelt used the analogy of a child “unable to look out and fend for itself” in describing France, saying that a court would typically appoint a trustee in such a case. Then he added that “the only course of action that would save France,” according to the captain’s summary of the discussion, “was for all of her loyal sons to unite to defeat the enemy, and that when the war was ended, victorious France could once again assert the political sovereignty which was hers over her homeland and her empire.”⁷⁰ In his recounting of this meeting, de Gaulle makes no reference to these particular statements.

CONCLUSION

Roosevelt was born and reached maturity in the most adventurous years of American foreign policy. He even participated in American intervention in the Caribbean while Assistant Secretary of the Navy. His political ideas, though, did not mature until the second half of the 1920s and can be characterized as internationalist, going beyond the Open Door policy advocated by John Hay in seeking to work in alliance with the community of American republics. Exploitation of their colonial resources by the British, Dutch, and French beginning even before the Great Depression of the 1930s exacerbated American disdain for colonialism based on the nation’s own revolutionary experience, its Open Door policy, and support of self-determination. Japanese misuse of island mandates in the Pacific as military bases and their broader

⁷⁰ *FRUS, The Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, and Casablanca, 1943* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1968), 695-96; *The War Memoirs of Charles de Gaulle: Unity, 1942-1944*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), 88-89,

aggressions in search of raw materials in colonial Southeast Asia made de-colonization an increasingly important part of Roosevelt's plans for sustaining peace after the war. In the next chapter, we will examine the attempt to develop an alternative to the failed League of Nations on a foundation supplied by the Atlantic Charter, the battles that were waged in the process, the motivations behind the different positions taken, and what this meant to America's approach to the future of French Indochina.



Prime Minister Churchill, President Roosevelt, and Marshall Stalin at the Yalta Conference, 1945¹

Chapter 7

Postwar Planning, Yalta Conference and the Death of FDR: Political Maneuvering and the New World Order

The Atlantic Charter provided a statement of aims for the postwar world, but it was an overly broad declaration, not only open for dispute over how to interpret it, but also how to bring about its goals of sustained peace and security. Throughout the war there were debates between the U.S. and its ally, Great Britain, over these issues, but division did not stop there. Postwar planning in the U.S. was carried out, in part, by a divided State Department. At times, both Britain and the State Department worked

¹ Library of Congress, <http://memory.loc.gov/service/pnp/cph/3a10000/3a10000/3a10000/3a10098r.jpg> (accessed April 24, 2005).

against the President's postwar goals. Roosevelt's aims were most blatantly undermined by the military, represented in particular by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretaries of War and Navy, who viewed peace and security from a traditional conception of strength. Political maneuvering by these actors and a desire to resurrect France affected planning for the postwar international order which included the establishment of the United Nations and the acquisition of new American bases in the strategically important Pacific Ocean.

Even before Franklin D. Roosevelt died, it was clear that the U.S. would emerge from the war far and away the wealthiest country in the world with the greatest industrial capacity, while militarily it would stand with the Soviet Union as one of the two most dominant military forces. It seems now that it could hardly be otherwise, Europe, the home to empires had been ravaged by two world wars that left the U.S. virtually unscathed. If the postwar international institutions were sponsored and fundamentally shaped by the U.S., whose leader professed to oppose colonialism, how would this affect Indochina.

BATTLES OVER TRUSTEESHIP IN THE ROOSEVELT ADMINISTRATION

In 1942, Roosevelt was confident that he could turn the loose principles of the Atlantic Charter into a tangible reality. Christopher Thorne quotes the President's response to a friend who "feared that the United States was assisting the cause of European imperialists." Roosevelt remarked, turning over his palm as he did so, "Why,

Pat, I can change all that at the proper time, as easily as this.”² He believed that colonies should undergo a period under trusteeship like the Philippines, in which they would be tutored to become stable, sovereign nations according to the American conception of a modern democratic state. Trusteeship was to be an integral part of the new United Nations, replacing the failed League of Nations and its principle of “mandate,” referred to in Roosevelt’s 1928 *Foreign Affairs* article and stipulated in Article 22 of the League’s Covenant. Article 22 provided for the tutelage of particular colonies and territories “inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world.”³ Usage of the term “mandate” had fallen from favor by World War II because territories in China, the Pacific, the Levant, and Africa taken from the Germany and the Ottoman Empire at the end of First World War were merely incorporated into the colonial empires of Japan, Britain (some were given to Australia and New Zealand to administer), and France without any real concern for eventual independence.

In signing the Joint Declaration by the United Nations on January 1, 1942, the twenty-six countries which took part pledged to employ their “full resources” in the fight against the Tripartite Pact and subscribed to the principles of the Atlantic Charter.⁴ Two weeks later, Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle, Jr., told an audience in New York

² Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 103.

³ “The Covenant of the League of Nations,” *The Avalon Project at Yale Law School*, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/leagcov.htm#art22> (accessed August 20, 2004).

⁴ *FRUS, 1942*, volume 1 (1960), 25-26. The Declaration of United Nations was signed by representatives from the US, UK, USSR, China, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, India, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Poland, South Africa, and Yugoslavia. Other nations signing on by March 1, 1945 included: Mexico, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Iraq, Brazil, Bolivia, Iran, Colombia, Liberia, France, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Paraguay, Venezuela, Uruguay, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Syria.

City the Atlantic Charter “outlaws imperialism. The era of attempted domination must end.”⁵ In a March 1st radio speech, Berle likened the Declaration of the United Nations to the Declaration of Independence. This meant “freedom for the great masses of Asia,” Berle announced, and “the materials and resources of the world would be administered so as to be accessible to all nations.”⁶ Not all State Department officials were willing to go as far as Berle; to them these were goals requiring negotiation, not foregone conclusions. Stanley Hornbeck, a political adviser and expert on eastern Asia, had circled the words in Berle’s January speech “outlaws imperialism” with a blue pencil then drew a line like the rope of a lasso to a question mark. Even while announcing that “the age of imperialism is dead,” Sumner Welles also realized there was much work to be done before it could be “outlawed.”⁷

Throughout 1942, Welles chaired the State Department’s Advisory Committee on Postwar Foreign Policy, its subcommittee on political problems (the Political Subcommittee) and, within this subcommittee, another subcommittee on international organization.⁸ In an early August meeting, the Political Subcommittee agreed to the general principle:

⁵ Speech of Adolf Berle, Jr., Assistant Secretary of State, before the National Dry Goods Association, Hotel Pennsylvania,” 15 January 1942, Box 27 Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution.

⁶ Text of speech by Adolf Berle for March 1, 1942 over the Mutual Broadcasting Company, Folder Adolf Berle, Box 27, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution.

⁷ Speech of Adolf Berle, Jr., Assistant Secretary of State, before the National Dry Goods Association, Hotel Pennsylvania, New York City, on January 15, 1942, Folder Adolf Berle, Box 27, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution.

⁸ Harley Notter, *Postwar Foreign Policy Preparation, 1939-1945r* (Washington: Department of State Publication 3580, 1949), 4, 110; Hull, 1632-34; and Welles (1951), ix, 183. The Advisory Committee on Postwar Foreign Policy was created at the end of December 1941 and the Special Subcommittee on International Organization was established in June 1942 at Welles’ suggestion to draft proposals for an international organization for discussion by the Political Subcommittee. Welles chaired the Advisory Committee until late spring 1942 when Secretary Hull took over leadership of it. The membership of the

The United States should work toward the liberation of the peoples of the Far East; and that some form of international trusteeship should be established in giving effect to this principle so as to accomplish two objects:

(a) assist the peoples of the territories to attain political maturity, and

(b) control the raw materials of the area in the interest of all peoples.⁹

Thus, international trusteeship was to offer the machinery, within the Charter of the United Nations, a governing document for a postwar international organization, giving substance to the third and fourth articles of the Atlantic Charter.

The Subcommittee further proposed that the U.S. might hold conversations with “the former sovereigns” as the war progressed to alleviate any suggestion of coercion “at the time of a formal settlement.” Great Britain, they believed, would be the lynchpin. If the U.S. could get Great Britain to place Burma under trusteeship, “the other countries would then more readily fall in line.” They anticipated the Dutch would be amenable to placing the East Indies under trusteeship because they had already “prepared a new, liberal constitution for their” colony, while they did not believe “France had any claim to regain Indochina.” The decisions of the Subcommittee at this time, however, appeared tentative. While they were unsure if trusteeship could be applied to all colonies throughout the world, they did agree that it would “to areas where colonial monopolistic control had by high prices for example, rendered access very difficult to essential raw

Special Subcommittee on International Organization was a subset of the members of the Political Subcommittee and both were chaired by Welles in 1942. Welles claims that he wrote the first draft of what evolved into the Charter of the United Nations along with Hamilton Fish Armstrong, the head of the Council on Foreign Relations.

⁹ P Minutes 21, “Far Eastern Problems,” 8 August 1942, Box 55, Notter Files, RG 59, NARA.

materials.”¹⁰ These two weaknesses in forming a consensus—the need to gain British affirmation and emphasis on raw materials rather than liberation—became sources of contention that would, over time, begin to separate the idea of international trusteeship from Articles Three and Four of the Atlantic Charter.

The general principle established in August was restated in a joint Political Subcommittee-Special Subcommittee on International Organization document on international trusteeship in October. However, these subcommittees decided to exclude colonial areas in the Western Hemisphere from trusteeship. This conveniently removed areas under U.S.’s suzerainty such as Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as,



Sumner Welles by Yousuf Karsh, 1943¹¹

presumably, Hawai’i and Guam. They also decided to prohibit military, naval or air bases, and defense forces from trusteeships “except as agreed upon by the executive

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ George Eastman House, http://www.geh.org/ne/mismi3/m198130600036_ful.html (accessed April 24, 2005).

authority as being in the interest of such general security.”¹² This was done in response to the Japanese use of mandates for military bases in the Pacific.

On October 22, the Subcommittee on International Organization, whose members were comprised of a subset of the Political Subcommittee, drafted tentative views they had arrived at during meetings held from July 17 to October 9. They added to the League of Nations mandates, which had applied only to surrendered territories from the First World War, “dependent peoples not yet ready for self-government.” The Western Hemisphere was not mentioned directly, however; it was omitted from the list of regions to be considered for trusteeship. The Subcommittee proposed that French and Dutch colonies in the Caribbean be added to the Caribbean Commission, an Anglo-American organization designed to deal with colonial issues involving American bases in British territory. They also excluded from their trusteeship scheme “certain strategic points” important for “an international security system and as commercial airports for the inter-continental air transportation service of the future.”¹³

Welles continued to maintain the integrity of trusteeship tied to the spirit of the Atlantic Charter—in as much as it did not apply to the Americans—as long as he maintained control of these postwar planning committees, even if there were clear moves away from the direction he charted. Secretary Hull signaled this was to come to an end in

¹² P Document 118/P.I.O. Document 95, “An International Trusteeship for Non-Self-Governing Peoples,” 21 October 1942, Box 56, Notter Files, RG 59, NARA.

¹³ P Document 121-a, “Tentative Views of the Subcommittee on International Organization,” 22 October 1942, Box 56, Notter Files, RG 59, NARA.

November 1942 when he recommended that trusteeship not include colonies, “primarily on grounds of political feasibility.”¹⁴ He later explained his reasoning:

Our prime difficulty generally with regard to Asiatic colonial possessions, of course, was to induce the colonial Powers—principally Britain, France, and The Netherlands—to adopt our ideas with regard to dependent peoples. Britain had refused to go along with us on the idea of eventual independence of her colonies, believing instead that they should in time achieve self-government within the Empire. We had frequent conversations with these parent countries, but we could not press them too far with regard to the Southwest Pacific [(Southeast Asia) Division of the State Department] view of the fact that we were seeking the closest possible cooperation with them in Europe. We could not alienate them in the Orient and expect to work with them in Europe.¹⁵

For ten days in December 1942, the scope of the Atlantic Charter was debated between two groups which emerged out of international attendees of a conference held by the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR) in Quebec.¹⁶ Although IPR was a non-governmental agency, it made the decision to invite government officials from several countries for this particular conference. The individual diplomats, colonial officials, and businessmen attended in an unofficial capacity from countries including Canada, China, France, India, Netherlands and Netherlands East Indies, the Philippines, Thailand, United

¹⁴ Notter, 110; Hull, 1638.

¹⁵ Hull, 1599.

¹⁶ *War and Peace in the Pacific* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1943), 24; Paul F. Hooper, “A Brief History of the Institute of Pacific Relations,” [“a slightly-edited version of an article that appeared under the same title in *The Journal of Shibusawa Studies* 5 (October 1992), pp. 3-32”]. Accessed on 30 July 2004 at: <http://pacificaffairs.com/history/hooper.pdf>. The Institute of Pacific Relations was conceived in 1919, established in 1925 in Hawai’i, and became the preeminent pre-War private organization in the U.S. for fostering East-West relations through research, conferences and publications, including the periodicals, *Pacific Affairs* and *Far Eastern Survey*. Edward C. Carter, who, being critical of the headquarters location in Hawaii had said, “Honolulu has no culture; no facilities for world news; and is so tropical that no one can think of do[ing] serious work,” had them moved to New York two years after he was made the Secretary General of the Institute in 1933. In 1941, President Roosevelt had enlisted the editor of *Pacific Affairs*, Owen Lattimore, to become special adviser to Chiang Kai-shek. William Holland, one-time Secretary General of the Institute, also moved from the Institute to government service when in 1944 he resigned to work with the O.S.S. in its Washington, D.C. office. The Institute’s demise was brought about during the McCarthy years when Alfred Kohlberg, who was concerned over critical remarks about Chiang Kai-shek’s government that Edward Carter had made, initiated pro-communist allegations against the Institute.

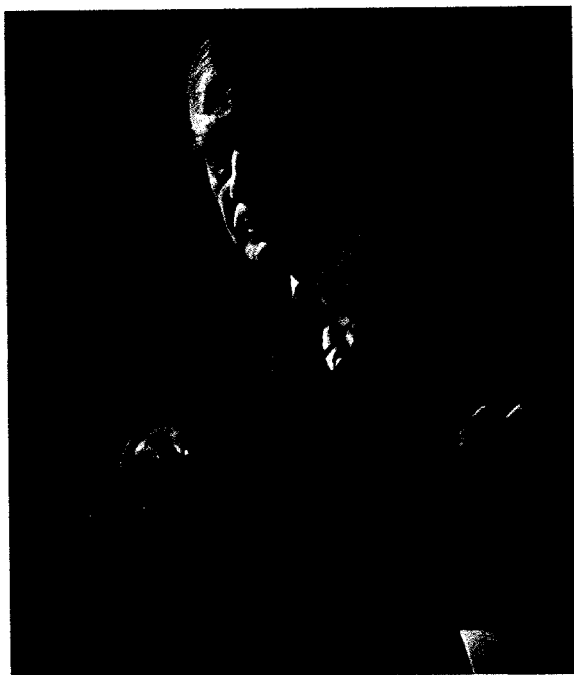
Kingdom, and U.S.¹⁷ “Representatives of all the colonial powers present, including the Fighting French,” according to the Conference report, argued that the Atlantic Charter’s provisions gave “added force” to the trend which had already been naturally occurring in these areas whereby the colonial administrators had been working to improve “native welfare” and “native self-determination” for many years. “A cynic remarked,” the report recorded, “that evidently the old types of colonial administration no longer paid, since no support whatever could be found in the conference for a strict adherence, after the war, to that combination of bondage and paternalism which is associated in the popular mind with imperialism—and this notwithstanding Mr. Churchill’s recent seeming defense of that system.”¹⁸

The conference had several roundtables. In the Southeast Asia Roundtable, a consensus was reached on the need to improve the economic welfare of dependent peoples, or the native inhabitants of colonies. The U.S. was called upon by attendees, as likely the strongest nation to emerge from the war, to “pledge its share in the maintenance of the international law and order without which all hopes of reforms in that area might prove illusory.”¹⁹ There was no similar support for independence or self-determination, and those attendees who had initially favored a single international trusteeship for the colonies were convinced after discussions, of the “practical difficulties of such a transformation.” Two attendees to the Conference were State Department officials and members of the postwar committees, Stanley Hornbeck and Leo Pasvolsky.

¹⁷ *War and Peace*, 154-56.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 25.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 48-49.



Cordell Hull by Yousuf Karsh, 1946²⁰

On January 4, 1943, Secretary of State Hull replaced Under Secretary Welles as acting chairman of the Subcommittee on Political Problems and took over as active chair of the Advisory Committee.²¹ Within two weeks he also established the Division of Political Studies with Harley Notter as its chief within the newly established Committee on Special Studies chaired by Pasvolsky,

who Hull had appointed in September 1939 as his Special Assistant “primarily for work on problems of peace.” Dean Acheson later referred to Pasvolsky as Hull’s “chief lieutenant.”²²

Hull directed Pasvolsky to draft a United Nations Declaration with the help of Hornbeck and Green Hackworth, Legal Advisor of the State Department, which he sent to President Roosevelt on March 17, 1943.²³ Using as its basis the adoption of the Atlantic Charter by the United Nations in 1942, the document recognized “the duty and

²⁰ http://www.geh.org/ne/mismi3/m198130600029_ful.html#topofimage (accessed April 24, 2005).

²¹ Notter, 169.

²² Department Order 1124, 14 January 1943; Denys P. Myers, “Leo Pasvolsky (1893-1953),” *Cosmos Club Bulletin* 9, 9 (July-Aug, 1956); Department Order 1124, 14 January 1943, Folder Leo Pasvolsky, Box 332, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution; and Notter, 165. Pasvolsky immigrated with his parents from Pavlograd, Russia in 1905 when he was about 12 years-old. Acheson, 65; *Navigating the Rapids, 1918-1971: From the Papers of Adolf A. Berle*, edited by Beatrice Bishop Berle and Travis Beal Jacobs (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973). 443; Though Acheson refers to Pasvolsky as Hull’s “chief lieutenant,” Adolf Berle referred to James Dunn in 1943 as Hull’s principal adviser.

²³ Notter, 110; Hull, 1234-36

the purpose of each nation having political ties with colonial peoples” to abide by several provisions including:

- c. To grant progressively to the colonial peoples such measure of self-government as they are capable of maintaining in the light of the various stages of their development toward independence;
- d. To fix, at the earliest practicable moments, dates upon which the colonial peoples shall be accorded the status of full independence within a system of general security; and
- e. to pursue policies under which the natural resources of colonial territories shall be developed, organized and marketed in the interest of the peoples concerned and of the world as a whole.²⁴

The proposal also called for “continuous consultation and collaboration” between the European empires and “other nations which have substantial interest in the regions in which such areas are located.” However, the next paragraph excludes colonies belonging to any countries other than the losers of World War I, and the Axis Powers in World War II from trusteeship:

As a result of the last war, people in several areas still unprepared for full independence were released from political ties with nations formerly responsible for them. Other peoples in like status may be similarly released from their former political ties as a result of this war.²⁵

On April 10, Hull pushed his proposal of excluding non-enemy colonies from territorial trusteeship through a meeting of the international organization group in which the participants included Welles, Pavolsky, Notter, and Hornbeck along with numerous others.²⁶ The “minutes,” actually only a summary of the meeting, revealed that the

²⁴ Notter 470-72.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ P Minutes 51, “The Problem of Trusteeship,” 10 April 1943, Box 55, Notter Files, RG 59, NARA (this same document is also available in Harley Notter Foler, Box 321, Stanley K. Hornbeck Files, Hoover Institution). Also present were Hamilton Fish Armstrong, Senator Warren R. Austin, Adolf A. Berle, Representative Sol Bloom, Isaiah Bowman, Senator Tom Connally, Representative Charles A. Eaton,

group's trusteeship plan included colonies and territories captured from enemies in both wars, without mentioning the plan submitted to the President a month earlier. It omits names of individuals aligned with a particular position; however, it is clear that Hull was behind the move to overturn the scope of trusteeships as it had earlier been defined while Welles had chaired the group:

There was read for the subcommittee a statement outlining the duties of a parent country to its colonies. It was felt that this document, as well as reports of British official opinion, indicated that Britain would not favor subjecting its colonies to international supervision but would undertake to apply in them the fundamental objectives of trusteeship. It was stated that European dependencies in the Western Hemisphere are to be excluded from the jurisdiction of a trusteeship system. For these reasons, it was suggested, the trusteeship plan should be further considered in terms of only the first two categories of dependencies—mandated areas and territories detached from the Axis.²⁷

Hornbeck sent Welles a letter before the group's next meeting on April 17, in which he denied that he was "moved to argue the point, either pro or contra," but acknowledged that he had begun to view the benefits of self determination for people under colonialism with more ambiguity after reading a book on British colonialism (Lennox A. Mills, *British Rule in Eastern Asia*, 1942). An excerpt from his letter reads:

The horns of that dilemma are these: on the one hand, we want to see peoples governing themselves, we want them to have something which they themselves want or think they want to have, freedom and independence; on the other hand, we want them to have peace and relative prosperity. In many a case, the facts of the situations being what they are, it is difficult for them to have either and almost impossible for them to have both. Take, for

Senator Walter F. George, Representative Luther A. Johnson, John V.A. MacMurray, Anne O'Hare McCormick, James T. Shotwell, Myron C. Taylor, Senator Elbert D. Thomas, Senator Wallace H. White, Jr., Wallace S. Murray, Ray Atherton Paul Daniels, Leroy D. Stinebower, C. Easton Rothwell and James Frederick Green. O'Sullivan, <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/osc01/osc04.html>. Christopher O'Sullivan explains that Congressional representatives were included in discussions of postwar planning for an international organization to avoid the obstacles Woodrow Wilson encountered in having the U.S. join the League of Nations. Bloom was the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee; Connally was the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; Eaton was the minority leader in the House Foreign Affairs Committee; and George was a former chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

²⁷ Ibid.

instance, a region such as the Malay Peninsula. Under British rule, the Malays and the Chinese at least refrain from flying at each other's throats, cannot terrorize one over the other, and enjoy (at least on the Chinese side) a considerable measure of prosperity. Give them freedom and independence,—one may wonder how long that situation would continue? The same question can be asked—and certainly are often put forward by the British—regarding India.²⁸

In the international organization group's meeting on the 17th, copies of a document entitled "International Trusteeship" were distributed, in which the scope of trusteeship was restricted to mandates and Axis dependencies. The argument was made—again, we are not told by whom—that colonies should be included as well, because British public opinion "would support such a proposal." Basing its opinion on the belief that "it is important that the American public realize that their objectives must be reconciled with those of other nations," the group rejected this argument.²⁹

Three years later, Welles explained that he supported coercion if necessary to extend trusteeship over the Allies:

The United States had the chance to secure the adoption within the charter of concrete provisions which could have averted chaos and paved the way for the orderly liberation of the colonial peoples. It is true that the colonial powers, such as Great Britain, the Netherlands and France, strenuously objected to the inclusion within the charter of any such specific provisions. But had the United States insisted, the colonial powers would have acceded. The violent upheaval which has now taken place in the Far East, and which may increase in intensity in the future, might have been prevented.³⁰

Trusteeship was only one issue in a conflict between Secretary Hull and Under Secretary Welles that stretched back several years, and was fully resolved until late in 1943. "Mr. Hull rankled under what he believed to be Welles' disloyalty and the

²⁸ Hornbeck to Mr. Welles, 12 April 1943, Folder Sumner Welles, Box 440, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution.

²⁹ "Problems of Trusteeship," 17 April 1943, Folder Harley Notter, Box 321, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution.

³⁰ Welles (1946), 368.

President's neglect," observed Dean Acheson.³¹ As early as 1940, Hull confidante Breckinridge Long recorded in his diary that Hull had respect for Welles' ability but the Under Secretary "acts independently and forgets to tell the Secretary."³² Welles' ongoing conflict with Hull ended in Welles' resignation under pressure for political reasons on August 22, 1943 (officially on September 25). An ambitious and jealous William Christian Bullitt, an ally of Hull, had gone on a campaign to tarnish Welles' reputation by spreading rumors in government circles of a purported incident one day in 1940 where Welles solicited sex from several train porters while drunk. Shortly before Welles' resignation, Hull had threatened Roosevelt, saying that he would resign if Welles did not do so first.³³ Hull, a southern Democrat, was a political asset for the following year's

³¹ Acheson, 12, 47; *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes*, vol. III (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), 464-65; and *The Price of Vision: The Diary of Henry A. Wallace, 1942-1946* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973), 68; *Navigating the Rapids*, 400, 415; General Albert C. Wedemeyer. *Wedemeyer Reports!* New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1958), 170; and Thorne, *Allies of a Kind*, 113-14. General Albert C. Wedemeyer related Roosevelt "had announced that he was his own State Department." Hull complained that "the President runs foreign affairs," and that "I don't know what's going on. I have to find out from Halifax what's going on between the President and Churchill." While maintaining that his own relationship with Welles was good, Dean Acheson wrote that the Under Secretary was extremely stiff and "his voice, pitched much lower than would seem natural, though it had been so since he was a boy, lent a suggestion of pomposity." Some people disliked Welles due to his part in bringing dictator, Fulgencio Batista, to power while Ambassador to Cuba, and admiration for Benito Mussolini as the greatest man he had ever met. Two particular issues that irked Hulls, though, according the Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle, were Welles' control of the Rio Conference, which raised "a square question as to who is the real Secretary of State," and sidestepping the Secretary in making speeches on postwar plans.

³² *The War Diary of Breckinridge Long*, edited by Fred L. Israel (Lincon, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 67.

³³ *The Price of Vision*, 233; *The War Diary of Breckinridge Long*, 322. Irwin F. Gellman, *Secret Affairs: Franklin Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 219, 235-37. The incident purportedly occurred in September 1940 after President Roosevelt had ordered his entire cabinet to attend Speaker of the House of Representative William Bankhead's funeral. Welles went in Secretary Hull's absence onboard the President's party's Pullman train customized for Roosevelt's wheelchair. After reaching his sleeping quarter on the return trip from Alabama to Washington, D.C., a drunken Welles began to ring his service bell. When the porter answered, Welles solicited him for sex. The porter rebuffed Welles, but the Under Secretary continued to ring for a porter and solicited sex from each who came to answer the request for service but all refused. See also Benjamin Welles, *Sumner Welles: FDR's Global Strategist* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 333-47, who deftly skirts the details of the homosexual allegation against his father. Bullitt had gone to J. Edgar Hoover to obtain a report of an FBI investigation of Welles, but Hoover refused having concluded that there was "no pattern of

political campaign for president. Although Hull no longer had to worry about his Under Secretary's statements such as "imperialism is ended" appearing on the front page of the *New York Times*, but Welles would not be quieted so easily.

Welles published his own proposal for dealing with colonialism in 1944, which envisioned four separate forms of trusteeship. For Korea, he recommended that China, the Soviet Union, and the U.S. "render the assistance required until all of the mechanics of self-government can be supplied." India, next on the list of colonies that required progressively more tutelage, was "capable of enjoying autonomy in the immediate future." French Indochina, Burma, and Malay had "passed the first milestone along the road toward self-government; but they have not as yet reached a stage of development where they can successfully undertake the exercise of those rights." They would require the assistance of international trusteeship and regional authorities. New Guinea represented those most in need of "enlightened" tutelage because the "colonial peoples of the Southwestern Pacific who are still uncivilized and as yet clearly incapable of governing themselves."³⁴ Under the typical scenario, as Welles proposed it, the colonial power would act as trustee, but "be responsible to public opinion through the

homosexual behavior." Undaunted, Bullitt had warned the President in July that Welles could be blackmailed. Bullitt's friend, Cordell Hull, then threatened to resign if Welles did not. Roosevelt needed Hull politically and told Welles that Hull had been trying to get him removed for a year and a half.

³⁴ Sumner Welles, *The Time for Decision* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944), 300-03. What we today call ethnocentric tone of Welles' wording, despite the forward thinking on colonialism for his era, might more correctly be referred to as Social Darwinistic attitudes of the former Under Secretary of State who was born ten years after Roosevelt and certainly influenced by many of the same currents of thought growing up. *Navigating the Rapids*, 456. Adolf Berle cautions us in reading what Welles has written about projects he was involved in with this: "Such a book almost inevitably has the author for its central character and figure; whereas the one certain thing about this business is that whatever any individual was doing was unparalleled, duplicated or affected by a great many other individuals at the same time. Murakami, 379. Even Japanese policymakers believed the Vietnamese would require 20 years of tutelage before becoming "an independent nation within the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere," according to Sachiko Murakami.

international organization itself.” However, in the case of Korea and “where the present colonial power has proved unworthy or incompetent, the International Trusteeship, through its regional councils, should undertake the administration of their affairs.” Policymaking authority was to be vested in the International Organization, and the regional councils were to act as an advisory body.³⁵

In early July 1943, Secretary Hull suspended meetings of the Advisory Committee and its various subcommittees through autumn of 1944 so that “the results of our discussions to date be brought together in the form of documents which can serve as a basis of a more specific consideration of policies and proposals.”³⁶ As a consequence, Harley Notter’s Division of Political Studies further solidified the State Department’s position not to challenge the prewar status quo of colonial Southeast Asia in several study papers. The Political Studies group used arguments eerily similar to those Welles had used when arguing against immediate dominion status for India in November 1941. They consistently refused to recognize the possibility of self-rule in the colonies, acknowledged the legal right of the British, Dutch, French, and Portuguese to their colonial possessions, in some cases applauded their administration, and shunned any attempt to challenge their control even for interim military governments.

In their paper on British Malaya, the Division of Political Studies argued “the inaccessibility of much of the country, the racial heterogeneity [sic] of the population, the transient nature of the non-Malay peoples, the inability of the Malay Sultans to cope with modern economic problems, and the Malay’s backwardness and inexperience in

³⁵ Ibid, 383-84.

³⁶ Notter, 165.

democratic government—all these factors militate against the achievement of independence.”³⁷ “The only alternative to the British plan” for their own military government in Burma, went another paper, “would appear to be the establishment of an inter-allied military government.” The Division of Political Studies doubted a country “as backward as” the Netherlands East Indies will be given autonomy despite Dutch plans for imperial reorganization. “They may grant the form,” the State Department document read, “but deny the substance of autonomy, or virtually give control over the Indies Government to the Dutch and Eurasians resident there.”³⁸

The Political Studies group merely supported the orthodox viewpoint in the department that the European colonial powers continued to be the rightful sovereigns of their colonies in Southeast Asia even after the Japanese invasion had either kicked them out or, in the case of Indochina, allowed them to stay as long as they supported Japanese military goals. In an August paper, the group used two statements by Sumner Welles, one on August 2, 1941 and another on April 13, 1942, supporting French “territory” and “possessions overseas” without any apparent understanding that such comments were made to neutralize the French fleet and French colonial territory in Africa and the Western Hemisphere as discussed earlier. In a November paper, the group spoke “of the fact that French Indo-China is still legally under French sovereignty.”³⁹ The group also suggested the U.S. had recognized the Portuguese sovereignty of their colony in Timor

³⁷ PS, “The Problem of British Malaya: Possible Solutions,” 13 October 1943, Folder Harley Notter, Box 321, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution.

³⁸ PS, “Probably Dutch Objections to Proposals for International Accountability for the Administration of the East Indies,” 1 December 1943, Folder Harley Notter, Box 321, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution.

³⁹ PS, “Indo-China: Military Government,” 9 November 1943, Folder Harley Notter, Box 321, Stanley Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution.

based on an instruction Welles sent to the American legation in Lisbon. Although the group's paper recognized that the instruction was given "relative to reported Japanese in Timor," the inference was that Portuguese control over their colony could not be subsequently challenged.⁴⁰

Even if their sovereignty could be challenged, the Political Studies group seemed to suggest that there was really no desire to do so. In their paper on British Malaya, colonial rule was applauded for substituting "law and order, justice, honest administration, and prosperity for the piracy, petty tyranny, and insecurity that had characterized the Malay States." "Any attempt to substitute an [sic] international personnel for British administrators," the group argued in their paper, "would merely weaken the government structure and intensify the racial schisms within the country."⁴¹ The standards of the Dutch colonial administration in the Netherlands East Indies "during the last decades have been as high or higher than the standards set by the Mandates system under the League of Nations."⁴² Such apparent support for colonialism makes apparent one reason why Roosevelt had disdain for a State Department that opposed his anti-colonial policies.

Even where they desired to end colonialism, this group concerned with post-war plans was reluctant to endanger American relations with allies. The Political Studies group, for example, believed that a post-war inter-allied military government was "optimal" for Burma, but concluded "the disadvantages involved in acquiescence by the

⁴⁰ PS, "Official Statements and Views Pertaining to the Far East (September 1939 to date)," 26 August 1943, Folder Harley Notter, Box 321, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution.

⁴¹ "The Problem of British Malaya: Possible Solutions";

⁴² "Probably Dutch Objections to Proposals for International Accountability for the Administration of the East Indies."

United States in the British Military Government in Burma would not seem to be such as to justify the exercise of extreme pressure in order to effect a change in British policy.”⁴³

Welles' replacement as Under Secretary of State, Edward Stettinius, led a mission from April 7 to April 29 1944 to “to exchange views with the British Government” on a wide range of issues including current politics, economics, the Middle East, and postwar planning, and then presented its report to the President on May 26. Each member, other than Stettinius, focused on a particular issue. Isaiah Bowman, as Vice Chairman of the Advisory Council on Postwar Foreign Policy, held discussions “with practically the whole of the upper Foreign Office staff,” Churchill, Foreign Secretary Eden, and a study group attached to the Foreign Office on the colonial question.⁴⁴ Bowman tried to find out how willing the British would be to accept “principles for the guidance of the United Nations in the administration of dependent peoples,” in which “the emphasis was at first upon ‘independence,’ later changed to ‘self-government.’” On this issue, as with other issues, the British response was harsh, perhaps even condescending:

⁴³ PS, “Burma: Military Government.” 2 December 1943, Folder Harley Notter, Box 321, Stanley Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution.

⁴⁴ Memorandum for the President, 26 May 1944; The Under Secretary of State [to] The Honorable Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, Letter of Transmittal, 22 May, 1944; Report to the Secretary of State the Honorable Cordell Hull, On Conversations in London April 7th to April 29th, 1944, Folder State-Edward Stettinius, Box 93, PSF, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; (the report is published here) “The British Commonwealth of Nations, United Kingdom,” Report of the Secretary of State Under Secretary of Stettinius on His Mission to London, April 7-29, 1944, [dated] 22 May, 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, III, 1-30. Isaiah Bowman, *The New World: Problems in Political Geography* (Chicago: World Book Company, 1928), 3, 321. Bowman, who had been a delegate at the Paris Peace Conference after World War I, had been no friend of self-determination. In his memoir of the conference, he described the colonial issue as the relationship of the capital of industrial states to labor: “Ultimately someone has to do the world’s manual labor...for the white man.” “We know that if the grip of [western man] were loosened anarchy would follow it in many instances,” he wrote. In another characteristic comment, he argued, “The weak sometimes fear and hate the strong with reason... To impress social and political equality upon all classes is not to raise the lower but to pull down the higher, and this is no less true in spiritual and political life than it is in economic affairs.”

It is the British view that these statements are vague and impractical. They claim that the diversities of life and environment among dependent peoples are so great that it is not possible to make any real improvement in the relations of such peoples to the *métropole* by setting up what they feels is a vague set of general ideas.⁴⁵

To the question of a definite time table for granting self-government, the British position was similar:

The point is made that a definite time table to be followed in giving an independent status to colonial peoples is an impossible goal. One cannot say in advance when the processes of education will enable a given people to exercise self-government.... Self-governing people, the British feel, are developed as a result of trial and error. To put all dependent peoples under a general set of principles is to pretend that all may be treated alike. Moreover, an enduring security system is not achieved by multiplying completely independent and small entities all over the world.⁴⁶

In a phone conversation which touched on the subject of postwar planning with influential newspaper columnist Walter Lippmann on July 31, Stettinius sought to distance the Department from Welles' publicly expressed views. He said, "Sumner used some of the State Department stuff but he went off on his own in a lot of ways that did not represent the official thinking here. As a matter of fact, most of this has been developed within the last six months and Sumner has been gone a year."⁴⁷

By mid-1944, the language of the State Department's draft proposal for trusteeship, had changed somewhat, but Hull's decision not to apply it to colonies of non-enemies remained:

A. *Scope and Purposes.* the international organization should establish a system of international trusteeship by which it would

(a) [mandates from League of Nations], and

⁴⁵ "The British Commonwealth of Nations, United Kingdom," 20.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 20-21.

⁴⁷ Stettinius, 101.

(b) acquire authority over certain territories which may be detached from the present enemy states. *By action of the general assembly the system might be extended to any territories for which assistance is requested by member states having control over such territories.*⁴⁸

This draft, Article IX, Territorial Trusteeship, was conceived in the spirit of the Atlantic Charter to de-colonize the world, but had come to be an only slightly modified version of the Covenant of the League of Nations' Article 22 on mandates. Article IX was, however, not introduced as part of the Tentative Proposals for a General International Organization at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference at the request of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS).⁴⁹ The Soviet Union was making hints that it wanted recognition for territories gained under the secret non-aggression pact with the Germans between 1939 and 1941.⁵⁰ The JCS was concerned that discussion of territorial settlement might prevent the Soviet Union from entering the war against Japan, and hinder their desire to gain control of Japanese islands for bases.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Notter, 606. (italics added)

⁴⁹ Ibid, 397; see also *FRUS, 1944*, volume I (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1966), 665, note 22.

⁵⁰ Welles (1951), 134

⁵¹ Notter, 604, 660; General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the United States Army, to the Secretary of State, Washington, 3 August, 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, I, 699-700; and Stanley Hornbeck to Mr. Stettinius, 9 August 1944, Folder Correspondence Stettinius, Box 400, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California; Hull, 1599; and Notter, 660. General Marshall cited two military considerations: "a. The incalculable importance to the United States of the early entry of Russia into the war against Japan, and b. The very profound changes that will be found in the military strengths of the major powers of the world upon the conclusion of the present war." Commenting on the JCS concern, Hornbeck, Adviser for the Far East, wrote: "The probability is that the Russians will make their decision regarding entry or non-entry into the war against Japan on the basis of their estimate of major considerations in connection with their relations with China. Silence on our part regarding our ideas on the subject of territorial settlements would not conceal from the Russians the fact that we have ideas on that subject; nor would it keep them substantially in the dark as to what those ideas are. Moreover, either the British or the Russians or both are very likely, as they examine our proposals regarding international organization, to ask regarding our thought on the subject." *The Forrestal Diaries*, edited by Walter Millis (New York: The Viking Press, 1951), 31. Reliance on the Soviet Union to aid in plans for the invasion of Japan prior to the first successful atomic bomb test can best be described by a note in Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal's diary from late February 1945 that General MacArthur had told him anything less than 60

A month after the Dumbarton Oaks Conference was held, the State Department's position on trusteeship had been reduced to a plea:

It would be *especially helpful* if [early, dramatic, and concerted announcements making definite commitments as to the future] could include

- (1) specific dates when independence or complete (dominion) self-government will be accorded,
- (2) specific steps to be taken to develop native capacity for self-rule, and
- (3) a pledge of economic treatment toward other nations.

"*It might be wise,*" the Department memorandum proposes, "for the U.S. to *attempt* to insist upon such a declaration of trusteeship by one country if similar declarations could not be secured from the others."⁵²

In an October 5 memorandum to the President, Hull was concerned about the Japanese policy of retreat "to lay the foundations for a possible resurgence of Japanese influence in Asia in identifying themselves as the champions of liberation who were thwarted and defeated by Western imperial powers." This necessitated "prompt formulation of American policies towards the regions of Southeast Asia," argued Hull, "and the importance—as a measure of psychological warfare—of a concerted, dramatic announcement by the appropriate United Nations regarding the future of these regions."⁵³

In spite of Hull's best efforts, there was division and confusion in the ranks of the State Department over the future of the French Empire and Indochina. Head of the Far

Russian divisions might be insufficient to hold down the Japanese while American forces concentrated on attacking the main Japanese island of Honshu.

⁵² Hull, 1600. (*italics added*)

⁵³ Memorandum for the President, 5 October 1944, Folder State-Cordell Hull, Box 166, Map Room, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL.

East Division, John Carter Vincent had sent a memo to Berle in early November 1943, explaining his understanding of China's position on Indochina before adding:

The post-war status of French Indochina is a matter of speculation: return to France; international control; and even British control. It is our belief that the Annamites are fundamentally capable of self-government and that it should be the objective of any post-war administration to train Annamites to resume the responsibilities of self-government. This objective might be achieved by a continuation of French administration for a definitely limited period or by international administration.⁵⁴

Even with Welles gone for over a year, Secretary Cordell Hull's relationship with the President had not improved, and he resigned in November 1944, a few weeks after Roosevelt was reelected.⁵⁵ Roosevelt chose Stettinius as his replacement. Before replacing Hull's nemesis in 1943, Stettinius headed the Lend-Lease program. His detractors believed he "had little knowledge of international politics, and possessed a mind the mediocrity of which, and its predilection for trivia, are reflected in contemporary records and recalled as an embarrassment by men who worked with him."⁵⁶ Roosevelt was well aware of such assessments and it was widely believed they were largely the reason behind his choice of Stettinius.

⁵⁴ FE: Vincent to Mr. Berle, 2 November 1943, Folder French Indo-China, Box 173, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution.

⁵⁵ *The War Diary of Breckinridge Long*, 387-88. Hull had decided by October 1944 to retire, but put off his decision to do so until after the election as a service to Roosevelt. He confided this and his reasons for retiring to State Department official Breckinridge Long. His list of complaints were involved Vice President Henry Wallace, Sumner Welles, Henry Morgenthau all generally related to his feeling "He was tired of being by-passed. He was tired of being relied upon in public and ignored in private."

⁵⁶ Thorne, *Allies of a Kind*, 508-09; *The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg*, edited by Arthur H. Vandenberg, Jr. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1942), 191; and Robert L. Messer, *The End of an Alliance: James F. Byrnes, Roosevelt, Truman, and the Origins of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 77. Stettinius had replaced Sumner Welles in 1943 after administering the Lend-Lease program. Senator Arthur Vandenberg's May 13, 1945 diary entry included this description of the Secretary of State: "I agree that there is no longer any strong hand on our foreign policy rudder—neither Truman nor Stettinius nor Grew. Stettinius does *not* have a seasoned grasp of foreign affairs. He rarely contributes to our policy decisions. We improvise as we go along. Stettinius is

Hornbeck had been provided with copies of documents all of which showed the U.S. recognition of the French Empire and its possessions (before the invasion of Northwest Africa as discussed in the previous chapter) by French Desk Officer James C.H. Bonbright in December. On December 18, Hornbeck sent a memo to James Dunn, Adviser on Political Relations, expressing his confusion over the official position on Indochina, "in the light of 'rumors' where there are not still other and even more conclusive indication of this Government's definitely formulated intention and/or commitment in regard to the French Empire or specified parts thereof."⁵⁷

Roosevelt was at least partially responsible for such confusion. The State Department had not participated in Allied conferences held for discussing military strategy, but at which he also articulated his ideas on colonialism. While such ideas may have found their way back to the Department, it was not in a coherent form recognizable as a policy. This was by design. His focus during the war was on winning the war, even while postwar planning was well under way building postwar institutions. He had Welles working on the machinery of trusteeship in the State Department during 1942. But Roosevelt told Welles he desired "alternative solutions" to potential problems "so that when the times comes," the President could choose from the various propositions supplied to him.⁵⁸

In fact, the President had hinted at trusteeship for colonies ten days after the draft United Nations Declaration, which Hornbeck helped produce, was sent to him. In a

not *really* Secretary of State." A plain-speaking Harry S. Truman, the second president Stettinius served as Secretary of State under, said he was "as dumb as they come."

⁵⁷ Hornbeck to PA/D, Mr. Dunn, 18 December 1943, Folder French Indo-China, Box 173, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution.

⁵⁸ Welles (1951), 182.

meeting with the British Ambassador and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, which Secretary Hull, Under Secretary Welles, and Assistant Under Secretary William Strang attended on March 27, 1943, Roosevelt “made it clear that he did not want a commitment made in advance that all those colonies in the Far East should go back to the countries which owned or controlled them prior to the war.”⁵⁹ Then in November, President Roosevelt had been even clearer of his position on trusteeship for Indochina in a communication with the State Department.

The French were aware of Roosevelt’s views and took countermeasures. The Chief of the French Military Mission approached the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and a representative of de Gaulle’s Comité Français de Libération Nationale presented a letter to the State Department a short while later in November, 1943 with a warning that it was dangerous to allow Chinese troops to launch operations “against Indochina” because the Chinese were “hereditary enemies of the Annamites.” In his reply to the State Department, the President dismissed the concerns of the French, leaving the issue “to the discretion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and to the Commanding Officers in the area.”⁶⁰ Subsequently, in the last year of the Pacific War, the French began to try and divert the Americans away from the colonial issue by warning of threats from the Soviet Union.

On November 28, while attending the Tehran Conference on Allied military strategy, Roosevelt and Stalin discussed France and Indochina at the Soviet Embassy. Stalin led the conversation, for example, saying “that he did not propose to have the Allies shed blood to restore Indochina” to the French. Neither Stalin nor Roosevelt

⁵⁹ Sherwood, 718.

⁶⁰ *FRUS, 1943: China* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1957), 886-87.

believed Indochina should be returned to the French. Roosevelt told Stalin that he had discussed Indochina with Chiang Kai-shek at the Cairo Conference, and proposed the idea of a trusteeship to prepare “the people for independence within a definite period of time, perhaps 20 to 30 years.”⁶¹

Roosevelt responded in late January 1944 to a memo from Hull reporting a conversation the Secretary had with British Ambassador Lord Halifax confirming that he had told “Turks, Egyptians, and perhaps others” that “that Indochina should be taken away from the French and put under an international trusteeship.”⁶² The President told Hull that he had already confirmed this to Lord Halifax a week earlier, relating that he had told him

quite frankly that it was perfectly true, that I had, for over a year [since the invasion of Vichy-controlled Africa], expressed the opinion that Indo-China should not go back to France but that it should be administered by an international trusteeship. France has had the country—thirty million inhabitants for nearly one hundred years, and the people are worse off than they were at the beginning.

As a matter of interest, I am wholeheartedly supported in this view by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and by Marshal Stalin. I see no reason to play in with the British Foreign Office in this matter. The only reason they seem to oppose it is that they fear the effect it would have on their own possessions and those of the Dutch. They have never liked the idea of trusteeship because it is, in some instances, aimed at future independence. This is true in the case of Indo-China.

⁶¹ Roosevelt-Stalin Meeting, 28 November 1943, *FRUS, 1943: The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1961), 325, 484-86. The record of a dinner meeting with Roosevelt and Chiang on November 23, 1943 shows that Chiang presented “his thought that China and the United States should endeavor together to help Indo-China achieve independence after the war and that independent status should be restored to Thailand.”

⁶² Cordell Hull Memorandum of Conversation, 3 January 1944, *FRUS, 1943: The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran*, 864; *FRUS, 1944*, volume III (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1965), 769-70.

Each case must, of course, stand on its own feet, but the case of Indo-China is perfectly clear. France has milked it for one hundred years. The people of Indo-China are entitled to something better than that.⁶³

In February, General J.H. Hilldring, the Director of the Civil Affairs Division of the War Department sent a memo to James Dunn, now Director of the Office of European Affairs, explaining "a number of important decisions depend upon whether French troops are to be used in the military operations to regain control of Indo-China, and whether the French nationals are to be used in civil administration and planning." The State Department then sent a memo to the President asking for his approval "to proceed on the assumption that French armed forces will be employed to at least some extent in the military operations, and that in the administration of Indo-China it will be desirable to employ French nationals who have an intimate knowledge of the country and its problems." The State Department also added the important caveat: "We would assume further that the use of French forces or civilians would be without prejudice to the question of the ultimate status of French Indo-China and would be related solely to problems directly connected with and flowing from possible military operations." After a meeting with Roosevelt in March, Under Secretary Stettinius relayed the President's message to Dunn and General Hilldring that "no French troops whatever should be used in Indo-China. He added that in his view the operation should be Anglo-American in character and should be followed by the establishment of an international trusteeship over the French colony."⁶⁴

⁶³ Memorandum by President Roosevelt to the Secretary of State, 24 January 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, volume III, 773.

⁶⁴ The Director of the Office of European Affairs (James Clement Dunn) to the Director of the Civil Affairs Division, War Department (General Hilldring), 14 March 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, volume V, 1205-06;

About this time, Roosevelt also told Isaiah Bowman of an agreement he and Hull had worked out to postpone the issue of British “sovereignty over the island Canton,” an island in the South Pacific, for 50 years to secure rights for an American base there. Pleased with himself that they had convinced the British to relinquish a parcel of their empire, he surmised that such an approach could be utilized “for much larger areas in other parts of the world.” Recall that in the previous chapter, Welles was quoted as saying that Roosevelt often failed to avail himself of State Department specialists “who had devoted a lifetime to the study of some particular country or region,” yet his pressuring of the British over India clearly mirrored the opinions of some in the Department. We also have indications from Welles, that while he was chairing the various postwar planning committees, the President was supportive of this group’s work on trusteeship. Roosevelt’s absurd and not well thought-out suggestion to expand an agreement, in which rights over a colonial possession were leased as a solution to the broader colonial problem, reveals a widening breach in the President’s relationship with the Department once Welles left.⁶⁵

Roosevelt’s emphasis on Indochina for the colonial-territorial trusteeship issue is not overly surprising. He had reason, as has been explained earlier, to believe that the Dutch would be taking steps to promote the interests of the dependent peoples in the East Indies through some form of dominion status, and he had to bide his time with the British

(“Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War,” *Hearings before the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 92nd Congress* (Washington: United States GPO, 1973), 163-64.

⁶⁵ *The Diaries of Edward R. Stettinius, Jr.*, 40.

because the war was still in progress. Accordingly, the French and their prewar possession of Indochina were the easiest targets for his anti-colonial sentiments.

The French had capitulated to the Germans in their homeland—Harry Hopkins told de Gaulle this was the source of Roosevelt's animosity towards the French—and handed over Indochina to the Japanese who then used the territory to invade the rest of Southeast Asia.⁶⁶ De Gaulle had fought with Roosevelt over his policy to neutralize Vichy's African and North American possessions, and the French fleet—recall Robert Murphy cited this as the foundation of Roosevelt's dislike for de Gaulle. De Gaulle's arrogance and aggressiveness threatened to split the French exile community, at least in Roosevelt's eyes. Finally, de Gaulle consistently put his goal of promoting his own position by seeking the rebuilding France without delay, ahead of the military goals of the other Allies.

Roosevelt's dislike for de Gaulle may also have been precipitated, as Murphy alleges, by the disaster at Dakar, but there were several reasons why he never warmed to the chauvinistic Frenchman who had no country to rule. It mattered little that the major French resistance organizations, Combat, France-Tireur, Libération, Mouvement Ouvrier Français, Comité d'Action Socialiste rallied behind de Gaulle the day after the invasion of North Africa.⁶⁷ The Department of War Intelligence Service, OSS and the Joint Intelligence Committee were unanimous that there was nothing to gain from supporting him. The OSS had concluded that for various concerns over his go-it-alone style and

⁶⁶ Charles de Gaulle, *War Memoirs: Salvation: 1944-1946*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 92.

⁶⁷ Mario Rossi, *Roosevelt and the French* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1993), 111.

organization, recognition of de Gaulle as the leader of the French would only exacerbate tensions between the Allies and the military and administration in North Africa.⁶⁸

The vast majority of the Free French army was comprised of colonial natives (84 percent), and de Gaulle had threatened the loyalty of the largest contingent, Syrian and Lebanese troops, by his actions. In November 1943, de Gaulle suspended the Syrian and Lebanese constitution, dismissed the parliament, and imprisoned indigenous ministers after nationalist protests against French League of Nation's mandate. In addition to risking a defection by Syrian and Lebanese forces, the incident added to Roosevelt's contempt for French colonialism. The French fleet, which Roosevelt worked so hard to neutralize before the invasion of North Africa, accounted for 24 percent of the combined U.S.-British-French navies in 1939, but only 6 percent by 1944. Hence the Joint Intelligence Committee concluded that only serious disadvantages could come from recognition of de Gaulle.⁶⁹

Roosevelt told Churchill in June 1943 that he was "fed up with de Gaulle, and the secret personal and political machinations of that Committee," in which he outmaneuvered Henri Giraud. "We must divorce ourselves from de Gaulle," Roosevelt declared, in part because "he has proven unreliable, uncooperative, and disloyal to both our Governments." Churchill explained that while he did not care for de Gaulle, he did not favor forcing the breakup of the Committee because it would divide the French.⁷⁰ Regardless of Churchill, Roosevelt intended on following through with the idea of

⁶⁸ Ibid, 88-90.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 88-90, 127.

⁷⁰ *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 344-45, 346-47.

trusteeship for France itself, hinted at to de Gaulle during their Anfa meeting, until free elections could be held. His plan was to have France administered by an Allied military government (AMGOT) after the invasion of France.⁷¹

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who commanded the invasion of North Africa (Operation *Torch*), and, later, the invasion of France (Operation *Overlord*), felt hampered by the President's dictum to General Marshall restricting dealings with de Gaulle to military issues and not political. "It was necessary to remind" the President, Eisenhower said in reference to the occupation of North Africa, "that far from governing a conquered country, we were attempting only to force a gradual widening of the base of government, with the final objective of turning all internal affairs over to popular control."⁷² Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy was critical of the President's AMGOT plan. He favored the rebuilding of a strong France and believed the civil government should be run by de Gaulle. In January 1944 the U.S. Government informed the CFLN that they were ending all contacts with the Vichy Government, and two months later even Roosevelt ordered Eisenhower not to have any dealings "with the Vichy regime except for the purpose of terminating its administration in toto." After Paris was liberated and the Allies were well on their way to completing the job throughout France, Roosevelt finally relented to pressure from both the military and the State Department, and de Gaulle's Comité

⁷¹ Ibid, 113.

⁷² Rossi, 123; Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1948), 137; President Roosevelt to the British Prime Minister (Churchill), 31 May, 1944. *FRUS, 1944*, volume III, (1965), 693-94. Roosevelt had told Churchill, "We cannot give [Marshall] plenary powers to negotiate with de Gaulle singly or with you and de Gaulle jointly, because this is wholly a matter in the political and not in the military field. Marshall can, of course, talk about all military matters."

Nationale Français (French National Committee or CNF) was recognized as “temporary *de facto* authority for civil administration in France” on October 23, 1944.⁷³

Roosevelt’s animosity towards de Gaulle’s France was also reflected in postwar planning for Europe. In Allied discussions during 1943 and 1944, President Roosevelt preferred to occupy northern Germany so the U.S. could use German rather than French ports in the supply of its troops. Related to this, Roosevelt stated that he wanted to have nothing to do with the reconstruction of southern Europe, including France, that because this was a greater concern for Great Britain, the British should occupy southern Germany. U.S. military operations favored an occupation of southern Germany, but Roosevelt was apparently only mollified by an agreement in September 1944 giving American forces to northwestern ports and passage through the British-controlled area.⁷⁴

Less than two weeks before Roosevelt’s recognition of the CNF as something resembling a government of France, Roosevelt told Admiral Jacques Fénard, the chief of Comité’s naval mission in the U.S., of his commitment to de-colonization (note the influence of Welles’ published proposal on trusteeship in the last paragraph):

Following Japan’s defeat, the situation of the white race in the Pacific will be more critical than in the past. The ideas of independence have become more familiar to the populations so far submitted to the authority of European countries. This applies to India, to Dutch possessions, and to Indochina.

I believe if we do not wish to be thrown out by those people, we must find a general formula to resolve the relationship between the White and the Yellow races. This could take the form of a general organization in which each country would continue taking care of the territory it now occupies.

⁷³ Rossi, 109, 133, and 139; Thorne, *Allies of a Kind*, 383.

⁷⁴ Forrest C. Pogue, *The Supreme Command* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of Army, 1954), 348-51.

But a common general line of action for all colonial countries should be established as of now, providing that within a given time span colonies become independent. Delays could vary considerably according to the degree of evolution of the various territories.⁷⁵

The thinking of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was entirely different. After their success in having the draft article on trusteeships removed from the proposal of an international organization at Dumbarton Oaks, a retired admiral warned Ernest J. King, Chief of Naval Operations and Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Fleet, that the question of trusteeship “will require considerable vigilance on the part of our military people to counter the utopian ideas of the International Welfare Group.”⁷⁶ About this time, Marshall and Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy were reported to have privately “expressed sympathy for France and the restoration of the empire” in speaking to the French Ambassador from Chongqing when he was in Washington, D.C.⁷⁷

In September, Secretary of State Hull sent a memorandum prepared for him by Joseph Grew and James Dunn to the President thinly veiling their reticence to support the President’s position on the colonial issue when in discussing Southeast Asia, they noted:

Emergence of these regions as self-governing countries would appear desirable as soon as they are capable of self-rule, either as independent nations *or in close voluntary association with western powers*, for example as dominions. *Such association might indeed lend them political and economic strength (the weakness of Asiatic owners has long been a cause of war) and help prevent future cleavage along regional or racial lines.*⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Rossi, 144.

⁷⁶ John J. Sbraga, “The Anticolonial Policies of Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Reappraisal,” *Political Science Quarterly* 101,1 (1986): 69.

⁷⁷ Thorne, *Allies of a Kind*, 464.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, *FRUS, The Conference at Quebec, 1944* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1936, 1972), 263; Memorandum to the President, 8 September 1944, Folder State-Cordell Hull, Box 166, Map Room, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL. (italics added)

Dunn would emerge after Roosevelt's death as the strongest advocate in the State Department for the return of French colonial rule in Indochina.

On October 16 the President sent a memorandum to the Secretary of State notifying him "that in his judgment at that time we should do nothing in regard to resistance groups or in any other way in relation to Indochina," but it was not until November 3, that Roosevelt established official policy for colonial Southeast Asia based on British attempts to attach a French mission to SEAC. It remained, however, an extremely vague response to Under Secretary of State Stettinius' report detailing British support through SEAC of French efforts to reestablish their colonial rule of Indochina with their limited resources. "We have made no final decisions on the future of Indochina," the President declared for the first time to Under Secretary of State Stettinius, "This should be made clear." Equally important in confirming that no clear policy had yet been determined, was the order that "it should be made clear to all our people that the United States expects to be consulted with regard to any future of Southeast Asia."⁷⁹

After further discussing the situation with Stettinius on the 10th, the latter had a memo drawn up, dated November 17, and copied for OSS Director Donovan, Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, Secretary of War Henry Stimson, Office of War Information Elmer Davis, and Admiral William Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, which the President signed. It stipulated: "I wish to make it clear that American approval must not be given to any French military mission being

⁷⁹ F.D.R., Memorandum for the Under Secretary of State, 3 November 1944, Folder Diplomatic Correspondence Indochina, Box 39, PSF, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; E.R. Stettinius, Jr., to General Donovan, 22 December 1944 and William J. Donovan to Edward R. Stettinius, 26 December 1944.

accredited to the South East Asia Command; and that no officer of this Government, military or civilian, may make decisions on political questions with the French military mission or with anyone else.” He then added a last paragraph restating what he had told Stettinius on the 3rd.⁸⁰ He reiterated his position to Stettinius in January after the latter had sent him several memos explaining the response to the newly articulated policy from the British, French, and Dutch: “I do not want to get mixed up in any military effort toward the liberation of Indochina from the Japanese”; and “You can, can tell Halifax that I made this very clear to Mr. Churchill [at the Second Quebec Conference in September]. From the military and civil point of view, action at this time is premature.”⁸¹

On January 4, Roosevelt’s closest adviser, Harry Hopkins, met with Stettinius, Stimson, and Forrestal, calling for a “complete review not only of the Indo-China situation but of our entire French approach.” Stettinius reported to his principal Assistant Secretary, James Dunn, that:

The opinion was expressed that it would be wise both from a political and military point of view to integrate our French policy to the end that affirmative steps could be taken both with the Soviet Union and Britain. Secretary Stimson indicated he was prepared to support this from a military point of view as France has become a great military base and that he felt it would be to our advantage to utilize all that we could in the way of added military reserves from French man power. He also indicated that we were favorably

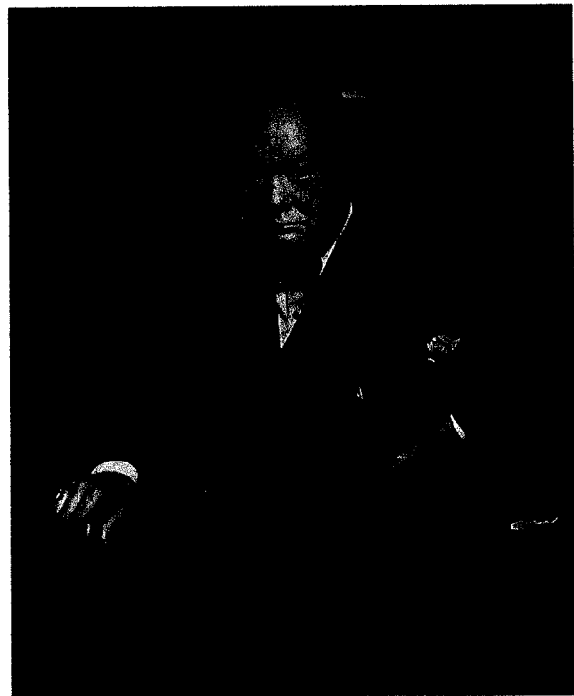
⁸⁰ E.R. Stettinius, Memorandum for the President, “Indochina and Southeast Asia,” 15 November 1944; Franklin D. Roosevelt to Brigadier General William J. Donovan, Franklin D. Roosevelt to James V. Forrestal; Franklin D. Roosevelt to Henry L. Stimson; Franklin D. Roosevelt to Mr. Elmer Davis; Franklin D. Roosevelt to Admiral William D. Leahy, 17 November 1944; M.C. Latta, Memorandum for the Under Secretary of State, 18 November 1944, Folder Diplomatic Correspondence Indochina, Box 39, PSF, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL.

⁸¹ President Roosevelt to Secretary of State, 1 January 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, volume VI (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 293. See, for example, E.R. Stettinius, Jr. to Henry L. Stimson, 11 December 1944, Appendix “A,” and Annex to Appendix “A,” Reel 90, M1642, NARA, discussed in Chapter 5. The Aide Mémoire Halifax gave to Stettinius on November 23, 1944, which the latter forwarded to the President and Secretaries of War and Navy in by early December requesting approval of “proposals for the use of the French in pre-operational activities in Indo-China.

considering the arming of eight new French Divisions with which General Marshall was in accord.⁸²

Hopkins revealed that contrary to Roosevelt's deep disdain for de Gaulle, he actually possessed "admiration for the valiant French general." He was convinced that "France must be restored in its proper dignity, not only as its just historical due, but because stability in Europe was inconceivable without a strong and influential France."⁸³

At the Yalta Conference, from February 4 to 11, 1945, Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden fought hard for France, according to Robert Sherwood, and a sickly Hopkins supported them behind the scenes. In negotiations over the postwar occupation of Germany, Stalin said he would not object to France being given a zone if it was carved out of the US and British zones, but he remained adamant



Prime Minister Winston Churchill by Yousuf Karsh, 1941⁸⁴

that France should not be added to the control commission. Churchill and Eden threatened that Great Britain could not take sole responsibility for containing Germany on

⁸² Secretary of State to Mr. Dunn, January 4, 1945, *CIA Research Reports: Vietnam and Southeast Asia, 1946-1976*, edited by Paul Kesaris (Frederick, MD: University Publications, Inc., 1983), Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center, International and Area Studies, University of California, Berkeley. Notter, 349. After succeeding Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Stettinius reorganized the Department. James Dunn was appointed Assistant Secretary of State for Europe, the Far East, the Near Eastern and Africa (only Latin America was excluded) at this time.

⁸³ Rossi, 146.

⁸⁴ National Gallery of Australia,

<http://www.nga.gov.au/Exhibition/KarshShmith/Detail.cfm?IRN=49449&ViewID=2&MnuID=1> (accessed April 24, 2005).

the Western Front. Hopkins convinced a reluctant Roosevelt to accept the British position a few days later, and after hearing Roosevelt had changed his mind, Stalin also yielded.⁸⁵

During the conference, Roosevelt told Stalin that he wanted Indochina to be placed under trusteeship, based on the example of the Philippines. The British were resistant because “they feared the implications of a trusteeship as it might affect Burma,” he told the leader of the Soviet Union. When Roosevelt told him that de Gaulle had asked for ships to send troops to Indochina, Stalin asked facetiously where de Gaulle planned on getting the troops. To this Roosevelt replied that de Gaulle had told him he would find the troops when the President found the ships. Then Roosevelt “added that up to the present he had been unable to find the ships.”⁸⁶

While Roosevelt and Stalin were discussing Indochina, the foreign ministers of the Three Powers were meeting to discuss territorial trusteeship. The next day, February 9, Stettinius had just spoken long enough to say that the Five Powers (US, UK, Soviet Union, China, and France, after Dumbarton Oaks) represented in the Security Council would discuss “providing machinery in the World Charter for dealing with territorial trusteeship and dependent areas,” before Churchill interrupted to challenge the entire

⁸⁵ Sherwood 858-59. Elliott Roosevelt, 76-77. Elliott Roosevelt wrote that his father, the President, was telling him at the Casablanca Conference (January 14-24, 1943) that he was planning on restoring France “as a world power,” and to offer it “its rightful place” amongst the four great powers of the U.S., Great Britain, the Soviet Union and China. At the same time, according to Elliott’s account, France would be made trustee of its own colonies, but be required to report on the colony’s progress toward self government to an unnamed authority. Harry Hopkins’ notes, facsimiles which appear in Sherwood’s book suggests Elliott’s account of this particular matter is untrue.

⁸⁶ *FRUS, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1955), 770

notion of trusteeship.⁸⁷ Stettinius attempted to calm the Prime Minister by explaining that the British Empire would not be touched by the proposal, but Churchill was not satisfied and a break in the session was made for a private conference involving Roosevelt, Churchill, Alger Hiss, Anthony Eden, and Sir Alexander Cadogan in which a note was drawn up to satisfy Churchill, limiting the scope of trusteeship as had been proposed by the State Department for Dumbarton Oaks to enemy territories from the two World Wars.⁸⁸ This was Roosevelt's first complete acknowledgement that the trusteeship principle would be on a "voluntary" basis. The "voluntary" stipulation was subsequently proposed and agreed upon at the San Francisco Conference on the Charter of the United Nations.⁸⁹

In spite of this agreement on trusteeship at Yalta, President Roosevelt made clear he had not given up on the idea when speaking with reporters onboard the *U.S.S. Quincy* on February 23 during his voyage home. His discussion was off the record, but reaffirmed his commitment nevertheless. He began by relating discussions he had had in past with Chiang Kai-shek in Cairo and Stalin in Tehran about the idea of trusteeship for Indochina. He also told the press about his conversation with Stalin at Yalta about the French not having shipping necessary to recapture Indochina before openly criticizing Churchill as "mid-Victorian" on these issues. His criticism expanded to British

⁸⁷ Ibid, 844-45. *FRUS, 1944*, I, 699. Roosevelt had already agreed at Dumbarton Oaks to reserving a seat on the U.N.'s Security Council "if and when" France had a government. By the end October 1943 America was providing Britain with 77 percent of its escort vessels, 88 percent of its landing craft, 68 percent of its light bombers, virtually all of its transport aircraft, 60 percent of its tankers, all of its tank transporters and one-ton trucks, and half of selected strategic materials such as magnesium.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 858; Notter, 397.

⁸⁹ *The United Nations Conference on International Organization, Documents*, volume 10 (New York: United Nations Information Organization, 1945), 440.

colonialism as he praised Queen Wilhemina and the Dutch for their treatment of the Dutch East Indies and the likelihood of Java and Sumatra of being given their independence soon, though “it might be one hundred years” before the Borneo headhunter could be educated and civilized.

STATE-WAR-NAVY AND THE TERRITORIAL GRAB FOR BASES

While Roosevelt ignored the fact that the State Department was developing postwar policy on trusteeship in a different direction from his privately stated beliefs, he held tighter reins on the military. Representing the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Leahy sent a recommendation to the President on July 4, 1944, asking for approval and notification of the State Department that the Japanese mandated islands “be placed under the sole sovereignty of the United States.” “Together they constitute a single military entity,” he explained, “no element of which can be left to even the partial control of another nation without hazard to our control of that entity.”⁹⁰ Roosevelt’s rejected the proposal on the 10th:

The Joint Chiefs of Staff are right in stating that no other nation should be left even to the partial control of another nation, but they must also realize that we have agreed that we have agreed that we are seeking no additional territory as a result of this war.

I am working on the idea that the United Nations will ask the United States to act as a Trustee for the Japanese Mandated Islands. With this will go the civil authority to handle the economic and educational affairs of their many inhabitants, protect them, i.e., fortifications, etc. It does not necessarily involve a decision on permanent sovereignty.⁹¹

⁹⁰ William D. Leahy, Memorandum for the President, 4 July 1944, Folder Joint Chiefs of Staff, Box 167, Map Room, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL.

⁹¹ Memorandum for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Folder Joint Chiefs of Staff, Box 167, Map Room, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL.

“One of Roosevelt’s pet ideas,” Leahy later explicated, “which he had discussed with me on many occasions, was a plan for a series of strategic bases all over the world to be controlled by the United Nations.” This was an idea he had also spoken to Isaiah Bowman about in March, 1944.⁹²

In requesting that the subject of territorial trusteeship be omitted from the Dumbarton Oaks discussion of the international organization, it became clear the Joint Chiefs of Staff had not given up the fight for control of the Japanese mandated islands. They detailed their concerns to the State Department, part of a ploy to gain more support for their position on the broader issue: potential conflict between the Chinese and British over Hong Kong; Russian dominance in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and, in particular, on continental Northeast Asia; and U.S. interests in the Japanese Mandated Islands. Having listed its concerns, the inference was made clear enough why the Japanese Mandated Islands were an important consideration by the statement that “after the defeat of Japan, the United States and Russia will be the strongest military powers in the world.”⁹³

Secretary of War Stimson began working on forming a united front in the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC) to convince Roosevelt to change his mind as early as January 23, 1945, when he sent a memorandum to Stettinius outlining his vision of postwar security. He believed each of the Four Powers would acquire territory for bases deemed “to be necessary for their own safety” in maintaining world peace. Russia, for example, “will claim that, in light of her bitter experience with Germany, her

⁹² *The Diaries of Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., 1943-1946*, 39; Leahy, 314.

⁹³ *FRUS, 1944*, I, 700-03.

own self-defense as guarantor of the peace of the world will depend on relations with buffer countries like Poland, Bulgaria, and Rumania, which will be quite different from complete independence on the part of those countries.”⁹⁴

At Yalta, the Big Three did not specify territories to be placed under trusteeship, but agreed the Five Powers would do so before the conference on the Charter of the United Nations was to be held at San Francisco beginning in April, 1945.⁹⁵ No such discussions ever took place, even though the President reiterated his position when telling a State Department official that “neither the Army nor the Navy had any business administering the civilian government of territories; that they had no competence to do this.”⁹⁶

Stimson and McCloy met with Navy Secretary Forrestal on March 30 to discuss trusteeship as well. Stimson told Forrestal he did not want to hand over “hardly won islands which we had taken in the Pacific to the principle of trusteeship.” Instead, he proposed that the U.S. should not only keep, but “exercise our ownership as a trust on behalf of world security, not for any national advantage.” Together, Stimson and Forrestal met with Stettinius on April 2, and convinced the Secretary of State to agree to drafts of a proposal Stimson had prepared to forward to the President.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Stimson, 602-04. The SWNCC was The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC) was established in December 1944, to coordinate the views of the State, War, and Navy Departments in matters in which they all had a common interest, and to establish policies for their Departments on politico-military questions referred to it. The Committee maintained liaison with the Joint Chiefs of Staff in order to obtain military approval for its decisions.

⁹⁵ *FRUS, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1955), 858; Notter, 397.

⁹⁶ *FRUS, 1945*, VII, 122.

⁹⁷ *The Forrestal Diaries*, edited by Walter Millis (New York: The Viking Press, 1951), 37-38. Hull, 1466. Former Secretary of State Hull later wrote in his memoirs (1948): “I opposed the view of our Joint Chiefs of Staff that the Pacific islands we would take from Japan should become United State property. I felt



SWNCC Secretaries Edward R. Stettinius, Jr. (State), Henry L. Stimson (War), and James V. Forrestal (Navy)⁹⁸

Five days later, Roosevelt sent Stettinius a letter from Secretary of the Interior

Harold Ickes advising the President that the U.S. should be “the administering power for the Japanese mandated Islands,” but should not insist on “complete sovereignty” because this would lead to the danger of a British claim for the same in the Middle East, which would be damaging to American commercial interest in “our great stake in Middle Eastern oil.” Roosevelt agreed with Ickes and believed that an agreement should be reached at San Francisco “on mandated territories and dependent areas [i.e. colonies].”⁹⁹

strongly that there should be no exception to my view that all the colonial territories wrested from the Axis should be placed under a United Nations trusteeship system. It was not hard to see that Russia would not oppose our outright acquisition of these islands, but it also was not hard to see that Russia would thereupon use this acquisition as an example and precedent for similar acquisitions by herself. Our acquisition of these islands estopped us from objecting to similar acquisitions by other nations.

⁹⁸ Composite photo from: Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., *U.S. Department of State for Youth*, http://future.state.gov/who/secretary/former/stettinius_e.html, Henry L. Stimson, *NDDB*, <http://www.nndb.com/people/489/000059312/>, and James V. Forrestal, *Truman Presidential Museum and Library*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/profile/viewpro.php?pid=70> (all accessed April 24, 2005)

⁹⁹ *FRUS*, 1945, I, 140-41.

When Stimson, Forrestal, and Stettinius met next, the Secretary of State no longer agreed with the draft proposal Stimson had earlier prepared, stating “that while his private views accorded” with Stimson and Forrestal, “he was under orders to the contrary.”¹⁰⁰ Stettinius sent a memorandum, to which Secretary Ickes assented, separately from Stimson and Forrestal on the 9th, and the President responded with “Your message on International Trusteeship is approved in principle,” the following day. The day after Roosevelt died, Stettinius briefed his successor, Harry S. Truman about the trusteeship issue. Now free to break Roosevelt’s orders, Stettinius met with Forrestal, Stimson, Admiral King, and General Marshall for the next three days, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday to draft a new proposal for Truman.¹⁰¹

The proposal, signed by Stettinius, Stimson, and Forrestal, recommended against placing any territory under trusteeship at the San Francisco Conference.¹⁰² Truman agreed, and Stettinius drafted a possible press release for the President on the 20th. The draft press release emphasized “the maintenance of United States military and strategic rights” which relied on “such control as will be necessary to assure general peace and security in the Pacific Ocean area as well as elsewhere in the world.” Territories to be placed under trusteeship would not be discussed at the San Francisco Conference, but would be designated later. Stimson (and the rest of the military leadership) had at last

¹⁰⁰ *The Forrestal Diaries*, 38.

¹⁰¹ Notter, 431-32. Thorne *Allies of a Kind*, 631. A British official had written to Admiral Mountbatten on March 27, 1945 that “As a result of a talk, very strictly personal and therefore ‘eyes only’, that I had with Ernie King yesterday, it seems to me that the United States Chiefs of Staff are by no means in favour of the President’s policy of keeping the French out of Indochina.”

¹⁰² *FRUS, 1945*, I, 350-51.

achieved his victory over FDR's plan. Their proposed draft, however, was not sent after Stettinius' recommended that Truman wait until after the San Francisco Conference.¹⁰³

TRUSTEESHIP AND DIVISION: DID FDR CHANGE HIS MIND?

Several noteworthy scholars generated a debate in the final years of the (American) Vietnam War on the question of whether or not Roosevelt changed his mind on trusteeship for Indochina. Whether or not they acknowledged it, they all owed something to the earlier works of Ernst B. Haas, who wrote an article on the United Nations trusteeship system in 1953, followed a couple of years later by Foster Rhea Dulles and Gerald E. Ridinger who focused on FDR's anti-colonial policies. These scholars offer differing views of Roosevelt's motivation. The point of evidence for their arguments all center upon the memorandum of conversation drafted by the State Department's Adviser on Caribbean Affairs, Charles Taussig after meeting with President Roosevelt on March 15, 1945. Edward Drachman (1970), Walter La Feber (1975), Christopher Thorne (1976 and 1978) and William Roger Louis (1977) all believe that Roosevelt did change his mind. Gary Hess (1972) disputes the importance of the memorandum, believing that the intention of independence for Indochina was essentially the same as it had always been, even if the method was slightly modified.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Notter, 433.

¹⁰⁴ Ernst B. Haas, "The Attempt to Terminate Colonialism: Acceptance of the United Nations Trusteeship System," *International Organization* 7, 1 (Feb., 1953): 1-21; Foster Rhea Dulles and Gerald E. Ridinger, "The Anti-Colonial Policies of Franklin D. Roosevelt," *Political Science Quarterly*, 70, 1 (Mar., 1955): 1-18; Edward R. Drachman, *United States Policy Toward Vietnam, 1940-1945*, (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1970); Gary R. Hess, "Franklin Roosevelt and Indochina," *The Journal of American History* 9, no. 2 (September, 1972): 353-368; Walter La Feber, "Roosevelt, Churchill, and

This summary of his conversation with the President by Taussig forms the basis for the debate:

I said that I thought the military had no confidence in the proposed United Nations Organization. The President replied that he thought that was so.... The President then said that neither the Army nor the Navy had any business administering the civilian government of territories; that they had no competence to do this.

The President said he thought we might have some difficulties with France in the matter of colonies. I said that I thought that was quite probable and it was also probable the British would use France as a "stalking hourse."

I asked the President if he had changed his ideas on French Indochina as he had expressed them to us at the luncheon with Stanley [Col. Oliver Stanley, British Secretary of State for the Colonies, who had lunched with the President and Mr. Taussig on January 15]. He said no he had not changed his ideas; that French Indo-China and New Caledonia should be taken from France and put under a trusteeship. The President hesitated a moment and then said—well if we can get the proper pledge from France to assume for herself the obligations of a trustee, then I would agree to France retaining these colonies with the proviso that independence was the ultimate goal. I asked the President if he would settle for self-government. He said no. I asked him if he would settle for dominion status. He said no—it must be independence. He said that is to be the policy and you can quote me in the State Department.¹⁰⁵

It is doubtful that Roosevelt had definitively decided on a particular form of trusteeship even if he had mentioned "international trusteeship" several times. It is also important to note the force with which he insisted on independence in the meeting with Taussig. Recall that Welles (1944) had suggested France be Indochina's trustee after the war but under international supervision which would monitor the course of tutelage towards independence. Roosevelt's hesitation suggests that he was ill—others had noted

Indochina: 1942-45," *The American Historical Review* 80, no. 5 (December, 1975): 1277-1295; William Roger Louis, *Imperialism at Bay*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Christopher Thorne, "Indochina and Anglo-American Relations," *Pacific Historical Review* 45, 1 (February, 1976): 73-96; Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Stein Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945 : Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh, and De Gaulle in a world at war* (London: Sage Publications, 1991) and "Franklin D. Roosevelt and the French Loss of Indo-China, 9 March 1945," (2002). Stein Tønnesson (2002) provides an additional handful of different scholars who have written on the subject.
¹⁰⁵ *FRUS, 1945, I, 1967, 122-24.*

an often confused state in discussions with him in the period before he died—so we cannot take this conversation as a dramatic and decisive break in his thinking.

On March 22, in reply to a message from Churchill proposing that Mountbatten be given equal authority over Indochina with Wedemeyer, Roosevelt made mention that Wedemeyer was in town before replying “I suggest that you direct Mountbatten to coordinate his activities in Indochina with Wedemeyer; and I will direct Wedemeyer to take any steps necessary to ensure coordination of all Allied operations in China theater including Indochina.”¹⁰⁶ Recall that British support of French activities designed to reestablish their control over colonial Indochina precipitated Roosevelt’s November 1944 policy directive to various department heads. If Roosevelt had dropped his opposition to French control of Indochina, he would have had less reason to support Wedemeyer’s command control over the colony (the Wedemeyer-Mountbatten conflict is discussed in more depth in the next chapter)

Before placing so much weight on the President’s language in the one meeting with Taussig more must be said about his declining state of health. Long before 1945, Roosevelt’s health figured in speculation as to whether he would even seek a fourth term.¹⁰⁷ By mid-January 1945 his illness was apparent to all. In recalling a meeting with the President that he, Pasvolsky, Hiss, and Stettinius attended, Dean Acheson said, “we were all shocked by the President’s appearance. Thin, gaunt, with sunken and darkly

¹⁰⁶ Churchill to Roosevelt, No. 913, 17 March 1945 in *Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*, 677, 682-83; David Stafford, *Roosevelt and Churchill: Men of Secrets* (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 2000), 288-89. David Stafford errs in his assertion that “before he died, Roosevelt effectively agreed that Mountbatten should be allowed to conduct intelligence and guerilla activities in Indo-China—and thereby acquiescing indirectly in Indo-China’s return to France.”

¹⁰⁷ Stettinius, 239.

circled eyes, only the jaunty cigarette holder and his light-hearted brushing aside of difficulties recalled the FDR of former days.”¹⁰⁸ On seeing the President three days before he left Washington, D.C., Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins said that he had “the pallor, the deep gray color of a man who had long been ill.”¹⁰⁹ His condition deteriorated by the time he got to Yalta. “He was not only frail and desperately tired, he looked ill,” noticed Assistant Secretary of State Charles Bohlen, the President’s interpreter at Yalta. After Yalta, Bohlen tells us, “Because President Roosevelt’s powers of concentration were slipping, and his general energy was lessening, he was forced to rely more than he would have normally on the good faith and judgment of his advisers, some person took advantage of his condition, I am sorry to say.”¹¹⁰

By March, “his color was ashen, his face drawn, and his jaw drooping,” remarked General Wedemeyer who had a lunch meeting with the President. Wedemeyer does not record when this meeting took place, but in 1967 he stated it was “two weeks before [Roosevelt] died.” Wedemeyer “had difficulty in conveying information to him because he seemed in a daze. Several times I repeated the same idea because his mind did not seem to retain or register,” and “the President seemed to be in a Never-Never Land most of the time that I spent with him, picking nervously at his food and going off on tangents

¹⁰⁸ Acheson, 102-03.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in David Stafford, *Roosevelt and Churchill: Men of Secrets* (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 2000), 284.

¹¹⁰ Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929-1969* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973), 171, 206.

during our discussion.”¹¹¹ It was clear enough, however, that Roosevelt had not given up the idea of ending colonialism:

He evinced considerable interest in Indo-China and stated that he was going to do everything possible to give the people in that area their independence. He believed that colonialism must be abandoned by our allies. He admonished me not to give any supplies to the French forces operating in the area. I explained that there were not many there; that requests had been made by the French General Sabattier for arms and equipment and that I had in each instance refused on the grounds that my directive required me to give the equipment to the Chinese Nationalist forces and that my supply was wholly inadequate even for that purpose. I had made available medical supplies and facilities to French units which had straggled up into the Yunnan Province from Indo-China. It was difficult to handle this situation in China, because I greatly admired the French and also knew that General Sabattier was a courageous leader who was sincere in his endeavors to continue to fight against the Japanese. Of course, he could not expect to receive help from own country, which was occupied by the enemy; so he naturally turned to me, an ally, for help.¹¹²

Further evidence suggesting that the lapse in Roosevelt’s resolve in the Taussig meeting was due to his health more than a reconsideration of the issue is found in Ambassador Hurley’s meeting with President Roosevelt on March 24. “I told the President also that the British would attempt, to occupy Indo-China and reestablish their former imperial control,” recorded Hurley before adding:

I suggested to the President that for my own guidance and in order to clarify Wedemeyer’s position I thought we should have a written directive on Indo-China. *The President said that in the coming San Francisco Conference there would be set up a United Nations Trusteeship that would make effect the right of colonial*

¹¹¹ General Albert C. Wedemeyer, General Albert C. Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!* (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1958), 340, 343; General A.C. Wedemeyer to Edward Drachman, 19 January 1967, Folder 6, Box 134 Vietnam, Wedemeyer Papers, Hoover Institution. A contemporary document (Enclosure to Memorandum for the Secretary SWNC from M.E. McDonald, 24 March 1945, Roll 5, LM54, NARA) states that Wedemeyer was still in Washington at the time of Hurley’s meeting with Roosevelt on 24 March (see below) and it would seem likely that they both visited him one after the other since they came from the same Theater and their discussions would be related.

¹¹² General Albert C. Wedemeyer (1958), 340.

people to choose the form of government under which they will live as soon as in the opinion of the United Nations they are qualified for independence."¹¹³

In an SWNCC meeting on April 13, the day after Roosevelt's death, Robert A. Lovett (acting for Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy) declared that the lack of policy on Indochina "is a serious embarrassment to the military." Lovett acted as spokesman for Stimson's rallying of opposition to Roosevelt's anti-colonial position when he demanded "President Roosevelt's prohibition upon discussing of our Indochina policy must be reconsidered or reaffirmed promptly." H. Freeman Mathews, the State Department's Director of the Office of European Affairs and official responsible for all department dealings with War and Navy Departments on matters involving civil affairs of Europe, the Far East, and French, Dutch, Portuguese, and *French possessions in the Far East*, who was representing Assistant Secretary of State James Dunn, stated that Dunn felt that it was necessary to "clarify policy."¹¹⁴ "Clarify" was a diplomatic euphemism for "change" as we shall see in the next chapter concerning Indochina policy under the Truman Administration, a fight led in the State Department by Dunn.

¹¹³ Control and Command in the war against Japan, No. 603: Memorandum by the Assistant to the President's Naval Aide ([G.M.] Elsey), [Undated], *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, 1945*, volume I (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1960), 917. (italics added) Tønnesson, Stein. "Franklin D. Roosevelt and the French Loss of Indo-China, 9 March 1945." Unpublished paper presented at a Symposium on the First Indochina War, at the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, in Austin, Texas, 1-3 November 2002, [http://www.prio.no/staff/Stein/FDR_and_Indochina_\(Austin%20paper\).pdf](http://www.prio.no/staff/Stein/FDR_and_Indochina_(Austin%20paper).pdf) (accessed July 11, 2004); Tønnesson, Stein. *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945 : Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh, and De Gaulle in a world at war* (London: Sage Publications, 1991), 219. Stein Tønnesson asserts that President Roosevelt had with Patrick Hurley and Albert Wedemeyer at 12:30 a.m. on March 8, but the date of Hurley's meeting is not disputed and it is unlikely that Wedemeyer would have been confused over the timing of his meeting being two weeks rather than five weeks before the President died.

¹¹⁴ SWNCC 35/7, 13 April 1945, T1194, RG 353 Records of the Interdepartmental Committees, Minutes of the State, War and Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC) 1944-47; James Clement Dunn, 4 January 1945, Roll 54, LM54, NARA.

Although it did not immediately involve Indochina, the Joint Chiefs of Staff also acted on April 13 by submitting a proposal to their British counterparts to cede Southeast Asian territories from MacArthur's command to SEAC.¹¹⁵ This also implicitly challenged Roosevelt's policy of November and its timing cannot be ignored. While this did not involve Indochina, which fell within the China Theater, as we shall see later, the British counterproposal sought to transfer it to SEAC.

These moves by Stimson, Stettinius, and Forrestal to change policy on the Japanese mandated islands and Indochina, and by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to cede formerly European-controlled colonies to the SEAC represented a dramatic break from President Roosevelt's well-known, if not officially documented, stand on the issue of colonialism. There should no longer be any doubt as to whether Roosevelt changed his mind on such issues, or his mind was changed for him immediately upon his death by those who disagreed with him.

In his work on modern Vietnam, Mark Philip Bradley belittles the significance of Roosevelt's advocacy of trusteeship, declaring that his "belief that trusteeship in Vietnam marked a revolutionary break from the colonial past, the shared Euro-American beliefs that underlay the United States approach to the Philippines and Vietnam belied his exceptionalist claims."¹¹⁶ Roosevelt's use of racist language when referring to non-Caucasian peoples and his insistence on tutelage for such people to attain "civilization," do not make it hard to accept that his proposal represented a true departure from

¹¹⁵ McMahan, 79.

¹¹⁶ Bradley, Mark Philip. *Imagining Vietnam & America: the making of postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950* (Greensboro, The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 79.

colonialism. However, do truly revolutionary breaks ever occur? Or do seemingly revolutionary social events result from gradual impetus over time? While there is no doubt the U.S. has substituted a “Pax Americana” for the “Pax Britannica” and other empires, what developed during the Cold War went well beyond what trusteeship embodied. Trusteeship was, after all, vehicle for allowing colonies to develop legitimacy as states, based on a shared American and European conceptualization of what it meant to be a modern nation-state.¹¹⁷ The Welles-Roosevelt approach to the issue was an imperfect, though *progressive* attempt overcome the failure of the Wilsonian mandate system. In the end, we might pose the question of how revolutionary a break from the past Roosevelt’s vague idea of trusteeship seemed to the hundreds of thousands who died fighting for independence against British, Dutch, and French imperialism after his death definitively ended hopes that the end of the war would bring an end to colonial rule.

CONCLUSION

In providing a relatively comprehensive look at the Roosevelt Administration’s approach to territorial trusteeship and the President’s personal support of the liberation for Indochina from French colonial rule, several aspects of the story that have been overlooked in the past have been uncovered. There are many reasons diplomats and scholars have been so willing in the past to accept the argument that Roosevelt had changed his mind on trusteeship for Indochina near the end of his life. One of these

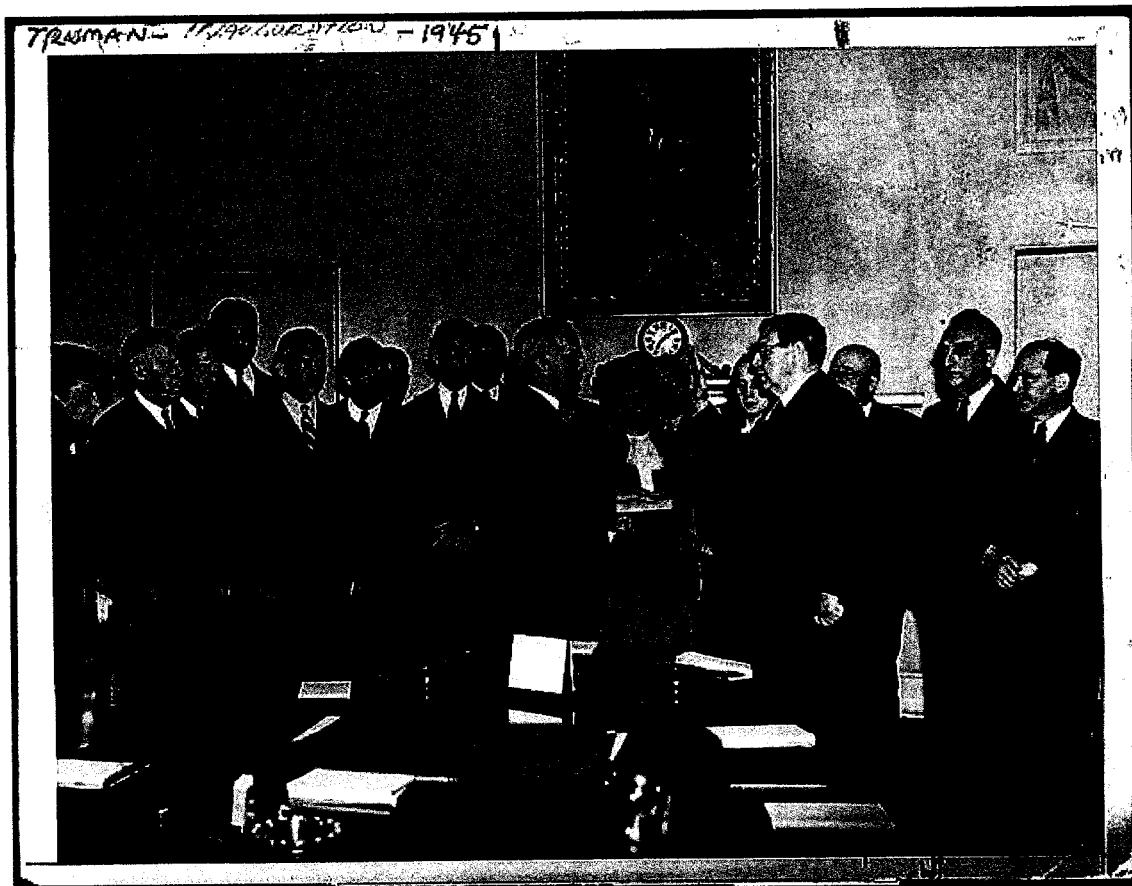
¹¹⁷ Thorne, *Allies of a Kind*, 140. Christopher Thorne reports how this notion was widely held by Allied colonial powers who were concerned about the growing power and influence of the U.S. as the war progressed. The Britain’s War Office used this particular language in a report to Cabinet culled from British officers serving in Washington, D.C.

reasons is a lack of understanding of the President's commitment to this goal, confused in part by the inconsistent remarks about supporting the integrity of the French Empire's colonial possessions in statements made to the Vichy Government before Operation *Torch*. There has also been misunderstanding about what predicated the change in the State Department's position on the scope of territorial trusteeship and the President's acceptance of its limitation to the two World Wars' enemies' territories. Furthermore, not enough attention has been accorded the political maneuvering and policy changes initiated within the days and weeks following Roosevelt's death.

Challenges to the President from within the Executive Branch, as well as from the British, were not fully manifested until after he died. Tensions that lay below the surface of these relationships were only resolved with the President's death. If Welles and Roosevelt had conceived trusteeship in the postwar international organization as a departure from the old League of Nations mandate system, the British, the State Department, the JCS, and Secretaries of War and Navy did all they could to undermine such efforts. The change after FDR died was immediate (days and weeks) and permanent.

Trusteeship as it was originally envisaged, tied to the principles of the Atlantic Charter, had died. Trusteeship as Roosevelt and Welles conceived it did not fail due simply to the overwhelming opposition it faced, although this existed. It failed because Roosevelt's management style of working around institutional obstacles through personal representatives working *ex officio* relied upon him to fulfill the policy. His approach failed because Churchill, his domestic opponents, and the war outlasted him.

While Administration officials in Washington appeared to increasingly join efforts in the first few months of 1945 against Roosevelt's trusteeship proposals for colonial Southeast Asia, and the Truman administration decisively moved away from decolonization, the Division of Southeast Asian Affairs in the State Department and, more dramatically, those on the ground in southern China and Indochina continued to support the idea of ending colonialism. The OSS, for example, had begun to challenge colonialism in Southeast Asia as a method of propaganda to free American operations from the animosity the native inhabitants of these areas held toward their colonial allies. As an operational policy, however, the OSS in Indochina made use of both the French and Vietnamese against the Japanese. These aspects, beginning with policy changes under the Truman Administration, will be explored in the next few chapters.



Harry S. Truman swearing the oath of office in front of a portrait of Woodrow Wilson in the Cabinet Room of the Whitehouse, April 12, 1945.¹

Chapter 8

Harry S. Truman Joins the Team: Setting the Stage for the Return of Colonialism

On a diplomatic level, for the first four months after Truman succeeded Roosevelt, U.S. relations with France and Great Britain over the issue of Indochina pivoted around four issues: military operational jurisdiction in Indochina, Lend-Lease supply of equipment, logistical support (i.e. transportation) for French forces to be deployed there, formal U.S. policy on French sovereignty of the territory, and U.S.-Soviet Union

¹ Library of Congress, [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/i?ammem/pin:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(ppmsc+02890\)\):displayType=1:m856sd=ppmsc:m856sf=02890](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/i?ammem/pin:@field(NUMBER+@band(ppmsc+02890)):displayType=1:m856sd=ppmsc:m856sf=02890) (accessed April 24, 2005)

relations. Broadly speaking, the U.S. took a established a uniform policy towards the European colonies of Southeast Asia by June, but fear of an international communist threat amongst high-level Truman Administration officials and the identity of the dominant nationalist group in Việt Nam set the basis for a unique approach there. This discussion is divided into two chapters. This chapter isolates foreign policy development towards Việt Nam, and Chapter 9 examines the origins and nature of the crisis in the spring of 1945 in U.S.-Soviet relations that led to a Cold War approach to that country.

JURISDICTION OVER ALLIED MILITARY OPERATIONS IN INDOCHINA

We saw earlier how the British had maneuvered to support de Gaullist French attempts to establish their claim to be working for the liberation of Indochina from the Japanese, even falsely claiming at various times that the President, the JCS, and the Supreme Allied Command Headquarters had agreed to the French Military Mission attachment to SEAC. The British had clearly adopted a policy of subterfuge to bypass Roosevelt's resistance to supporting French aims at resuming their colonial control over Indochina. Prior to the March 1945 coup, French claims to resisting the Japanese in Indochina relied on Service de Renseignement (SR, or Intelligence Service) and Service the d'Action (SA, or Action Section of the SR) networks established inside the colonial territory through primarily through retired General Eugène Mordant. Christopher Thorne claims the March 1945 coup "enabled the Government in Paris...to claim that France was

shedding blood in the liberation of her own territory.”² Of course, French in the *metropole* did not hesitate to make this claim, but it was completely untrue. The French who died in the coup were not killed liberating Indochina—the French Ambassador to Washington admitted as much—rather, the small minority who resisted and were injured or died, did so defending the line they had held at the time a *modus vivendi* was reached with the Japanese more than four years earlier, requiring collaboration ever since. Support for the return of French colonial rule in Indochina was not based on any accomplishment of the French in this regard, rather, it was based on strategic military planning (the jurisdiction issue), a freeing up of military resources at the conclusion of the war (the supply and logistics issue), and a basic sense of kinship with the French (the sovereignty issue).

Chiang Kai-shek was given operational control over Indochina at the first Cairo Conference (January 14-24, 1943). Subsequently, in exchange for Mountbatten’s willingness “not to publish” the fact that Thailand was placed in SEAC, Chiang agreed on an arrangement of shared operational control over Indochina with his China Theater. When the appropriate time came to launch an assault on the Japanese, the Chinese would move in from the North, the SEAC would direct its attack from the South, and control over Indochina was to be based on their respective progress. This was known as the

² Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 621. Christopher Thorne also states: “Thus the Minister of Colonies was better placed to affirm, as he did on 24 March, that ‘Indochina is called to a special place in the French community...The Indochinese Federation will form, together with France and other parts of the Community, a French Union whose interest abroad will be represented by France.’” Embassy of France in the United States to Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., 14 April 1945, Roll 5, LM54, NARA. In a memorandum to Secretary Stettinius on April 14, the French Ambassador recognized that the coup was not a response to resistance, but “an initiative taken by the Japanese Authorities.

“Gentlemen’s Agreement,” and though how it had come about may have been disputed, its main points were not.³ A debate, however, emerged over Moutbatten’s interpretation of a “supplementary agreement” he made with Chiang as explained here in a letter to General Albert Wedemeyer, commander of American forces in the China Theater:

Before I left Cairo, in November 1943, I told you I would take up the point again with the Generalissimo; and I did so specifically, on the drive from Ranchi to Ramgarh, taking great pains to make the position abundantly clear to him through Madame [Chiang’s wife]: that I wanted to carry out pre-operational activity in both Siam and F.I.C., as had been agreed at Huang Shan but omitted from the written agreement. The Generalissimo agreed quite readily, but asked me to keep him informed of what I was going to do; and I replied: “I will do the same as you.”⁴

In his response, Wedemeyer states that Chiang Kai-shek asked him to coordinate all operations within China Theater. In setting out to do so, Wedemeyer claimed, the problem emerged when:

I discovered that the Chinese had no knowledge of whatsoever of sorties being flown by SEAC into French Indo-China. My air commander General Chennault reported that sorties were revealed on his radar screen and he could only assume that they were enemy planes. Such a situation was militarily unsound.

I do not agree that we are back to the terms of the Gentlemen’s Agreement as you interpret it, namely, that you can operate in China Theater without prior authority of the Generalissimo who is the recognized Supreme Allied Commander. He has repeatedly told me that he tried to make clear to you that he desired prior arrangement. It is perfectly understandable how you interpreted your agreement in one way and how de did in the other. However, you must admit that his interpretation is in consonance with standard military practice and I should like to emphasize that no other Theater

³ Memorandum by the United States Chiefs of Staff, 24 November 1943, and The Consul at Coombo (Bishop) to the Secretary of State (Stettinius), 9 January 1945, *FRUS, 1943, The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1961), 391-92, 886-888.

⁴ Dickie Moutbatten Lieut-General A.C. Wedmeyere, 6 May 1945, Folder 82, Box 26, Wedemeyer Papers, Hoover Institution. The Consul at Colombo (Bishop) to the Secretary of State (Stettinius), 9 January 1945, *FRUS, 1943, The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1961), 886-888.

Commander attempts to conduct operations in a contiguous area without the authority and prior full cognizance of the Commander of such area.⁵

This disagreement was fueled by personal views over colonialism deeply rooted in their respective national attitudes towards the issue.⁶

Churchill wired Roosevelt on March 17 to lobby for Mountbatten's viewpoint on "pre-occupational" activities in Indochina, attempting to bolster the SEAC Commander's position by asserting that he had "vital interests" in Indochina as well as Thailand because Japanese land and air reinforcements were routed through these two areas to British Burma and Malaya (in SEAC, commanded by Mountbatten).⁷ In his response a few days later, Roosevelt defended Wedemeyer's position on "pre-occupational" activities stating that "the Generalissimo has insisted that he should control, through his Chief of Staff General Wedemeyer, all clandestine activities by other than Chinese forces which may be conducted within the China theater including Indochina." Roosevelt proposed that Churchill direct Mountbatten to coordinate his activities with Wedemeyer "as Chief of Staff to the Generalissimo."⁸

⁵ A.C. Wedemeyer to Admiral the Lord Louis Mountbatten, 12 May 1945, Folder 82, Box 26, Wedemeyer Papers, Hoover Institution.

⁶ Mountbatten to Wedemeyer, 30 September and Wedemeyer to Mountbatten, 19 October 1974, Folder 6, Box 134, Wedemeyer Papers, Hoover Institution. In a letter to Edward Drachman (30 January 1967, Folder 6, Box 134, Wedemeyer Papers, Hoover Institution), Wedemeyer wrote that "Admiral Mountbatten was an aggressive individual and was constantly reaching out in every sphere of activity to increase the prestige and control of the British. I state this categorically without fear of denial and yet I do so in a friendly spirit because I admired and respected him as an individual and as a leader." He also revealed that he liked "the idea of trusteeship or a tutelage period under the aegis of more influential and more experienced nations. However, this period should definitely not be used to exploit the underprivileged or the underdeveloped area."

⁷ Churchill to Roosevelt, No. 913, March 17, 1945, *Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*, 677.

⁸ *Ibid*, 682-83

Churchill did not send a response to Roosevelt until April 11, the day before the President died. In drawing attention to the coup, he argued that “substantial resistance is being offered by French patriots, it is essential not only that we should support the French by all the means in our power, but also that we should associate them with our operations into their country.” Rather than accede to Roosevelt’s proposal that Mountbatten coordinate his activities, Churchill’s counterproposal was for Mountbatten to merely inform Wedemeyer of his actions.⁹

On his return to China from Washington, D.C., Wedemeyer met with Mountbatten at the latter’s headquarters and, after discussing operations in Indochina, they believed they had reached an agreement. Wedemeyer believed that Mountbatten had agreed not to carry out operations in Indochina until he approved them, but Mountbatten felt that he was merely required to keep Wedemeyer informed of the activities he directed there, no doubt influenced by Churchill’s counterproposal to Roosevelt. Upon succeeding Roosevelt, Truman solicited advice on the issue from the Joint Chiefs. They supported Wedemeyer’s position on operations in Indochina based on the accepted practice that operations in overlapping theaters require the approval of the principal theater commander, in this instance Wedemeyer who acted in behalf of Chiang Kai-shek. Consequently, Truman responded to Churchill on the 14th reaffirming Wedemeyer’s position on the issue.¹⁰

⁹ Memorandum by the Assistant to the President’s Naval Aide (Elsey), [undated], *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, 1945*,” Volume 1, 918-19; Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1955), 35.

¹⁰ Memorandum by the Assistant to the President’s Naval Aide (Elsey), 1, 918-19.

During April, Mountbatten informed Wedemeyer of his intention to fly 26 sorties into Indochina in support of French guerilla groups. Wedemeyer wanted to know what arrangements had been used to insure that Lend-Lease equipment were going to be used only against the Japanese. Additional messages were exchanged between the two, but Mountbatten never answered Wedemeyer's question, and ordered the planes to carry out the sorties without waiting for approval from Wedemeyer or Chiang. Wedemeyer protested Mountbatten's action to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on May 25 stating that Roosevelt had given explicit instructions that Lend-Lease equipment was not to be used by the French in Indochina, and argued that the equipment given to SEAC should therefore be handed over to the China Theater so he could better do his job.¹¹

By July 7, Mountbatten sent Wedemeyer a letter explaining in effect that the French through SEAC were attempting "to re-establish the intelligence network of the D.G.E.R. [Direction Générale des Études et Recherches] and its coastal watching system which was largely destroyed when the Japanese coup de main took place in that country."¹² Then, ignoring all previous discussion on the matter, Mountbatten returned to his initial position based on his understanding of his "supplementary agreement" to the Gentlemen's Agreement he had with Chiang Kai-shek in stating: "Now you have the

¹¹ Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 17 July 1945, *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, 1945*, Volume 2, 40-42; Memorandum by the Assistant to the President's Naval Aide (Elsley), [undated], *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, 1945*, Volume 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1960), 918-20. Richard J. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan: Britain, America and the politics of secret service* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 211. Richard Aldrich, citing an SOE paper from March 1945, states that the RAF flew 71 successful sorties to Tonkin from Burma in the first eight weeks of 1945.

¹² Strictly speaking, the Direction Générale des Études et Recherches, or French clandestine Service of Information and Action was formerly the Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action, but in effect he meant the Service de Renseignement and Service d'Action ran through the structure of the French Indochina Army under the direction of General Mordant before he was confined by the Japanese during the coup so it could not be re-established but had to be built from the ground up.

scope of the pre-operational activities being launched from this theatre into F.I.C., I would be grateful if you would inform” British General Carton de Wiart in Kunming “of any operations of yours in that country so that I may keep clear of them, or, with your concurrence, aid them to the best of my ability.”¹³ The jurisdictional dispute was, however, nearly over.

Desiring to consolidate all resources on Pacific operations directed at Japan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed to transfer a portion of the Southwest Pacific Command under MacArthur to SEAC. On July 9, the British Chiefs of Staff counter-proposed that Thailand and Indochina also be included in the transfer “so that there may be unity of control of the major operations in this area when they develop and of previous subversive and paramilitary operations.” Since the original proposal included portions of the Dutch East Indies not previously under SEAC, the new boundaries would, just as Wedemeyer had earlier suggested, extend the command to include all (major) European colonial possessions in Southeast Asia.¹⁴

In assenting to the British counter-proposal on the 17th, the Americans offered one modification, that Indochina be divided at the 15th Parallel (15° North Latitude)—shortly changed to the 16th Parallel, so that China’s flank could be protected. The British had also proposed that two French divisions be permitted to join in operations against the Japanese—the Americans agreed it would be best if they were used in Indochina—but it was realized that they would not be able to reach the area until late spring of 1946 due to

¹³ Mountbatten to Wedemeyer, 7 July 1945, Folder 82, Box 26, Wedmeyer Papers, Hoover Institution.

¹⁴ Memorandum by the Representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff, 9 July 1945, *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, 1945*, 1, 922.

lack of shipping. The boundary change was formally approved by Truman and Churchill at the Potsdam Conference on the 24th. On the 31st, unaware that the American Joint Chiefs of Staff had already agreed to take half of Indochina from his theater and give it to SEAC, Wedemeyer sent a personal message to Marshall warning that the British would probably propose extending SEAC's area to include all former British, French, and Dutch colonial possessions. Truman ordered Ambassador Hurley to pass a note to Chiang Kai-shek on August 1 informing him of Combined Chiefs' of Staff decision to take away Thailand and Indochina south of the 16th parallel and asking for his agreement to the change.¹⁵

Although not scheduled to take effect until August 15, by which time the war was over, the boundaries were changed anyway and the new boundary lines served merely to assist recolonization interests of the British, Dutch, and French in Southeast Asia rather than to save American lives. As late as August 13, SEAC had established operational priorities setting the occupation of Singapore first on the list, followed by Indochina, Thailand, Java and Sumatra. This reflected a switch from an earlier emphasis on

¹⁵ Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 17 July 1945 and Memorandum by the Assistant to the President's Naval Aide (Else), [undated]; Meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, 24 July 1945, *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, 1945*, Volume 2, 377; Memorandum of the United States of Staff, 17 July 1945, *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, 1945*, Volume 2, 1313; and Memorandum by the British Chiefs of Staff, 22 July 1945, *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, 1945*, Volume 2, 1319, 1321. Bruce Cummings, "The Division of Korea," in *Two Koreas—One Future?*, edited John Sullivan and Roberta Foss (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), 7; David I. Steinberg, *The Republic of Korea: Economic Transformation and Social Change* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 48-49; Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 903. Stalin had agreed to place Korea under trusteeship in a meeting with Harry Hopkins on May 28, 1945. During a night long session of the SWNCC on August 10-11, Assistant Secretary of War John McCoy directed Colonels Dean Rusk (later Secretary of State) and Charles Bonesteel (later Commander of UN forces in South Korea) to go into another office and draw a line on a map dividing Korea into two so that Russia would later be forced to accept the division presented them. They were given 30 minutes and decided arbitrarily on the 38th parallel because it included the capital city of Seoul in the South.

attacking Sumatra first. By the end of the war, the British had nearly recovered Burma from the Japanese, but they had not advanced as far as Malaya to approach their first objective.¹⁶ General Order Number 1 provided that the Japanese would surrender to Chiang Kai-shek north of the 16th parallel and to Mountbatten south of the 16th parallel.¹⁷

SUPPLYING AN ARMY: LEND-LEASE, TRANSPORT & THE FRENCH EMPIRE

A parallel debate over supplying the French with Lend-Lease equipment and transport services to bring their troops from Europe to Indochina unfolded roughly at the same time the jurisdiction issue was being played out. Some of the men on the ground in Asia arrived in the region with anti-imperialist attitudes while others acquired this sentiment after arrival there. Ambassador to China Patrick Hurley, like Wedemeyer, was one of the former. On the long journey to China to begin his assignment as personal representative of the President in late 1943, Hurley wrote to Roosevelt from New Delhi to report “some of my present views on the Middle East” through which he had just passed:

The British are using American lend lease and American troops not for the purpose of creating a brave new world based on the Atlantic Charter and the four freedoms but for British conquest, British imperial rule, and British trade monopoly. It is quite generally maintained in the Middle East that American foreign policy is now directed toward these latter purposes.

¹⁶ Thorne, 614, 670.

¹⁷ *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941-45* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1958), 262.

...Lend lease is a potent instrument in international relations. With the occupation of territory now held by the Axis, lend lease will increase in international importance.¹⁸

In late January 1945, he made his position clear in a message to Secretary Stettinius in connection to a request handed to the embassy by Achilles Clarac, Counselor of the French Embassy in China:

So far as I am personally concerned, I have let the diplomatic representatives of the so-called imperialistic governments with interests in southeast Asia know that I am personally opposed to imperialism but that I am not making the policy of the United States on that subject. I have remarked to them that the United States is committed to the proposition that governments should derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. I have said that I personally adhere to the principles of the Atlantic Charter which provides that we shall "respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live." I have commented that French imperialism and French monopolies in Indochina seem to me to be in conflict with these principles. However, I have emphasized, as indicated above, that I am personally not making the policy of my Government. I have accordingly suggested to the French that they should look to Washington and Paris and not to us here for clarification of America's policy in regard to Indochina.

In connection with my opinion on this subject I refer also to the speeches made early in the war by Prime Minister Churchill, Secretary Hull and President Roosevelt which indicate clearly the principles of liberty for which we are fighting. These principles are also set out definitely in the Atlantic Charter.¹⁹

Hurley warned President Roosevelt on March 24 that the British "would attempt, with the use of our Lend-Lease supplies and if possible our manpower, to occupy Indo-China and reestablish their former imperial control."²⁰ Hurley, unaware of what had

¹⁸ Patrick J. Hurley to Honorable Franklin D. Roosevelt, 7 November 1943, Folder Patrick Hurley, Box 151, PSF, FDRL.

¹⁹ The Ambassador in China (Hurley) to the Secretary of State, 31 January 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, Volume VI (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 294.

²⁰ Memorandum by the Assistant to the President's Naval Aide (Else), [undated], *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, 1945*, Volume 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1960), 917. Albert Wedemeyer to Edward Drachman, 19 January 1967, Folder 6, Box 134 (Vietnam), Wedemeyer Papers, Hoover Institution. In a letter to historian Edward Drachman, Wedemeyer reiterated that Roosevelt was not in good health when he met in March 1945, "His mind seemed to wander. However, one instruction that he gave me he repeated for emphasis: he ordered me not to give any assistance whatsoever to the French in French Indochina. He explained that it was his intention after the war to eliminate all colonial systems in the Far East. The President stated that he would inform Admiral Leahy (Chairman of the JCS). It is

already transpired at the Potsdam Conference, had also sent a message to President Truman on July 28 in which he supported Wedemeyer's resistance to the British over the jurisdiction of Indochina issue, stating that he had been "definitely directed by President Roosevelt in regard to his policy in Indo-China, but we in this theater have never received a written directive on the political policy of the United States in Indo-China":

Attention is called to the fact that Lord Louis [Mountbatten] very recently requested [General] Sultan, United States India-Burma Commander, for a large increase in lend-lease supplies that will enable him to defeat the Roosevelt policy in Indo-China and reestablish imperialism in that area. If you, sir, are opposed to Lord Louis['] political objectives in Indo-China, I suggest that our Government stop giving him lend-lease supplies and deny him the use of American Air Forces and other American resources.²¹

Echoing General Mervin Gross' message to Chennault in March (see Chapter 5), he added that "the move of the imperialistic powers to use American resources to enable them to move with force in Indo-China is not for purpose of participating in the main battle against Japan." He ended his message with a request that he either give the theater a new directive or reaffirm Roosevelt's policy.²²

In early May, Marshall notified Stimson that "A portion of the equipment for" three French divisions "had been shipped and reached France." In the meantime, equipment, apparently including the equipment supplied directly by the U.S., was cannibalized from other units for the 9th Division in preparation for its being sent to Indochina. After Germany had been defeated, the commander of all French forces, General Juin, was "pressing for completion of the equipment of three French divisions

interesting to note that earlier, at the Yalta Conference (4 Feb. 1945) Roosevelt told the JCS he favored anything that was against the Japanese so long as the U.S. was not aligned with the French."

²¹ Quoted in Memorandum by the Assistant to the President's Naval Aide (Elsley).

²² Ibid.

and the proportional slice of supporting troops,” but Marshall was reluctant for several reasons. Roosevelt had ordered the Joint Chiefs not to equip French forces destined for Indochina, no plan for a campaign there had materialized since his death, and even if there had been one, there was little prospect that French troops would be ready in time for participation in the fighting. Marshall was also reluctant to support Mountbatten in his dispute with Wedemeyer over “pre-operational” activities in Indochina.²³

In a meeting with Foreign Minister Bidault in May, Truman was non-committal about French offers of assistance in the war against Japan, stating that the matter involved concerns of supply and logistics, and so the decision was one of operations which had to be left to the Commander in the Pacific, MacArthur. Bidault later pressed Acting Secretary of State Joseph Grew on the 20th, informing him that there were two French divisions prepared to be transported immediately to fight against the Japanese. Grew asked Bidault if there were any Senegalese troops among them. Bidault admitted this was true, but “there were also substantial numbers of white French.” On the last day of the month, Ambassador Bonnet met with Grew and advised him that that only one of the divisions Bidault had mentioned was equipped and would be ready to leave by the end of June, not immediately, and that the second would be ready by the end of July, but would require equipment through Lend-Lease.²⁴

²³ *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Volume 5, edited by Larry I. Bland (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 179-80; Peter Dennis, *Troubled Days of Peace: Mountbatten and South East Asia Command, 1945-46* (Oxford: Manchester University Press, 1987), 34

²⁴ Memorandum of the Director of European Affairs (Matthews) to the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, 23 May 1945, and Memorandum of Conversation, by the Acting Secretary of State, 31 May 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, Volume VI, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969) 309-11.

Marshall told British Field Marshall Sir Henry Wilson in discussions on June 1 and 5 that “there must be an extraordinary importance to clandestine operations being carried out by Mountbatten...to justify the possible creation not only of ill will but of a feeling that there is a lack of good faith, which if exploited in the press, as there is always a danger, would react to our serious disadvantage all over the world.”²⁵ Consequently Mountbatten should not have been shocked as he purported to be when he wrote in his diary on the 15th: “It is horrifying to think that the American and Indian press evidently still regard us as merely Imperial monsters, little better than the Fascists or Nazis.”²⁶

In a discussion about the division of Indochina in the end of July, MacArthur, who was certainly less informed on the issue than his counterpart, asked Mountbatten if he would be willing to accept the two French divisions for operations in SEAC. MacArthur stated that both divisions were now composed entirely of “white men and the French proposal specifically provided that they would arrive with corps-supporting and service units.” However, MacArthur said these divisions would probably not be ready to move out until late spring of 1946. Mountbatten, glossing over his past efforts to get the French re-established in Indochina, said “he would certainly welcome these two French divisions” because they could be deployed in Indochina, and “he would be relieved of the necessity of dealing with a problem which could be satisfactorily handled only by Frenchmen.”²⁷ After the war was concluded, thus freeing up transport facilities, the British used American flag ships to transport French troops from Marseille to Sài Gòn.²⁸

²⁵ *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, 179-80.

²⁶ Quoted in Thorne, 590-91.

²⁷ Meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, 24 July 1945, *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, 1945*, Volume I (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1960), 377; Peter Dennis, 33-34. After the

JAMES DUNN: ARCHITECT OF AN INDOCHINA POLICY

These debates over jurisdiction, and supply of Lend-Lease equipment and logistical support for the “imperialist cause,” were overshadowed by the policy changes rooted in the debates over postwar planning between Welles and Hull. As long as Roosevelt was alive, there remained a chance that his anti-imperialist policies would survive. However, Admiral Leahy, who served as Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy under both Roosevelt and Truman, explained that “after reaching a decision,” Truman “delegated full responsibility for its execution to the department of the government charged by custom or by law with that duty.”²⁹ Thus, the State Department regained its traditional influence in foreign policy without the obstruction of the president. After Roosevelt’s death, the fight against colonialism was taken up in the State Department by the Division of the Southwest Pacific (later, Southeast Asian) Affairs working within the Office of Far Eastern Affairs. Even in their symbolic defense of Roosevelt’s anti-imperialist position, however, they had already conceded Hull’s earlier policy victories over Welles.

Japanese surrendered, Mountbatten was informed the the the French proposed to “make available” a brigade, a division, and 1500 non-divisional troops. The only troops ready to depart immediately were the, at the time, 979 soldiers of the 5^{ème} Régiment d’Infanterie Coloniale (RIC, or Regiment of Colonial Infantry) the former Corps Léger d’Intervention (Light Intervention Corps). Only 2300 of the 7000 soldiers in the brigade were white and these were British equipped. The 17,000-strong, all-white 9^{ème} Division d’Infanterie Coloniale (DIC, or Colonial Infantry Division) was Lend-Lease equipped. The 3^{ème} DIC had 20,000 Europeans had no equipment, but once it did, it would be available to depart by mid-October.

²⁸ Herring, 114.

²⁹ Leahy, 4.

Prior to the spring 1944, the Office of Far Eastern Affairs had no jurisdiction over areas of Southeast Asia, like the Dutch East Indies, British Burma and Malay, and French Indochina because they were European colonies falling within the purview of the Office of European Affairs. After the Southwest Pacific Division was created, it shared “concurrent jurisdiction” with the European Division over Thailand and other areas of Southeast Asia and the Pacific, excluding the Philippines. Hull, who “felt that there should be a united front by the Department and an agreement here before things went to the President,” a principle which Stettinius continued after succeeding him, required the two divisions agree before giving recommendations. According the Chief of the Southwest Pacific Division Abbot Low Moffat this meant “it proved almost impossible to raise conflicting views for resolutions at higher levels.”³⁰

A State Department draft policy on Indochina from April 5, a week before Roosevelt died, reflected this division. Recalling de Gaulle’s own words, one passage reads: “If France is to be denied her former position in Indo-China she will be to that extent weakened as a world power,” and was followed by the warning, “A disgruntled, psychologically sick and sovereign-conscious France will not augur well for post-war collaboration in Europe and in the world as a whole.” Yet in complete contradiction to such statements, the conclusion stated, in part: “It should be the endeavor of this Government to refrain from any action which would in any way weaken the effectiveness of any proposal which might hereafter be made by the United States with regard to the

³⁰ “Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War,” *Hearings before the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 92nd Congress* (Washington: United States GPO, 1973), 161-62; War Diary of Breckinridge Long, 67.

future disposition of Indo-China in the direction either of diminishing the extent of French control over that territory or enlarging the political responsibilities of the native population.”³¹ Moffat’s characterization of the split in the State Department, though, suggests that positions taken by the Office of European Affairs were balanced by the Office of Far Eastern Affairs and his Southeast Asia Division. This was not the case, though, due to a reshuffling of the Department in late 1944 giving conservative, pro-European forces greater influence.

Eleanor Roosevelt had written her husband in early December 1944, to convey her fear over a reorganization of the Department of State giving more power to conservative officials. Edward Stettinius was nominated to replace Cordell Hull as Secretary, James C. Dunn was appointed Assistant Secretary and became the third most influential department official under Stettinius after newly appointed Under Secretary Grew, Secretary Dean Acheson was made Secretary of Congressional Relations and International Conferences (he would later serve as Secretary during the height of the Cold War, 1949-1953), and William L. Clayton became Under Secretary for Economic Affairs. “I can hardly see,” wrote Eleanor, “that the set up will be very much different from what it might have been under” President Roosevelt’s Republican challenger in the 1944 election, Thomas Dewey. Singling out Dunn, she added, “It does, however, make me rather nervous for you to say that you do not care what Jimmy Dunne [sic] thinks because he will do what you tell him to do and that for three years you have carried the State

³¹ [no title given but content is discussion of Indochina policy], 5 April 1945, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center.

Department and you expect to go on doing it.”³² He could not, of course, continue to do so after he died, and Dunn, Stettinius, Acheson, and Clayton, amongst others, no longer had to concern themselves with following Roosevelt’s policies.

The first repercussion of Roosevelt’s shortsighted appointment of conservative officials to important offices for implementing his colonial policy was realized on April 13, the day after he died. The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC) met that Friday and agreed that the State Department should draft a prompt clarification of America’s Indochina policy for the new President, Harry S. Truman. James C. H. Bonbright of the Western European Division (under the Office of European Affairs headed by the Francophile H. Freeman Matthews), was given the task of writing the draft, but, in accordance with State Department policy, his draft on behalf of the European Division, had to be coordinated with a Southwest Pacific Division draft.³³

³² Quoted in Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1971), 713; Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1969), 89. Stettinius was not a leading conservative influence in the State Department, but an indirect influence through appointments such as these of conservative career officials to important positions. He was overly susceptible to other’s influence rather than a strong leader. *Time* 44:25 (18 December 1944): 19. *Time* reported that Dunn was 53 years old, a “longtime croquet partner of Cordell Hull,” who “was sure to raise the blood pressures of New Dealing Senators who suspect his wealth (he married an Amrour) and his conservative bent.” Oral History Interview with Loy W. Henderson, Truman Library, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/orallhist/hendrson.htm> (accessed January 5, 2005). Although Russophobe Loy Henderson (see below) was critical of those whose knowledge “about the Soviet Union had been acquired in the ‘liberal’ atmosphere of classrooms or from the reading of left-leaning magazines or other literature and from popular and persuasive commentators.” He viewed Clayton as an exception, “I would not include him among the economists who differed with us with regard to the Soviet Union. He was highly experienced in world affairs.”

³³ Secretary of State Raymond E. Cox, The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee to [H. Freeman] Matthews, EUR [State Department Office of European Affairs], April 19, 1945, and attached “Agenda Item No. 2-SWNCC 35/7”, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center. James Clement Dunn, 4 January 1945, Roll 54, LM54, NARA; Chairman of the Sub-Committee on the Far East, SWNCC. James Clement Dunn, 4 January 1945, Roll 54, LM54, NARA; ³³ George C. Herring, “The Truman Administration and the Restoration of French Sovereignty in Indochina,” *Diplomatic History* 1:2 (Spring 1977): 102. H. Freeman “Doc” Matthews had studied at the École Libre des Sciences Politiques and had served in France for seven years. On January 4, 1945 Secretary Stettinius appointed Matthews as the department’s representative to SWNCC “on all matters involving Civil Affairs affecting areas in Europe and the Near East, and *French*, Dutch or

Moffat's draft for the Southwest Pacific Division was sent to Dunn about a week later. The European Office draft emphasized improving relations with the French while the Southwest Pacific Division emphasized security in Southeast Asia where it saw American interests increasing. Moffat had suggested the French be given a list of five major points aimed at a liberalization of their colonial policy in Indochina and be asked to give some assurance before the U.S. would agree not to oppose their reoccupation. Though the gap between the resolutions may have seemed significant at the time, Moffat's proposal lacked any enforcement component and was weakened by agreement that Indochina should only be subject to international trusteeship if France agreed *voluntarily*. He agreed that the U.S. would not commit forces or furnish military equipment or supplies to "resistance groups" or to "French military forces" for the liberation of Indochina.³⁴

Dunn expressed his indignation over Moffat's draft in a memorandum to Under Secretary of State Grew stating that "it would be better to just let the matter drift rather than base our policy" on it. In his summary of Dunn's views, Grew wrote:

Portuguese *colonial possessions in the Pacific*." At the same time E.H. Dooman was appointed as Special Assistant to Assistant Secretary Dunn on Far Eastern matters. (*italics added*)

³⁴ "Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War," 167; Secretary of State Raymond E. Cox, The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee to [H. Freeman] Matthews, EUR [State Department Office of European Affairs], April 19, 1945, and attached "Agenda Item No. 2-SWNCC 35/7"; H. Freeman Matthews to [Assistant Secretary of State James Clement] Dunn, April 20, 1945; WE:JCHBonbright [James Cowles Hart Bonbright, State Department Division of Western European Affairs], Memorandum for the President, April 20, 1945; Edwin Forward Stanton, FE [State Department Office of Far Eastern Affairs, drafted by Abbot Low Moffat, Division of Southwest Pacific Affairs] to Dunn, April 21, 1945; Memorandum for the President, Subject: American Policy with Respect to Indochina, [no date or authorship given], Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center. James Clement Dunn, 4 January 1945, Roll 54, LM54, NARA; Chairman of the Sub-Committee on the Far East, SWNCC. James Clement Dunn, 4 January 1945, Roll 54, LM54, NARA.

However, he would greatly prefer to have us clear up the Indochina matter as soon as possible.

Mr. Dunn stated that he believes that just now especially we should draw close to Great Britain and France—the strongest western European countries (and we hope that France will be stronger and should try to help her). We should attempt to remove the sources of friction between France and the United States and should try to allay her apprehensions that we are going to propose that territory be taken away from her. We have no right to dictate to France nor to take away her territory. We can only use our influence with France and we should do so, for example, to bring France to improve the Government of Indochina and conditions there but we should not interfere.

Mr. Dunn emphasized his belief that now is the time for us to cooperate wholeheartedly with France. In this connection he referred to his recent conversation with Bidault in which the latter stressed his fears for western civilization as a result of the dominance of Russia in Europe.³⁵

Moffat defended his reasoning on the Indochina issue in a lengthy document on April 28, 1945. American anti-colonialism was based on two specific interests: (1) “American interests in the maintenance of peace, order, stability and prosperity in” Southeast Asia, and (2) “fair and equal access to all states to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity.” Moffat suggested that “Attempts to suppress or retard the aspirations of” the peoples of Southeast Asia “for self-governing liberty would shock the conscience of the American people.” In his view, “the peoples of southeastern Asia may turn to ideologies hostile to democracy in an effort to satisfy their natural aspirations,” and also warned that a “failure may result in the development of a pan-Asiatic movement directed against all western nations.”³⁶

³⁵ Memorandum on Indochina from the The Under Secretary of State, 23 April 1945, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center. An indepth discussion of the State Department’s views on Communist Russia provided in the next chapter and need not detain us here.

³⁶ SP—Mr. Moffat to SA/WP—Mr. Phillips, April 28, 1945, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

The split over a compromise reflected geographic areas of emphasis, but also Dunn's conservatism which was dominant in the State Department. Despite the Far Eastern Affairs Division's opposition, Dunn's view became policy, after Stettinius left Washington, D.C. to chair the charter conference of the United Nations in San Francisco and Under Secretary Grew became the Acting Secretary of State. Moffat and the Southeast Asia Division were effectively silenced. An SWNCC draft memorandum was sent to Truman on April 30 proposing a new Indochina policy, which reflected Hull's influence and the Department's antagonism to Roosevelt's ideas on colonialism:

The United States Government has publicly taken the position that it recognizes the sovereign jurisdiction of France over French possessions overseas when those possessions are resisting the enemy and has expressed the hope that it will see the reestablishment of the integrity of French territory...

The Government of the United States should neither oppose the restoration of Indo-China to France, with or without a program of international accountability, nor take any action toward French overseas possessions which it is not prepared to take or suggest with regard to the colonial possessions of our other Allies.³⁷

In early May, the State Department sent a memorandum to Truman stating that Roosevelt had approved "a statement issued by the Secretary of State [Stettinius] on April 3, 1945 relative to the plans approved at Yalta *which carried the clear implication* that Indochina would only come under a proposed trusteeship structure through voluntary action by the French." Of course if Roosevelt had given such a *clear implication*, there would have been no need at the SWNCC meeting on April 13 to for a prompt reconsideration or reaffirmation of "President Roosevelt's prohibition upon discussion of our Indo-China policy," because his prohibition was aimed at postwar trusteeship.

³⁷ Enclosure to Memorandum for the Secretaries of War and Navy from William D. Leahy, 30 April 1945, Roll 5, LM 54, NARA.

Moffat was apparently not aware of Roosevelt's position as communicated to Churchill, General Wedemeyer and Ambassador Hurley in March, but there is little doubt that Stettinius and his chief protégé in the Department, James Dunn, as well as Secretaries Stimson and Forrestal were. Sidestepping the lack of consensus between the two divisions holding concurrent jurisdiction over Indochina, the State Department provided recommendations which included the suggestion that the U.S. offer to give French resistance forces in Indochina "such assistance as does not interfere with the requirements of other planned operations," a clear change in direction from Roosevelt's strictly hands-off policy even if such assistance was to be used only for fighting the Japanese.³⁸

The State Department formalized U.S. policy for Southeast Asia in a paper on June 22. Although there were different sections for each European colonial possession there was little variation from a standard recognition of British, French and Dutch sovereignty over Burma, Malaya and British Borneo, India and Burma, Indochina, and the Netherlands East Indies suggesting they were all being treated in the same way. However, in an attempt either to silence critics of the Truman Administration for backtracking on the Atlantic Charter and supporting imperialism in Southeast Asia while they were condemning Soviet imperialism in Eastern Europe, the Department recycled the statement that "the general policy of the United States to favor a policy which would allow colonial peoples an opportunity to prepare themselves for increased participation in their own government with eventual self-government as the goal." There was, of course,

³⁸ Memorandum to the President, 9 May 1945; Agenda Item No. 2-SWNCC 35/7, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center; "Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War," 164. (italics added) Moffat said, "We in the Southeast Asia Division strongly favored the President's desire for Indochina and I hoped that he had some as yet secret plan by which he expected to effect such trusteeship, for we were unable to see how it could be implemented without applying the same policy to the British and Dutch colonies in the area."

no ambiguity in the Department's thinking, it supported imperialism for its war-ravaged allies as the basis for their recovery, but such statements led others to view the U.S. policy on colonialism as ambiguous.³⁹

CONCLUSION

Although the State Department's policy approach to colonial Southeast Asia could be traced back to Secretary Cordell Hull, there were important changes that cemented this policy, particularly in regard to Indochina. Roosevelt continued to believe that he could impose trusteeship on Indochina even though Hull's resistance to involuntary trusteeship had been formalized at Yalta. The real reason for Roosevelt's failure on the trusteeship issue in Indochina was his independent, micro-management style which left no opportunity for his vision to live beyond him. The three obstacles in the way to the French reasserting their sovereignty over Indochina were lifted in the four months after his death. Indochina was divided for wartime considerations at the 16th parallel so American forces could concentrate on their battle plan against Japan in the Pacific. This had no effect on American forces operating in Indochina, but the British argued successfully (though only for half of Indochina) on behalf of unity of operations within mainland Southeast Asia under the SEAC. Following Roosevelt's demise, there was little obstacle, beyond scarcity, to the supplying of French forces with Lend-Lease

³⁹ Policy Paper Prepared in the Department of State, "An Estimate of Conditions in Asia and the Pacific at the Close of the War in the Far East and the Objectives and Policies of the United States," 22 June 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), Volume VI, 567-580.

goods either directly from the U.S., or indirectly through the British in SEAC. After the war was concluded, transport facilities were opened up to carry French forces to Indochina. After Roosevelt's death, the issue of French sovereignty over Indochina met with only muted resistance from the politically weak Southwest Pacific/Southeast Asia Division under Abbot Low Moffat. The next chapter takes an in-depth approach to U.S.-Soviet relations in the beginning of the Truman Administration, and the unique impact of these relations on Indochina policy.



(seated, l-r) Prime Minister Clement Attlee, President Harry S. Truman and Marshal Josef Stalin:
(standing, l-r) William Leahy, Ernest Bevin, James Byrnes and Vyacheslav Molotov at Potsdam, August, 1945.¹

Chapter 9

The Origins of the Cold War: W. Averell Harriman, “The Little Man from Missouri,” and the Tartar Barbarians

The State Department’s June 1945 policy paper on colonialism in Southeast Asia gave all indications that the U.S. would pursue a uniform policy in the region, but the approach taken in Việt Nam was unique. As we have seen, British participation in the fight against the Axis Powers and the need for Allied cooperation in World War II led President Roosevelt to be lenient towards their colonial practices though he was opposed to imperialism. As a result the U.S.’s approach to Dutch colonialism in Southeast Asia provides a much better comparison with French Indochina. In examining the postwar

¹ Truman Presidential Museum and Library,
<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/photographs/displayimage.php?pointer=1777> (accessed April 24, 2005).

period, Robert Leupold has argued that the U.S. supported Indonesian nationalism while fighting a war to suppress Vietnamese nationalism for two reasons: (1) the U.S. became enmeshed in Indonesian politics as a result of its efforts to secure tin and protect American interest in oil reserves there, and (2) the “private businessmen and government officials saw a moderate pro-western nationalist movement with substantial popular support.” In contrast, he argues, the French had maintained a more effective “closed door” policy in pre-World War II Indochina, and Hồ Chí Minh and the nationalists he led were tainted by “their prewar association with communism.”²

Although the U.S. did not decisively step in to end Dutch colonialism until 1949, both they and the British had begun pursuing a different approach to Indonesia than to Indochina immediately after the conclusion of the war. The Allies did not provide Dutch soldiers with shipping, weapons or munitions, and the British encouraged negotiations between the Dutch and the nationalists.³ This was not the case in Indochina as we have already seen and will see in coming chapters. If we assume for now, that anti-communism motivated the unique policy approach to Việt Nam, how do we resolve this if the Cold War did not begin until 1947? The simple answer is that Cold War policy had its *active* origins in the first several months of the Truman Administration and was asserted against Việt Nam by September. This chapter explores the origins and nature of the breach in U.S.-Soviet relations before turning to examine the growth of the Communist nationalists and their influence in Việt Nam in the next chapter.

² Robert J. Leupold, “The United States and Indonesian Independence 1944-1947: and American response to revolution,” Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Kentucky, 1976), 204-07, 294-95.

³ Ibid, 187-88.

THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S RUSSOPHOBIC EXPERTS

Thomas Maddux has contributed to our understanding of the origins of the Cold War by looking at U.S.-Soviet Union relations prior to World War II. Maddux focuses particular attention on Loy Henderson, George Kennan, Charles Bohlen, and William Bullitt, the first three of whom began their influential careers in Soviet-American relations at this time. Kennan, Bohlen and other Russian and European specialists had received training in Russian history, culture and language at Riga, Latvia under Robert Kelly, Chief of the State Department's Eastern European Division from 1926-1937, who believed, according to Kennan, "that the possibility of developing meaningful relationships with the Soviet Union was limited because of Bolshevik ideology and the close ties between the Moscow government and the Communist International." Kennan, no doubt reflecting Kelly's training and influence, saw the Soviet Union as possessing "that tendency which makes most Russian rulers prefer to keep their people in darkness rather than risk illumination by contact with foreign culture and foreign ideas."⁴

⁴ Thomas R. Maddux, "Watching Stalin Maneuver Between Hitler and the West: American Diplomats and Soviet Diplomacy, 1934-1939," *Diplomatic History* 2:4 (Fall, 1978): 143, 154; Thomas R. Maddux, *Years of Estrangement: American Relations with the Soviet Union, 1933-1941* (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1980), 46-47; Oral History Interview with Loy W. Henderson, Truman Library, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/henderson.htm> (accessed on January 18, 2005); Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929-1969* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973), 40. George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1967), 70-74. Kennan had formed his opinion about the Soviet Union by 1936. The influence of Henderson and his own experience of life in Russia during the time of purges and collectivization was reflected in summaries of his own extreme writings from that period such as "the defiant and provocative attitude taken at all times by the Soviet regime toward non-Communist governments," and "'the spirit of chauvinism, of xenophobia, of suspicion, and hatred for everything foreign in which this effort was being conducted.'" "I saw little prospect that the future of Soviet Union would be a peaceful one, he wrote in his memoirs, before commenting on another paper from 1936.

Loy Henderson's anti-communist position was formed in 1919 while working for the American Red Cross Commission in Germany as an inspector of prison camps where he interviewed Russian prisoners of war, and in Kaunas, Lithuania where he opened an American Red Cross office. As first secretary of the Moscow Embassy, he influenced the coming generation of Eastern European and Russian specialists such as Kennan, Bohlen, and Elbridge Durbrow. The experience of life in Russia during the collectivization and the purges of the 1930s was also a profound, formative experience for these specialists who later influenced Cold War policy. Durbrow worked in the American Embassy in the Soviet Union from 1934-1937 before heading a restructured Division of Eastern European Affairs. He was also Ambassador to Việt Nam from 1957-1961. Kennan was at the Moscow Embassy from 1933-1937, and would go on to author an anonymous article for *Foreign Affairs* in 1947 in which he formulated the Cold War "containment" policy. Bohlen served at the Embassy in the Soviet Union from 1934-35, was then stationed at the Division of Eastern European Affairs in Washington, D.C. until 1937 when he returned to serve in Moscow until 1940. He later served as liaison between the

In writing about Soviet-American relations in 1938, he wrote: "In many respects they would always be rivals rather than complementary factors in the economic world, and the jealous uncertainty which seemed to make Russian rulers so suspicious, so bureaucratic, and so Oriental in their business dealings." Kennan was probably not alone amongst Russian and European specialists who had received similar training and experiences during the 1930s when he wrote in 1941: "It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that in every border country concerned, from Scandinavia—including Norway and Sweden—to the Black Sea, Russia is generally more feared than Germany." Kelly, considered by John Paton Davies as "one of the best informed men in the West about the Soviet Union, was transferred to Turkey in 1937 after his division was closed. "The division's files were ordered destroyed and its unique library scattered into the Library of Congress."

State Department and the White House, and as interpreter for Roosevelt, Stettinius, Harry Hopkins and others in meetings and wartime conferences with the Russians.⁵

Bullitt, who served as Ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1933-1936, helped Roosevelt gain the U.S.'s diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union in 1933. After achieving recognition, the Russian dictator Marshal Josef Vissarionovich Stalin Иосиф Виссарионович Сталин “soon turned a cold shoulder to Bullitt, turning off both personal intimacy and cooperative relations,” and Bullitt became hostile to the Soviet Union, which he then referred to as a “nation ruled by fanatics who are ready to sacrifice themselves and everyone else for their religion of communism.” In appraising Bullitt’s view of Russian policy, Maddux borrows liberally from Charles Bohlen in his analysis of the Russian dictator:⁶

Stalin generally subordinated ideology to the interests of the Soviet Union. Although the Soviet Leader pursued power as a revolutionary well-versed in Marxist theory, he seemed to use ideology as a tactic rather than allow Marxist-Leninist theories shape his diplomatic objectives.⁷

However, Maddux takes this as a point of departure to critique Bohlen’s cohort:

⁵ Maddux, “Watching Stalin Maneuver Between Hitler and the West: American Diplomats and Soviet Diplomacy, 1934-1939”: 143, 154; Maddux, *Years of Estrangement*, 46, 66-67; Oral History Interview with Loy W. Henderson; and Davies, 390. Davies writes glowingly of Kennan, who he worked with in the Moscow Embassy in 1945 and later in the State Department Policy Planning Department after transferring out of China: “Working for him was an exhilarating experience, for his was an intuitive and creative mind, richly stored with knowledge, eloquent in expression, and disciplined by a scholarly respect for precision...His subtle intellect swept the range of possibilities like a radar attuned to the unseen.”

⁶ Maddux, “Watching Stalin Maneuver Between Hitler and the West: American Diplomats and Soviet Diplomacy, 1934-1939”: 142; Thomas R. Maddux, *Years of Estrangement*, 47, 66-67.

⁷ Maddux, “Watching Stalin Maneuver Between Hitler and the West: American Diplomats and Soviet Diplomacy, 1934-1939”: 145; Bohlen, 290-91. This is essentially from Charles Bohlen who wrote, “Being a Marxist, he undoubtedly believed in all of the main principles of the doctrine. But being a Soviet nationalist, he had great doubt as to the ability of a Communist Party, left to itself, to achieve power in any circumstance...He therefore had organized the entire Communist apparatus on a worldwide basis as an instrument completely subordinate and, indeed, subservient to order from the Kremlin—that is, from himself. He trusted a Communist movement only when it was fully under his control.”

The pursuit of power—both the creation of it and the removal of any potential opposition of his exercise of it—had a greater influence on Stalin than an unrealistic, millennial desire for world revolution.

This suspicion about Stalin's ultimate objectives seriously weakened the assessments made by American diplomats.⁸

THE SOVIET UNION & POLAND: THE "NEW DEAL," THE IMPERIAL PRIME MINISTER, AND THE RUSSIAN DICTATOR

Roosevelt's attempts at further rapprochement with the Russians from 1937-1938 through Joseph E. Davies, a personal representative who replaced Ambassador Bullitt, ran into stiff resistance from the State Department and the Moscow Embassy, forcing him to put these diplomatic efforts on hold. This did not alter the President's conviction, but undoubtedly made him more hostile to the State Department's advice on the Soviet Union as well as other issues.⁹ Though we have no reason to believe Roosevelt's overtures to the Soviet Union would have prevented it, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov and Joachim von Ribbentrop negotiated a secret pact on behalf of Germany and Russia which led to the invasion of Poland in September 1939. Great Britain and France responded to this latest military aggression by declaring war on Germany, symbolically marking the beginning of World War II.

Stalin's motivation for the secret pact with Hitler was both security against the Germans and a means to gain back territories lost in battles to a newly independent Poland in 1920 and confirmed in the Treaty of Riga the following year. Polish President

⁸ Maddux, *Years of Estrangement*, 48.

⁹ Maddux, "Watching Stalin Maneuver Between Hitler and the West: American Diplomats and Soviet Diplomacy, 1934-1939": 142; Maddux, *Years of Estrangement*, 55. Oral History Interview with Loy W. Henderson. Several years later, Loy Henderson commented that Davies "through publicity, speeches, movies, and writings, was able to generate considerable amount of public opinion in favor of giving in to the Russians whenever we could do so without generating too much criticism."

Ignacy Mościcki and others of his government were interned after entering Romania on September 17, 1939 while escaping German and Russian invaders. Several remaining members of the Polish government regrouped in Paris and chose Władysław Raczkiewicz as their president and General Władysław Eugeniusz Sikorski as their Prime Minister. After the Germans invaded France, the Polish Government-in-Exile left Paris for London in June 1940.¹⁰

A surprise German attack and invasion (Operation *Barbarossa*) in mid-1941 and the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor brought Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the U.S. into the Grand Alliance. Stalin repeatedly pressured his allies to open a second front in Western Europe to relieve some of the pressure on the Red Army, which was fighting desperately to keep the Germans from overrunning the Soviet Union. On August 13, 1942 Stalin told Churchill:

I and my colleagues believe that the year 1942 offers the most favourable conditions for a second front in Europe, seeing that nearly all the German forces—and their crack troops, too—are tied down on the Eastern Front, while only negligible forces, and the poorest, too, are left in Europe.

Unfortunately, I did not succeed in convincing the British Prime Minister of this, while Mr. [W. Averell] Harriman, the U.S. President's representative at the Moscow talks, fully supported the Prime Minister.¹¹

The next year in February, Stalin complained again: “instead of the Soviet Union being aided by diverting German forces from the Soviet-German front, what we get is

¹⁰ Count Edward Raczyński, *In Allied London* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962), 39-44, 53-54. Count Raczyński, who was the Polish Ambassador to Great Britain and—for a time—Minister of Foreign Affairs, explains that President Mościcki wrote a letter ceding the presidency to the Polish Ambassador to the Vatican, but the French Government declared him *persona non grata* so Polish officials in France were forced to choose an alternative.

¹¹ J.V. Stalin to W. Churchill, 13 August 1942, *Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman 1941-45* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1958), No. 65.

relief for Hitler, who, because of the let-up in Anglo-American operations in Tunisia, was able to move additional troops against the Russians.”¹² After being told by Churchill that the opening of the second front would not be made until the spring of 1944, Stalin was dismissive of the Prime Minister’s apology while pointing out, “One should not forget that it is a question of saving millions of lives in the occupied areas of Western Europe and Russia and of reducing the enormous sacrifices of the Soviet armies, compared with which the sacrifices of the Anglo-American armies are insignificant.”¹³ Suspicions of his allies were further aroused by concerns the British were receiving far greater quantities of Lend-Lease supplies than the Russians.¹⁴

British and American wartime suspicions of the Soviet Union, on the other hand, centered on Poland, though Russian treatment of Western European and American allies would also become an issue. Russian-Polish enmity stretched at least as far back into history as Ivan the Terrible’s rule during the sixteenth century. The Nazi invasion of Russia in mid-1941 was the second time in successive generations the Germans had used Poland as a corridor for such an attack. This only increased Stalin’s determination to both to regain lost territory in Poland and build better security on the Soviet Union’s western flank given the perceived hostility of the Poles, Western Europeans, and Americans. Stalin had not forgotten European and American intervention in Russia after

¹² Ibid, No. 114.

¹³ Ibid, No. 165.

¹⁴ Randall B. Woods and Howard Jones, *Dawning of the Cold War: The United States’ Quest for Order* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1991), 8.

the Bolshevik Revolution and this reinforced his traditional Russian isolationist sentiment.¹⁵

Stalin had dissolved the Komunistów Polska Partia (KPP, or Communist Party of Poland) in mid-1938 claiming that “agents of Polish fascism managed to gain positions of leadership.” After the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland in September 1939, most of the leading officials were sent to Soviet prisons and labor camps. The survivors either stopped their activities or were repressed following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. Alfred Lampe, one of the few KPP leaders to have survived Stalin’s purges and the Nazis, and Wanda Wasilewska, a former socialist, sent a message to Molotov on January 4, 1943 proposing that a “center for Polish affairs” be established in the Soviet Union. In response to stalled negotiations with the Sikorski Government to improve relations between the Russians and Poles, Stalin acquiesced to the Polish émigrés’ request, leading to the formation in March of the Związek Patriotów Polskich (ZPP, or Union of Polish Patriots), which became a front organization with non-communist members. The ZPP immediately announced it accepted the Curzon Line, a boundary proposed by Lord Curzon in 1920 which would move Poland’s eastern border westward

¹⁵ Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, Nicholas, *A History of Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 484; The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant) to the Secretary of State, 11 February 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, volume III (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1965), 483, 1257. Although foreign involvement in the Russian Civil War initially aimed to prevent the Germans from obtaining Russian war materials, forces representing some 14 countries soon supported the anti-Bolshevik struggle. The military contingent from the U.S. numbered 10,000 men.

in favor of the Soviet Union, and called for the formation of a Polish army in the Soviet Union comprised of Poles who had been deported there.¹⁶

As sponsor of the Polish Government-in-Exile, including remnants of Mościcki's government which had both fought with the Russians for territorial gains in the early 1920s and had repressed Polish Leftists during the 1930s, Great Britain's relationship with the Soviet Union was destined to be precarious, all that was lacking was an incident to spark a crisis. This spark came when German radio claimed on April 13, 1943 that mass graves of "about ten thousand" Polish officers massacred during the Russian occupation in 1940 had been discovered in the area of Smolensk. The Polish Minister of National Defense issued a press statement on April 16 in which he noted that 15,490 prisoners of war from three camps were sent in the direction of Smolensk on April 5, 1940 when these camps were broken up. From the time the Polish Government-in-Exile signed a treaty with the Soviet Union in July 30, 1941 until the Germans announced the discovery in the Katyn Forest three years later, Polish officials had requested information on and the release of missing soldiers on at least seven different occasions.¹⁷

The Soviet Union consistently stated it had freed all prisoners. In making his announcement, the Polish Minister of National Defense said, "We have become accustomed to the lies of German propaganda and we understand the purpose behind its latest revelations. In view, however, of abundant and detailed German information," he concluded, "the necessity has arisen that the mass graves should be investigated and the

¹⁶ Vojtech Mastny, *Russia's Road to the Cold War: Diplomacy, Warfare, and the Politics of Communism, 1941-1945* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1979), 167-68; Antony Polonsky and Boleslaw Drukier, *The Beginnings of Communist Rule in Poland* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 5, 11-12.

¹⁷ Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1948), 29-30, 34-35.

facts alleged verified by a competent international body, such as the International Red Cross.” Stalin sent Churchill a message a week later renouncing recognition of the Polish Government-in-Exile at London. He could not forgive the Polish Government and its press organs for neither condemning the “anti-Soviet slander campaign launched by the German fascists,” he wrote, nor for failing to solicit information from the Soviet Government.¹⁸

During this time, Colonel Zygmunt Berling offered his own proposal for a Polish army to be established in the Soviet Union. Ironically, Berling was one of the roughly 1,000 Polish soldiers captured by the Red Army in 1939 who survived, and one of the few who did not later flee to Western Europe. Stalin finally agreed to Berling’s proposal, leading to the formation of the Kościuszko Division, which Berling commanded. As a result of the massacre of Polish officers and departure in 1942 of a large proportion of the remainder, 1,465, or nearly three-fifths of the Kościuszko Division’s officer corps had previously served in the Red Army, though some of them were Polish-born. By July, an additional 3,221 Red Army officers had joined the Polish Army which had grown from

¹⁸ Ibid; Personal and Secret Message from Premier J.V. Stalin to the Prime Minister, Mr. W. Churchill, 21 April 1943, *Stalin's Correspondence*, No. 150; Stanislaw Kot, *Conversations with the Kremlin and Dispatches from Russia*, translated by H.C. Stevens (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), xiii, 86 and 103; and Brian Crozier, “Remembering Katyn,” *Hoover Digest*, 2002, No. 2, <http://www.hooverdigest.org/002/crozier.html> (accessed October 3, 2004). Stanisław Mikołajczyk tells us that a medical examination by a thirteen-nation board, predominantly from German dominated countries revealed that “what might have become unidentifiable skeletons in a few months remained well-preserved corpses with papers and other means of identification intact.” There were some 4,253 bodies found, all shot in the back of the head with a make of German revolver exported to Russia. Two hundred and fifty of the victims had their hands tied behind their backs with Russian-made ropes. Finally, “Diaries, newspapers, and unmailed letters fixed the time fo the murders.” Brian Crozier provides additional details based on Soviet documents, known as *Fond 89*, obtained by the Hoover Institution more than half a century later. Stalin issued instructions to Lavrentii Petrovich Beria, head of the Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del (NKVD, predecessor to the KGB) on March 5, 1940 that the internees were to receive the “supreme measure of punishment—shooting.” On April 13, 1990, Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev admitted his country’s responsibility for the massacres at the Katyń Forest, Starobelsk and Ostashkovo and provided Polish leader General Wojciech Witold Jaruzelski with the names of Polish internees at the camps.

the initial Kościuszko Division. Berling admitted to a visiting Polish-American professor in 1944 that the Army was organized to facilitate the establishment of a pro-Soviet government in Poland.¹⁹

Churchill worked to repair relations between the two Eastern European governments based on the belief that Stalin's preeminent concern was territorial and everything else would fall in place if this one issue was resolved. He began pressuring Stanisław Mikołajczyk, leader of the Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish Peasant Party) who had succeeded Sikorski after the latter's fatal plane accident on July 4, 1943, to agree to Stalin's demand that Poland's eastern border be adjusted based on the Curzon Line. This would have removed Lwów (Lvov, modern Lviv, Ukraine) and Vilna (modern Vilnius, Lithuania) from Poland. Mikołajczyk refused to consider the suggestion because the two cities had at least a plurality of Polish residents. Mikołajczyk's government also refused Stalin's demand to cede Królówiec (Königsberg, renamed Kaliningrad in 1946), an important link to an ice-free port on the Baltic Sea. "Don't you see," Mikołajczyk tried to convince Churchill, "the Soviet Union's aim is not only to take the eastern half of our country but to take all of Poland—all of Europe?"²⁰

¹⁹ Mastny, 167-68; Polonsky and Drukier, 11-12. There were 6 generals, 17 colonels, 65 lieutenant-colonels, and 113 majors from the Red Army in the Kościuszko Division. Mastny, Polonsky and Drukier do not give the actual date of Stalin's decision for the formation of the division, but the presumption is that he gave his authorization in reaction to the Polish Government-in-Exile's response to the German report.

²⁰ Raczynski, 52-53; Mikołajczyk, 40, 149-51. Memorandum by the Assistant Chief of the Division of Eastern European Affairs (Durbrow), 11 January 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, III, 1221. In relying on Polish Government census information, the State Department's Chief of the Division of Eastern European Affairs Elbridge Durbrow noted that while the majority of the people living in the area disputed by the Soviet Union (Polish territory east of the Curzon Line), 36 percent as of 1939 (38 percent in 1931) were "pure Polish race." "On an ethnographical basis there would appear to be little question as to the desirability of making certain changes in this area; however, the Soviet proposal, particularly in regard to the areas in Eastern Galicia, is quite unfavorable to the Poles since it deprives them of half of the province of Lwow which includes the predominately Polish city of Lwow and the Polish oil fields."

Responding to the “vague and brief” official announcement of the Tehran Conference in November, Mikołajczyk made an appeal to the Allies by announcing that “the determination to keep to the principles of the Atlantic Charter and eliminate tyranny, slavery, intolerance, and oppression awakened a deep echo in Polish hearts. Through her struggle Poland has proclaimed her membership in the world family of democratic nations, from which tyranny and slavery, oppression and intolerance will be driven out.”²¹ In a meeting held at the Prime Minister’s country residence of Chequers on February 6, 1944 between British and Polish officials, including Mikołajczyk, Churchill expressed his conviction that “the demands for reconstitution of the Polish Government were trifles compared with frontier questions, and would fade away if the latter were settled.”²² Ignoring the Polish Government-in-Exile’s position based on his misguided calculation of Stalin’s aims, Churchill had already conceded Polish territory east of the Curzon Line to Stalin at Tehran, and would later formalize his decision at the Yalta Conference early in 1945.²³ Mikołajczyk went to Washington, D.C. in June and met with President Roosevelt, who, according to the Polish Prime Minister, offered hope when he said, “I am still opposed to dividing Poland with” the Curzon Line, that “Stalin is not an imperialist,” and the President would eventually “act as a moderator” on the Polish territorial issue, but had not acted yet because it was an election year.”²⁴

²¹ Mikołajczyk, 269.

²² The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant) to the Secretary of State, 11 February 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, III, 1256. Churchill continued to miscalculate Stalin’s resolve over the postwar Polish government in negotiation well into the Yalta Conference in early 1945.

²³ The Ambassador to the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the President, 14 October 1944, *FRUS, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1955), 202.

²⁴ Mikołajczyk, 60.

Mikołajczyk had learned on January 1 from the Polish underground, the Armia Krajowa (Home Army), that communist leaflets distributed throughout the country announced that the creation of the Krajowa Rada Narodowa (KRN, or Homeland National Council), formed principally by the Soviet-sponsored Polska Partia Robotnicza (PPR, or Polish Workers' Party, established in the beginning of 1942) and its appointment of a Michał (Rola) Żymierski as commander for the Armia Ludowa (People's Army, formerly the Gwardia Ludowa or People's Guard).²⁵ Mikołajczyk did not know that though the KRN was organized by the PPR, it was done so under the leadership of Władysław Gomułka who resisted Soviet influence. Gomułka had replaced the PPR's secretary Paweł Finder, after the latter had been arrested by the Gestapo in November 1943. Gomułka was eventually outmaneuvered by pro-Soviet members, particularly Bolesław Bierut, a longtime Comintern functionary and a member of the PPR central committee since July 1943, who was chosen chairman of the KRN, Edward Osóbka-Morawski its vice-chairman, and Michał Żymierski commander of the People's Army. In its manifesto issued two weeks after its formation on December 15, the KRN also renounced the authority of the Polish Government-in-Exile, and, at the same time, claimed it alone possessed the sole legitimate authority to establish a government. At the time, the KRN and People's Army posed no real threat to Mikołajczyk's government

²⁵ Ibid, 49; John Coutouvidis and Jaime Reynolds, *Poland 1939-1947* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1986), 30, 84, 113, 123-24. The Armia Krajowa was formed on February 14, 1942 by combining the Związek Walki Zbrojnej (Union for Armed Struggle created in November 1939), Bataliony Chłopskie (Peasant Rebellions), and the right-wing Narodowe Siły Zbrojne (National Armed Forces), Narodowa Organizacja Wojskowa (National Military Organization), and "and more loosely," the communist-led Gwardia Ludowa (People's Guard). The Gwardia Ludowa became the Armia Ludowa, or People's Army at this later period.

because they lacked support both within Poland and from the Soviet Union, but this soon changed.²⁶

The KRN sent a delegation on May 22, 1944 to meet with Stalin and gain Soviet sponsorship. Stalin told them he would not recognize the Polish Government-in-Exile as it was currently composed. The following day, the Soviet minister to the Polish Government-in-Exile in London initiated talks with the Mikołajczyk Government. U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union met with a KRN delegation in Moscow on June 10. Wojtech Mastny argues that Harriman's "surprisingly benevolent...attitude toward the" KRN delegation "dramatically enhanced their acceptability to the Russians." The day after Harriman spoke favorably to Molotov about his meeting with the KRN, the Russian negotiators imposed demands on Mikołajczyk Government that they recognize the Curzon Line as the new Polish border and reorganize their government. Mastny believes these demands assured the talks would collapse, but they represented Stalin's consistent twin goals in Poland of a secure (i.e. "friendly" government) and return of territory lost in 1920.²⁷

The day before the Red Army began its offensive against the Germans in Poland, Stalin authorized the KRN to administer areas liberated by the Russians. On July 15, Osóbka-Morawski and Wasilewska appealed to Stalin to support their formation of a provisional government. He agreed two days later. The KRN announced its authority over the ZPP and the Polish Army in the Soviet Union and formed the *Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego* (PKWN, or Polish Committee of National Liberation).

²⁶ Mastny, 171-72; Polonsky and Drukier, 10-11, 20-21.

²⁷ Mastny, 179; Polonsky and Drukier, 19-20.

Edward Osóbka-Morawski was selected to chair the PKWN, but its two deputy-chairman and ten of its fifteen members were from the ZPP, reflecting a strong pro-Soviet bias.²⁸

While the PKWN relied upon Stalin's sponsorship and the Red Army's muscle, the Government-in-Exile at London still possessed international legitimacy, and the underground Home Army remained the only significant opposition to the Germans within Poland. This also changed during the coming months. The Home Army, under Commander-in-Chief General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski, launched an insurrection in Warsaw beginning on August 1, 1944 hoping to gain from the Red Army's operations against the Germans while reclaiming the city for the Poles before the Russians arrived. The British and Americans flew supplies to the Poles from as far as Italy, but beginning on the 15th, the Soviet Union refused to permission for their airplanes to land at nearby Russian airfields to refuel and treat wounded crewmen.²⁹

In a further effort to sabotage the insurrection, the Red Army prevented Home Army detachments from coming to the capital from the provinces. Roosevelt had refused to interfere on behalf of the British and American supply drops for fear of antagonizing Stalin, but British Ambassador Sir Archibald Clark Kerr unilaterally delivered a protest on September 5. Four days later, the Soviet Union relented and resumed granting permission to the British and American planes to land at Russian airfields. Simultaneously, the Russians began dropping supplies into Warsaw, but they often fell in German-controlled portions of the city or were destroyed as they fell without parachutes

²⁸ Mastny, 179; Polonsky and Drukier, 21-23.

²⁹ Mastny, 183, 185.

to the ground.³⁰ In March the following year, sixteen Poles, including “nearly all the leading figures of the Polish underground movement,” according to Mikołajczyk, some of whom Harriman and Clark Kerr had proposed to be consulted for the new Polish Government, disappeared after going to meet with the leader of the Red Army in Poland. The Russians did not admit they were holding them prisoners until a month later.³¹

Mikołajczyk met with Lublin Committee President Bolesław Bierut in Moscow on October 17, and discussed forming a government in Poland. According to Churchill’s description of the discussion, Bierut demanded 75 percent of the cabinet would have to be of his choosing if Mikołajczyk was to become the Prime Minister. In a subsequent meeting with Stalin, Mikołajczyk told the Russian leader that unless he was premier and 50 percent of the cabinet



Stanisław Mikołajczyk³²

was favorable to him, the western world would not recognize the government as independent. While recognizing that Stalin wanted more than 50 percent of the cabinet, Churchill still believed that the “composition of the government” would not “prove an insuperable obstacle if all else is settled.”³³

³⁰ Ibid, 185, 189-90.

³¹ Mikołajczyk, 112; Harriman, 457.

³² Wikipedia, Stanisław Mikołajczyk,

http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanis%C5%82aw_Miko%C5%82ajczyk (accessed April 24, 2005)

³³ Prime Minister Churchill to President Roosevelt, 22 October 1944, *FRUS, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, 206. Churchill was not present at either of these meetings, but was informed of them by Mikołajczyk on the 18th.

Finally, unable to convince his cabinet to compromise on the territorial issue, Mikołajczyk resigned on November 24, 1944.³⁴ Stalin took advantage of Mikołajczyk's resignation and replacement by Tomasz Arciszewski when, in a December 27 note to Roosevelt, he argued that this "and, in general, ministerial changes in the Polish *émigré* government have made the situation even worse and have created a gulf between Poland and the *émigré* government":

I have to say frankly that if the Polish Committee of National Liberation [PKWN] transforms itself into a Provisional Polish Government, a view of the above-said, the Soviet Government will not have any serious ground for postponement of the question of its recognition. It is necessary to bear in mind that in the strengthening of a pro-Allied and democratic Poland the Soviet Union is bearing the main brunt of the battle for liberation of Poland, but also because Poland is a border state with the Soviet Union and the problem of Poland is inseparable from the problem of security of the Soviet Union.³⁵

On December 31, 1944, the KRN decreed the Lublin Committee had become the Provisional Polish Government. The Soviet Union was the first government to recognize the government five days later.³⁶

The State Department provided this interpretation of events as they happened, implicitly questioning Stalin's use of the term "democratic":

Much evidence has been received indicating that the so-called provisional government at Lublin is having considerable difficulty establishing itself and gaining real prestige in the liberated areas of Poland. It would appear that what prestige it may have is based, to a considerable extent, on that of the Red Army and the NKVD, the Soviet secret police.³⁷

³⁴ Mikołajczyk, 104-05.

³⁵ The Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Soviet Union (Stalin) to President Roosevelt, 27 December 1944, *FRUS 1944*, III, 1442.

³⁶ The British Prime Minister (Churchill) to President Roosevelt, 6 January 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, volume V (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1967), 111.

³⁷ *Briefing Book Paper, FRUS, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, 231.

In assessing the after effect of Mikołajczyk's resignation, Raczyński states that the Polish Government-in-Exile at London "had no chance of being anything more than what it has remained in Polish memory, namely a Government of National Protest."³⁸

Poland was one of the topics of discussion between the leaders, foreign ministers and others of the U.S., Great Britain and the Soviet Union at the Yalta Conference from February 4 to 11, 1945, but Polish representatives were noticeably absent. A "Declaration on Poland" was hurriedly concluded at the end of the conference but disagreement remained over who should constitute the government of a liberated Poland. In suggesting how the Poland-Soviet Union territorial issue should be resolved during these conference discussions, Roosevelt reminded Churchill and Stalin of his statement at Tehran, that "he believed the American people were in general favorably inclined to the Curzon Line as the eastern frontier of Poland, but he felt that if the Soviet Government would consider a concession in regard to Lwow and the oil deposits in the Province of Lwow this would have a salutary effect;" however, he "would not insist on it."³⁹ This equivocation ended debate on the issue. One of the four paragraphs of the Declaration were devoted to the boundary issue, the other three addressed what would have to occur before "the new Polish Provisional Government of National Unity" was recognized by all three parties.

³⁸ Raczyński, 151.

³⁹ Third Plenary Meeting, 2 February 1945, Livadia Palace, *FRUS, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, 667, 677. The language quoted here is from the President's interpreter, Charles Bohlen's notes of the meeting. According to H. Freeman Matthews' notes, the President said, "The Poles would like East Prussia and part of Germany. It would make it easier for me at home if the Soviet Government could give something to Poland. I raised the question of giving them Lvov at Tehran. It has now been suggested that the oil lands in the southwest of Lvov might be given them. I am not making a definite statement but I hope that Marshal Stalin can make a gesture in this direction." These slightly different recollections help illustrate the complications of the Russian and Anglo-American discussions.

Roosevelt's "New Deal revolution had expanded American ideas about the government's social responsibility," notes Harriman before adding: "He confidently believed this trend would continue after his own time. In the Soviet Union, he saw the completely centralized state bureaucracy giving way to a degree of decentralization."⁴⁰ Roosevelt "was not blind to the fanaticism nor to the ulterior motives of the Communist party leaders in Moscow," wrote Sumner Welles in 1946. "But he was equally aware—with that capacity for seeing the forest rather than the trees, which always distinguished him—that the present regime in the Kremlin was not immortal."⁴¹ Even Harriman noted that Roosevelt "felt greater freedom was bound to evolve in the Soviet system."⁴² He "saw no need to fear Communism if an international organization existed. To him it need be feared as a disruptive force only if the world were divided into two armed camps, one headed by the Soviet Union and the other by the English-speaking powers."⁴³

Roosevelt's approach yielded some benefits in his relationship with Stalin. Despite the historical basis for Soviet distrust of the U.S. and Great Britain, and even the failings of the wartime alliance, Stalin had a stronger basis for trusting Roosevelt than he ever had any other leader in these two countries. He even told Harriman in 1944 that he could communicate with the President.⁴⁴ This relationship did not, however, did not soften Stalin's position on the Polish issues. At Yalta, Roosevelt did not fulfill the moderator position on Poland's territorial issue as he had earlier told Mikołajczyk. He

⁴⁰ W. Averell and Elie Abel Harriman, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin, 1941-1946* (New York: Random House, 1975), 170.

⁴¹ Sumner Welles, *Where are We Heading?* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1946), 37-38.

⁴² Harriman, 170.

⁴³ Welles, 37-38.

⁴⁴ Harriman, 205.

merely restated Mikołajczyk's position adding "I am not making a definite statement but I hope that Marshal Stalin can make a gesture in this direction."⁴⁵ No such gesture was made. In an attempt to broker an agreement on the issue of reorganizing the Lublin Government to make it more amenable to the Americans and the British, Roosevelt sent Stalin a message during the conference Stalin suggesting that they invite Bierut, Osóbka-Morawski, and "representatives of the other elements of the Polish people." Stalin stalled, and Roosevelt did not press the issue any further.⁴⁶

Stalin claimed that he wished to see an "independent, strong and democratic" Poland, but rather than change his sponsorship of the Lublin Committee as the Provisional Polish Government signified something closer along a continuum towards what he described as "the policies of the Czars who had wished to suppress and assimilate Poland."⁴⁷ He stated that the Polish people had hated the Russians because of such attempts by the Czars, but the liberation of Poland by the Red Army had changed their mentality. He agreed to hold elections in Poland, which both Churchill and Roosevelt demanded, in as early as "a month provided no catastrophes occurred on the front and the Germans began to beat them," but he clearly discounted the importance of elections. He wondered why the Lublin Government should be treated any differently from de Gaulle's government, which had not been elected either; "he could not say which one enjoyed the greatest degree of popularity."⁴⁸ Stalin also remarked that he understood

⁴⁵ Matthew Minutes, *FRUS, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, 677.

⁴⁶ President Roosevelt to Marshal Stalin, 6 February 1945, *FRUS, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta*, 727-28.

⁴⁷ Third Plenary Meeting, 669.

⁴⁸ Fifth Plenary Meeting, 780-81. For comments made by Churchill and Roosevelt in support of free elections see, for example, Third Plenary Meeting, 667; President Roosevelt to Marshal Stalin, 6 February

that in Egypt, which was nominally independent, but where Britain still held ultimate control, elections were fraught with corruption.⁴⁹

Churchill “could not feel that the Lublin Government represents more than one third of the people and would be maintained in power if the people were free to express their opinion.”⁵⁰ He felt the Government-in-Exile at London needed to figure in a new, provisional Polish government in part because “there was a Polish army of about 150,000 men” who were fighting on the Western and Italian fronts.⁵¹ Although he frequently stated his desire for free elections in Poland, Roosevelt had only half-jokingly told Mikołajczyk in their meeting the previous June, that Stalin would “never become accustomed to understanding that there is a device known as free election—by which political matters within one’s country, as well as officeholders, may be changed.”⁵²

Molotov denied Churchill’s assertion about the support the Lublin Government had amongst the Poles. Instead, he argued that “the Poles would never agree to any solution which would greatly change the Provisional Government.” He believed that “the new Polish Government should be created on the basis of the Lublin Government,” preferred to use the term “enlarge” in this regard, and argued that “it was very difficult to discuss the Polish question without participation with the Poles.”⁵³ Stalin supported

1945, 726-27; Fifth Plenary Meeting, 778-79; and Sixth Plenary Meeting 9 February 1945, *FRUS, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, 846, 848.

⁴⁹ Sixth Plenary Meeting, 847.

⁵⁰ Third Plenary Meeting, 671.

⁵¹ Fifth Plenary Meeting, 778. Fifth Plenary Meeting, 778. Lieutenant General Władysław Anders was the commander of the Polish Second Course in Italy. President Arciszewski appointed him Acting Commander in Chief of Polish Armed Forces by decree on February 26, 1945.

⁵² Mikołajczyk, 60.

⁵³ Fifth Plenary Meeting, 777-79; Sixth Plenary Meeting, 848; Meeting of the Foreign Ministers, 9 February 1945, *FRUS, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, 805-07. During the Sixth Plenary Meeting, when Churchill had asked Stalin if Mikołajczyk could take part in Polish elections, the Soviet

Molotov's assertion that the Lublin Government was popular by assuring the conferees that three of the Lublin Government's members: Bierut, Osóbka-Morawski, and Żymierski were popular.⁵⁴ British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden naturally supported the Prime Minister's view. He felt "a new start was necessary," and "there could be no fair elections in Poland if they were controlled by the Lublin Government."⁵⁵

Another crucial point in the discussions on the future of the Polish government came in response to Molotov's assertion in the meeting of the foreign ministers before the sixth plenary meeting that if the American or British proposals were adopted, "the present Lublin Government would be undermined," leaving everything "standing in the air and a period of instability would be created in Poland." Secretary of State Stettinius quickly replied, "The present Polish Government would continue until the new Government was formed."⁵⁶ During the sixth plenary meeting which followed, Churchill warned that "it was a great mistake to take hurried decisions on these grave matters" affecting Poland, and "this great prize should not be imperiled by too much haste."⁵⁷ Haste, nevertheless, had been the order of the day.

The Allied leaders agreed in the conference Declaration on Poland that Molotov, Harriman and Clark Kerr would form a commission "with a view to the reorganization of the present Government."⁵⁸ The Polish Commission met for the first time on February 23 in Moscow, and ran into difficulties immediately. The three principals agreed to invite

leader used similar language as Molotov, that "this was a matter which should be discussed in the presence of the Poles."

⁵⁴ Fifth Plenary Meeting, 779.

⁵⁵ Meeting of the Foreign Ministers, 804, 806

⁵⁶ Ibid, 807.

⁵⁷ Sixth Plenary Meeting, 843.

⁵⁸ *FRUS, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, 938.

five Poles for consultation on a “new government,” to use Harriman’s language. Clark Kerr suggested three additional Poles from the Polish Government-in-Exile including Mikołajczyk, but Molotov repeated the same concern he had expressed at Yalta that the Lublin Government would accept him. Harriman insisted that the American public would demand Mikołajczyk participate in discussions of the reconstituted government. The commission came to an impasse and all agreed to invite the members from the Lublin Government to comment. This implied acceptance of the Lublin Government as a party to the Commission’s decision over who could be invited for consultation of the new government was a crucial mistake made by Harriman and Kerr. Afterwards, Molotov would continue to negotiate specific names, but eventually always returned to this point in refusing to accept a list of those who could be invited. Despite Harriman’s claim that Molotov had hardened his position, his position had been consistently the same since, and even prior to Yalta.⁵⁹

In accepting the Polish Commission’s invitation to send representatives to Moscow, Bierut argued that Mikołajczyk had disqualified himself as a possible participant because he had made several public statements critical of the Yalta agreements. After receiving complaints from Harriman, Acting Secretary of State Joseph Grew consulted Freeman Matthews and Charles Bohlen, the American interpreters at Yalta, who agreed that there was no language in the Yalta agreement supporting Molotov’s position that the Lublin Government be consulted about who could be invited for discussions. By March 6 there was perceptible frustration in Harriman’s dispatch to

⁵⁹ The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the Secretary of State, 24 February 1945, *FRUS, 1945, V*, 123-25; Harriman, 429.

Washington, D.C., which he began: "We had three more unproductive hours of discussions at the meeting of the Commission on Poland this evening, going over much the same ground as last time." At the third meeting of the commission, Harriman complained that that "Everyday the Lublin Government is becoming more and more the Warsaw Government and the rulers of Poland." Rather than agree to make some concession to get the process moving and avoid a *fait accompli*, Harriman became intransigent by pressing the State Department to support his position that the Commission must invite "independent Poles" before representatives of the Lublin Government would be permitted to come to Moscow. More than a month after the Polish Commission had first met, Harrimann reported that Molotov began questioning whether or not the commission should continue. On April 2, Harriman too was admitting discussion were at a "breaking point."⁶⁰

Churchill, who as late as October 1944 had been negotiating a deal with Stalin for percentages of "predominance" in Romania, Greece, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Bulgaria in a last-ditch effort to offset the Red Army's advances in Europe, had begun sending urgent messages to President Roosevelt by mid-March asking for help to stem the Soviet tide sweeping through Eastern Europe.⁶¹ Singling out Poland, he began speaking of an

⁶⁰ The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the Secretary of State, 27 February, 6, 7, 25 March, 3 April 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, V, 128-29, 142, 145, 180, 197; The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman), 3 March 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, volume V, 140-41. Harriman's language is "I therefore recommend against receding, at this time, from the position taken during the last two conferences,..." but he does not make it clear in his earlier dispatches that this had been his position all along.

⁶¹ Winston S. Churchill, *Triumph and Tragedy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), 226-27. Churchill most important proposal was to give 90 percent Russian "predominance" over Romania in exchange for 90 percent British predominance over Greece. He also offered 75 percent "predominance" to Russia for Bulgaria, and 50 percent for Yugoslavia and Hungary in exchange for the remainder to Great Britain or "the others." Later, Roosevelt neither approved nor rejected these proposals. By 1947, the

“open rift between us and Russia, not at all confined, in this country at any rate, to government opinion, but running deep through the masses of the people.” He also pointed out that commission delays were favorable to the Soviet Union because it offered time for “the process of liquidation” of those opposed “to them or their puppets.” In his reply, Roosevelt explained that his goal was no different from Churchill’s, but they differed on tactics. The Prime Minister preferred to make demands on the issue, while the President preferred “the guise of a general political truce.” He felt that personal intervention would only be harmful at that point, preferring to exhaust “every other possibility of bringing the Soviet Government into line” first.⁶²

By the end of the month, Roosevelt conceded the need to send a joint letter to Stalin. Stalin’s response to the letter was merely to support Molotov and criticize Harriman and Kerr for the failures of the commission. In another message to Stalin, Churchill threatened to make the Polish issue public by announcing a “breakdown of the Polish negotiations.” Learning about Churchill’s threat, a message drafted by the State Department and authorized by Roosevelt was sent to Churchill requesting him to consult with the President before he made such an announcement. The day before he died, Roosevelt sent a brief message to Churchill proposing restraint on the Polish issue “because these problems, in one form or another, seem to arise every day and most of

Communist threat in Greece led to the Truman Doctrine, the first formal proclamation of “containment” in the Cold War.

⁶² The British Prime Minister (Churchill) to President Roosevelt, 8 and 10 March 1945, *FRUS, 1945, V*, 148, 153-54; President Roosevelt to the Prime Minister (Churchill), 11 March 1945, *FRUS, 1945, V*, 155-57; and The Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars of the Soviet Union (Stalin) to President Roosevelt, *FRUS, 1945, V*, 201-04.

them straighten out....” He also called for continuing the “firm” approach he believed they had been pursuing.⁶³

Similar to the way opponents to his idea of trusteeship for Indochina had scuttled these efforts after Roosevelt’s death; Russophobes within the government successfully pushed an agenda leading to confrontation with Communist Russia. There was less unity on this second issue, though, with opposition coming primarily before the end of the Pacific War and from within a divided military. For example, as early as May 1944, Admiral Leahy predicted a future world conflict breaking out between Great Britain and the Soviet Union. He worried that even if the U.S. came to the aid of the British “we might be able to successfully defend Britain, but we could not, under existing conditions, defeat Russia.” As a result, Leahy argued for mutual cooperation between the U.S., Great Britain, and the Soviet Union.⁶⁴ This was essentially the position held by President Roosevelt.

In the Stettinius mission’s report written at the conclusion of a visit with the British Government in April 1944, the author stated that “the British seemed curiously unaware of the fact that American relations with Russia are at present enjoying less friction than their own.” “The British believe that Russia will maintain its determination to keep Germany weak,” reported the mission, “long after the British and ourselves have fallen into forgiveness and forgetfulness.” British officials admitted there “existed a minority fringe of people on the Right who believed that Bolshevism is the real menace to

⁶³ The British Prime Minister (Churchill) to President Roosevelt, 11 April 1945, and President Roosevelt to the Prime Minister (Churchill), 11 March, 11 April 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, V, 210.

⁶⁴ Department of State Briefing Paper [undated, but it served as Annex 1 to a memorandum dated 6 September 1944], *FRUS The Conference at Quebec, 1944* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 191-92. Leahy’s suggestion from May 16 was included within this paper.

Europe and that such people might argue for a strong Germany after the war.” However, the mission believed “the vast majority of the British” were “hoping and expecting” that cooperation between the Allies would extend into the postwar period.⁶⁵

Writing of his experience at the Moscow Embassy beginning in March 1945, John Paton Davies wrote: “Like most of the foreign service specialists on Russia, Kennan regarded Roosevelt’s policy toward the Soviet Union as, at best, credulous.”⁶⁶ Though never considered to be “a minority fringe of people on the extreme Right,” there were numerous officials in the State Department who “believed that Bolshevism is the real menace to Europe,” and they were not just the Russian and Eastern European specialists. The State Department continued to pursue a contradictory policy adopted from Cordell Hull which sought to apply an internationalist standard to the Soviet Union while accepting the retention of the colonial empires of Western European nations such as Great Britain, France and the Netherlands. Hull had, for example, advised Ambassador Harriman in late January 1944: “the workability of any international security organization with the Soviet Union as a full and cooperating member depends upon the willingness of the Russian Government to abandon unilateralism and to seek its ends by free and frank discussion with a Polish Government.”

⁶⁵ “The British Commonwealth of Nations, United Kingdom,” Report of the Secretary of State Under Secretary of Stettinius on His Mission to London, 10-13.

⁶⁶ John Paton Davies, Jr., *Dragon by the Tail: American, British, Japanese, and Russian Encounters with China and one Another* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1972), 390.

W. AVERELL HARRIMAN: INSTIGATOR OF THE COLD WAR?



V.M. Molotov, W. Averell Harriman and Winston Churchill, 1942⁶⁷

Russian and Eastern European specialists may not have been expected to have recognized the inherent inconsistency of policies they pursued, but department officials such as Hull and Ambassador Averell Harriman, who had been assigned to London as well as Moscow, had no excuse. Harriman was to the Russian and Eastern European specialists a convert and vociferous advocate. In September 1944, he had sent an urgent message to Harry Hopkins, knowing that he was the President's confidant and closest adviser on foreign relations since Sumner Welles had been ousted from active service a year earlier. He made the following appeal and requested permission to return to the U.S. to address Roosevelt personally on the issue:

Now that the end of the war is in sight our relations with the Soviets have taken a startling turn evident during the last two months. They have held up our requests with complete indifference to our interests and have shown an unwillingness even to discuss pressing problems.

⁶⁷ Library of Congress, <http://memory.loc.gov/pnp/fsa/8b13000/8b13000/8b13043r.jpg> (accessed April 24, 2005).

...The general attitude seems to be that it is our obligation to help Russia and accept her policies because she has won the war for us.

I am convinced that we can divert this trend but only if we materially change our policy toward the Soviet Government. I have evidence that they have misinterpreted our generous attitude toward them as a sign of weakness, and acceptance of their policies.

...Unless we take issue with the present policy there is every indication the Soviet Union will become a world bully wherever their interests are involved. This policy will reach into China and the Pacific as well when they can turn their attention in that direction.

...what I say is fully endorsed by General Deane, the air officers here and the Embassy officers.⁶⁸

Hopkins, speaking through Charles Bohlen, learned that Secretary of State Cordell Hull did not think it was an opportune time for the Ambassador to return to the U.S. and noted his message had been conveyed quite clearly in the memorandum. Roosevelt accepted this advice and Harriman was told to stay put.⁶⁹

Harriman and Major General John Deane, head of the American Military Mission to the Soviet Union, were linked together through the Moscow Embassy on the Ambassador's second most pressing concern, newly freed U.S. POWs in liberated Poland. In his study of the POW issue, Frank Costigliola explains that as conditions in camps deteriorated during the last several months of the war, British and American POWs maintained morale by "upholding standards of cleanliness." The most common complaint from POWs about conditions in the Red Army controlled areas concerned sanitation.⁷⁰ Costigliola concludes:

⁶⁸ The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the President's Special Assistant (Hopkins), 9 September 1944, *FRUS, The Conference at Quebec, 1944*, 199-200.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Frank Costigliola, "'Like Animals or Worse.': Narratives of Culture and Emotion by U.S. and British POWs and Airmen behind Soviet Lines, 1944-1945," *Diplomatic History* 28,5 (November, 2004): 757, 768

In supporting Deane's request for "drastic retaliatory measures" in terms of curtailing Lend Lease aid [he was eventually successful during Truman's first couple of months in office], Harriman leaped from these "minor" matters toward a Cold War logic: "unless we do take action in cases of this kind, the Soviet Government will become convinced that they can force us to accept any of their decisions on all matters and it will be increasingly difficult to stop their aggressive policy."⁷¹

In examining the issue, which on the surface would appear minor, Costigliola is able to make a profound observation about the origins of the Cold War. "Harriman's concerns about Poland and about American POWs in Poland reinforced one another especially on an emotional level," he argues. "Emotional responses are important," he continues in another part of his study, "because they are often keys to persuasion and to channeling and cutting off debate." When he speaks of debate, he is not referring simply to debate between people, but even one's internal debate over an issue.⁷² We can extrapolate from his argument in applying his lesson to explain why postwar alliances were chosen on the basis of inconsistent, even contradictory reasoning.

After Harry Truman succeeded to the presidency, Harriman rushed back to Washington, D.C. to convince him of his view on U.S. relations with the Soviet Union. As a warm-up to a meeting with President Truman, Harriman addressed two staff meetings at the State Department on the morning of April 20 to inveigh against the Soviet Union. Afterwards he lobbied the War Department at the Pentagon for a more forceful approach to the Russians, but met more resistance there. Later in the day, Secretary of State Stettinius, his secretary Bohlen, and Under Secretary Joseph Grew accompanied Harriman to the White House for his first meeting with the new President, who State

⁷¹ Ibid, 758.

⁷² Ibid, 752, 757, and 779.

Department officials condescendingly called the “little man from Missouri”—a sobriquet no doubt referring to more than his physical stature.⁷³

Arnold Offner offers this snapshot assessment of Truman:

The pace of the presidency and constant flow of paper seemed to overwhelm Truman. To compensate, he sought to speak and act quickly and decisively. Speaker Rayburn worried that the new president might make decisions without adequate information. Wallace noted that Truman seemed almost “to decide in advance of thinking.” Moreover, while Truman insisted that he would base each decision on “the facts” and “then forget that one and take the next,” this style of discrete decision making emphasized the present without due concern for complex backgrounds and long-term objectives.⁷⁴

These harsh assessments of Truman obscure the fact that presidents must rely tremendously on their advisors by necessity, and John Lewis Gaddis is probably correct in asserting the “No one did more to shape Truman’s views than Harriman himself.”⁷⁵

Harriman briefed Truman that “a new ‘barbarian invasion of Europe’ was under way, and

⁷³ Harriman, 449; Bohlen, 212; Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Charles E. Bohlen, Assistant to the Secretary of State, 20 April 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, V, 231-34. Harriman lists Assistant Secretary James Dunn as one of the State Department officials who accompanied him on his visit to the White House, but Bohlen does not list him amongst the participants of the meeting. Joseph C. Grew, *Turbulent Era, A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904-1945*, volume II (Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952), 1445-1447, 1506. At Harriman’s April 20 first meeting with President Truman, Grew had used the notion of a “united West” as a great leverage in the United States-Soviet Union relations. Grew, who was Acting Secretary of State while Stettinius was chairing the San Francisco Conference (James Byrnes became Secretary of State at the conference’s conclusion), includes a letter in his memoirs from Harriman and Bohlen who wrote in a private dispatch to him on May 19: “But as ‘a war to end wars,’ the war will have been futile, for the result will be merely the transfer of totalitarian dictatorship and power from Germany and Japan to Soviet Russia which will constitute in future as grave a danger to us as did the Axis...A future war with Soviet Russia is as certain as anything in this world can be certain.” Although Grew’s memoirs were not published until 1952, he reflected back seven years in writing: “During this era I felt that the great majority of the American people as well as elements in the Government were woefully blind to the fundamental philosophy and doctrine of the Soviets...They were blind to the Soviet doctrine that communism and capitalism cannot continue to exist peaceably side by side, and that war between the two camps is eventually inevitable. They were blind to the patent fact that the only language understood by the Kremlin is the language of strength, force and power; that friendly appeasement in any form is regarded as a clear sign of weakness and an invitation to further demands or encroachments.”

⁷⁴ Arnold A. Offner, *Another Such Victory: President Truman and the Cold War, 1945-1953* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 23.

⁷⁵ John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 201.

the United States would have to determine its attitude toward these unpleasant developments without delay.” He “thought the President should make it plain to the Soviets that the United States was by no means pleased with the way they were ignoring the Yalta agreements in Eastern Europe and that he was not disposed to let them get away with it.” In response, Truman noted that he had reviewed Harriman’s recent cables and told him that “we see eye to eye on the situation,” and “the Russians need us more than we need them.” When Harriman asked the President if the Polish issue would have any impact on the San Francisco Conference which was to convene the following week to begin the practical formation of the United Nations Organization, Truman replied “immediately and decisively,” according to Bohlen:

In his considered opinion unless settlement of the Crimean [Yalta] decision that the treaty of American adherence to a world organization would not get through the Senate. He added that he intended to tell Molotov just this in words of one syllable.⁷⁶

However, when pressed, Truman said, “the truth of the matter was that without Russia there would not be much of a world organization.”⁷⁷ At the end of the meeting, Truman admitted his lack of experience in foreign affairs and said he would rely on Stettinius and “his Ambassadors” in dealing with the Soviet Union.⁷⁸

Harriman’s influence on Truman cannot be overstated. Costigliola recounts an interview Truman gave fourteen years later where:

[Truman] volunteered that the Russians “have no sense of decency.” When the interviewer replied that the Russians “are not barbarians,” the former president snapped

⁷⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Charles E. Bohlen, Assistant to the Secretary of State, 233.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid; Harriman, 447-48.

back: I think they're the worst barbarians the world has ever produced. They have a cross of the Tartar in them, and they haven't changed a bit."⁷⁹

In his first meeting on April 22 with Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov, Truman said he would honor the Yalta agreements, but according to his interpreter, Bohlen, added that he "felt our agreements with the Soviet Union so far had been a one way street and that could not continue; it was now or never. He intended to go on with the plans for San Francisco and if the Russians did not wish to join us they could go to hell." In recalling this meeting, Bohlen later wrote: "How I enjoyed translating Truman's sentences! They were probably the first sharp words uttered during the war by an American President to a high Soviet official."⁸⁰

Before his second meeting with Molotov on the 23rd, Truman held an afternoon meeting with Secretary of War Stimson, Secretary of Navy Forrestal, Secretary of State Stettinius, General Marshall and Admiral King of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Harriman, General John Deane, James Dean, Charles Bohlen, and Admiral Leahy. After summarizing his discussion with Molotov the previous day, Truman solicited the views of his top advisers and representatives from the Moscow Embassy.⁸¹ Stimson believed the Russians viewed independence and democracy from a different perspective than the

⁷⁹ Costigliola, 780.

⁸⁰ Memorandum by Mr. Charles E. Bohlen, Assistant to the Secretary of State, of a Meeting at the White House, April 23, 1945, 2 p.m., *FRUS, 1945*, V, 253; Bohlen, 212-13; and Harriman, 451. Harriman refers to this first meeting was "cordial." Molotov (sometimes accompanied by Andrei Gromyko) also held inconclusive meetings, separate from Truman, with Secretary of State Stettinius, Under Secretary Joseph Grew, Assistant Secretary James Dunn, Harriman, British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden, Alexander Cadogan and Clark Kerr.

⁸¹ Memorandum by Mr. Charles E. Bohlen, Assistant to the Secretary of State, of a Meeting at the White House, April 23, 1945, 252; Harriman, 452-53. Bohlen's memorandum of the meeting in the *Foreign Relations of the United States* volume is one of the few places to list all the participants. James Dunn's participation, for example, is often excluded from personal memoirs, and despite his power and influence during the first several months of Truman's administration, he is rarely spoken of in the memoirs of the leading government personalities of the time.

Americans, they held control of Poland, and they were not likely to yield on elections since they considered the issue vital to their security. He seemed a little perturbed about all the commotion over Poland, virtually all of which, he pointed out, had been Russian territory twenty-five years earlier. He thought what mattered more was that the Soviet Union had honored its word on important military matters, often even going beyond what had been promised. Marshall said he was not aware of the political issues involving Poland, but was fearful that Stalin might delay attacking Japan if relations soured. He said he was inclined to agree with Stimson, who maintained that the Soviet Union was “more realistic” than the U.S. “in regard to their own security.”⁸²

Harriman’s old friend, Forrestal, felt that the Polish problem was emblematic of a “Soviet desire to dominate adjacent countries and to disregard the wishes of her allies.” He thought it would be “better to have a showdown now than later.” He was not concerned as Stimson and Marshall were, about the U.S. need for the Soviet Union’s help in defeating the Japanese.⁸³ In reply to Stimson’s comment that the conflict over Poland was new to him, Harriman expressed his belief that Stalin had changed his mind about the Yalta agreement on Poland after talking to Bolesław Bierut and learning that the Lublin Government had no hopes of winning a free election against a more legitimate

⁸² Memorandum by Mr. Charles E. Bohlen, Assistant to the Secretary of State, of a Meeting at the White House, April 23, 1945, 253-54; Harriman, 452; and Walter La Feber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War 1945-1984* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 16-17.

⁸³ *Ibid*; The Secretary of the Navy (Forrestal) to the Acting Secretary of State, 21 May 1945, *FRUS 1945*, volume VI (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 878. In spite of this what Harriman attributes to Forrestal, which is believable, the Secretary of the Navy supported Stimson’s view a month later that the participation of the Soviet Union would have a “profound military effect” for the Americans in the fight against Japan. Woods and Jones, 24. According to Randall Woods and Howard Jones, Forrestal had used a letter General Deane wrote to Army Chief of Staff Marshall “to facilitate his public campaign for a stronger postwar U.S. military force and his private crusade for a tougher policy toward the Soviet Union.”

leader such as Mikołajczyk. General Deane, who was basically aligned with Harriman on the issue of Poland, was convinced “that if we were afraid of the Russians we would get nowhere and he felt that we should be firm when we were right.”⁸⁴

Leahy, who had been at Yalta, disagreed with the State Department view that the Soviet Union had violated the Yalta agreement on Poland. He felt the agreement could be interpreted in two different ways and that the Russians would not permit a free government in Poland. Stettinius then read the section of the Yalta agreement concerning elections in Poland, his solitary contribution to the debate, to show that there was only one possible interpretation. Leahy thought the U.S. should tell the Soviet Union that it stood for a free and independent Poland, but added it would be a serious matter to break with the Russians over the issue.⁸⁵

Truman tried to ease the concerns of those like Stimson and Marshall by saying that he had no plans to give Molotov an ultimatum, but he was extremely assertive and undiplomatic when he met the Soviet Foreign Minister afterwards. In making a non-too-

⁸⁴ Memorandum by Mr. Charles E. Bohlen, Assistant to the Secretary of State, of a Meeting at the White House, April 23, 1945, 253, 255; Harriman, 453.

⁸⁵ Memorandum by Mr. Charles E. Bohlen, Assistant to the Secretary of State, of a Meeting at the White House, 23 April 1945, 254; Harriman, 452. William D. Leahy, *I Was There: The Personal Story of the Chief of Staff to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1950, 351. Harriman's memoirs and Bohlen's account in the *Foreign Relations of the United States* contradict Leahy's apocryphal account in his memoirs (published 17 years before Bohlen's account in *FRUS*), perhaps influenced by the later pressure of the time to appear stridently anti-communist. He states that a strong consensus had formed by the time of Molotov's visit around General Deane's highly critical report of the effectiveness of Soviet assistance in the war against the Japanese. Leahy even stated that the Joint Chiefs were about to change their policy based on the report. As a result, he argues, there was no concern about fallout which might lead the Soviet Union to lessen their war efforts in Asia as well as Europe, where the war was all but complete. The Secretary of War (Stimson) to the Acting Secretary of State, 21 May 1945, *FRUS 1945*, VI, 876-77. However, these other accounts do not report corroborate his account and Secretary of War Stimson continued to believe that “Russian entry” would “almost certainly...materially shorten the war and thus save American lives” as 21 May, and probably did so until the successful mid-July successful test of an atomic bomb in New Mexico. Admiral King and Dunn did not apparently add substantively to the discussion.

subtle remark about the Poland issue, he hinted that the public would need to be assuaged if he had any hopes of gaining Congressional approval for postwar economic aid for the Soviet Union. Molotov apparently understood the inference because he told the President that Allied cooperation required unanimous agreement, not decisions imposed upon one party by the others. Truman began to get upset at one point, telling Molotov that the U.S. would honor the agreements it made at Yalta and expected the Soviet Union to do so as well. Molotov was shocked by Truman's acerbic remark, replying, "I have never been talked to like that in my life," and that the President left the Soviet Union with two options, either to follow the dictates of the U.S. or drop out of the United Nations.⁸⁶

After this inauspicious prelude, Molotov, Stettinius, Harriman, and Bohlen flew to San Francisco for the United Nations Conference. Upon his arrival in San Francisco the next day, Stettinius remarked to a fellow member of the U.S. delegation, conservative Republican Senator Arthur Vandenberg, "If you had been talking about Poland to Molotov not even you could have made a stronger statement than Truman did." In relating the incident in his diary, Vandenberg noted emphatically: "FDR's appeasement of Russia is over."⁸⁷

Although no agreement had been reached as to how to reconstruct the Lublin Government, Molotov was undaunted and attempted unsuccessfully to gain its admission to the United Nations. Bohlen, who served as Stettinius' interpreter in conversations with Molotov at the conference explained how the Soviet Foreign Minister struck back:

⁸⁶ Harriman, 453; Leahy, 352.

⁸⁷ *The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg*, edited by Arthur H. Vandenberg, Jr. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1942), 175-76. Vandenberg had announced his conversion from isolationist to internationalist in January and Roosevelt had picked him to join the delegation to the founding conference of the United Nations as a maneuver to gain broad support for the international organization.

One night [May 4th], Molotov invited some of the delegates to dinner at the Soviet Consulate in San Francisco. I walked in with Stettinius, who greeted Molotov with his usual ready smile. Molotov nonchalantly commented, "Oh, by the way, Mr. Stettinius, about those sixteen Poles, they have all been arrested by the Red Army." He immediately turned away and said, "Hello, Mr. Eden." Stettinius was left standing there with a fixed smile on his face.⁸⁸

Although Stettinius was steadfast in his determination that the U.S. delegates provide as little information about conference debates, Harriman gave a secret midnight news conference to twelve leading journalists. He lobbied the public through the media the same way that he lobbied the President, the State Department, and the Pentagon, arguing "with *circumspection*" according to Bohlen's account, "the goals of the Soviet Union and the United States were so opposed that any possibility of future cooperation was not realistic." Bohlen, who felt Harriman could have gone further in his criticisms of U.S.-Soviet relations, noted that correspondents were outraged. Apparently Harriman was not circumspect enough because several of the reporters, including columnist Walter Lippmann and Broadcaster Raymond Swing, who called Harriman a "warmonger," walked out of the conference. Later Swing announced "that diplomats who lost their belief in the ultimate purpose of our diplomacy in relation to the Soviet Union were expendable."⁸⁹

THE SAN FRANCISCO CONFERENCE CONFRONTATION: "NEW DEAL" LIBERAL MEDIA & THE CONSERVATIVE WIND OF THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION

⁸⁸ Bohlen, 214-15; Mikolajczyk, 112.

⁸⁹ Bohlen, 214-15, 220-22; Gaddis, 227; and Woods and Jones, 43-44. (*italics added*) Other journalists included in Harriman's secret news conference included Ernest Lindley, Eugene Meyer (editor of the *Washington Post*), Roy Howard, Anne O'Hara McCormick, H.V. Kaltenborn and Blair Moody.

The conservative wind blowing through the new Truman Administration and contradictory approaches to the Soviet Union and Western European colonial powers became apparent in several editorials commenting on the early events of the San Francisco conference. The author of an April 20 *Washington Post* editorial ridiculed the inconsistency of the applause in the chamber of the House of Representatives when one of its members suggested that the U.S. hold onto Pacific islands captured from the Japanese, while others questioned Russia's annexation of Romania and Poland.⁹⁰ Also writing in the *Washington Post's* editorial pages, on the 28th Walter Lippman spoke of the arrival of Molotov and defended his and the Soviet Union's position of several contentious issues, before concluding:

If German aggression is to be ended forever, the United Nations must renounce any notion that they are setting up an organization here to police the Soviet Union. To police the Soviet Union they would have to restore Germany, first as a buffer and then as a spearhead. The Soviets are deeply aware of this, and at the bottom of all Soviet policy, of all Soviet suspicion, there is the determination to counteract the powerful interest in the Western world which, though they do not avow it openly, have this purpose in mind.⁹¹

In two separate commentaries, on May 3 and 15, Lippmann criticized Secretary of State and chairman of the San Francisco Conference Edward Stettinius for demanding an immediate vote on admission of Argentina, ruled by the fascist government of Edelmiro Farrell and Juan Perón, to the United Nations. Although the vote, the first of the conference, went in Stettinius' favor, Lippmann pointed out several troubling facts about how the speeches and the vote itself were aligned. Of the five speeches followed Stettinius' call for a vote, four were in favor (all countries from the Western Hemisphere:

⁹⁰ Editorial, *Washington Post*, 20 April 1945, 8.

⁹¹ Walter Lippmann, "M. Molotov's Arrival," *Washington Post*, 28 April 1945, 5.

Columbia, Mexico, Peru and the U.S.) and one (Belgium) opposed. Only Britain and the U.S. voted for admission, while the other three permanent members of the Security Council, China, France, and Russia voted against the measure. The vote in favor of Argentina was carried by the votes of the nations of the British Empire, except New Zealand, and the American republics. Recognizing that the vote revealed at the outset that the Americas possessed voting power “out of all proportion to their political weight in the world, and to their contribution to security in fighting this war or in preventing another,” Lippmann expressed concern that the vote might diminish the authority of the United Nations.⁹²

In lamenting the loss of President Roosevelt, Lippmann implied that he would never have let such a thing happen. Roosevelt, “by virtue of his war powers and his immense personal authority...managed to cooperate without sacrificing the independent position of the United States.” Since Roosevelt’s demise, the U.S. had “drifted away from, and has been maneuvered out of, its central position as the mediator power.”⁹³ Lippmann’s criticisms were echoed by the *Washington Post*’s Associate Editor Herbert Elliston who criticized the American delegation for their highly suspect excuse that the Latin American nations threatened to quit the conference if Argentina was not admitted.⁹⁴ *Time* magazine entered the foray with the comment that “the disproportionate voting strength of the U.S.’s noisy Latin American bloc gave Molotov a brilliantly used

⁹² Walter Lippmann, “Tuesday’s Showdown,” *Washington Post*, 3 May 1945, 7. Lippmann was a highly respected “Washington insider” who regularly conversed with top government officials, both Republican and Democratic. The Belgium delegate, Paul Henri Spaak was an advocate of a Western European-American bloc and apparently saw the Latin American-U.S. bloc as a threat to this goal.

⁹³ Walter Lippman, “Cooperation Without Entanglement,” *Washington Post*, 15 May 1945, 5.

⁹⁴ Herbert Elliston, “Argentina Action: More Fear Than Strength,” *Washington Post*, 6 May 1945, 7.

opportunity to pose as the conference's moral spokesman in opposing the Argentine jingoes, and generally cost the U.S. more than it gained."⁹⁵

Several weeks before Roosevelt died and more than a month before the San Francisco Conference began, Lippmann had warned about the "complex and explosive" colonial questions to be discussed there:

We are ourselves a colonial power, and it is as a colonial power that we cannot afford to take the view that our treatment of the Philippine Islands is a model, which exhibits all our ideals and principles about colonial territories. We have no intention, for example, of dealing with Alaska as we have dealt with the Philippines, nor with the Hawaiian Islands as we shall wish to deal with either Alaska or the Philippines, or with the Panama Canal Zone or with Puerto Rico or with the Virgin Islands. Merely to name the territories which are under the American flag and are not now self-governing is to realize at once that there is no general formula which we, or anyone, else can agree to.

Independence, as in the case of the the Philippines, is one solution. Eventual admission into the Union, as in the case of Alaska, is another. Who is prepared to say whether either of these solutions is ideally right one for Puerto Rico? And no one will be prepared to say that either solution is the right one for the Canal Zone.

Our own colonial empire, though a small one, is, therefore, exceedingly complex. Yet it is fairly simple as compared with a great structure like the British Commonwealth and Empire, or with that of the French empire.⁹⁶

A contrasting opinion was given by Marquis Childs used his column in the *Washington Post* on May 9 to criticize the "big powers" for "their betrayal of the ideas of the Atlantic Charter" and "betrayal of one of the great hopes of Franklin D. Roosevelt," in preserving the old order of colonialism. Citing at length from notes of a conversation he had had with the Roosevelt a year earlier, Childs outlined how the late President had been concerned that the prestige of the white man, "already badly damaged," had been shaken by the quick successes of the Japanese. "We are going to have to take some

⁹⁵ *Time*, 45, 20 (14 May 1945): 38.

⁹⁶ Walter Lippmann, "Pandora's Box," *Washington Post*, 20 March 1945, 8.

positive steps,” Childs quoted Roosevelt, “or find ourselves pushed out completely.” Childs wrote about how the President favored an international trusteeship of Indochina, the example of the Philippines and singled out the resistance of British Prime Minister Churchill.⁹⁷

A similar criticism appeared in the liberal magazine, *Nation*, where I.F. Stone proclaimed: “the whole trusteeship question is the big fraud of the United Nations Conference,” but blamed the failure to advance on the issue on the “unmistakable wrangle over strategic bases and the territorial booty which will be left over after the Axis is defeated.”⁹⁸ While Childs had focused on the more benign “loss” of areas not inhabited by the “white man,” Stone warned of the danger of arousing and then disappointing “the hopes of 750,000,000 colonial and colored people.”⁹⁹ Rather than point the blame at British imperialism, Stone quoted from an Admiral of the Navy, who speaking at an Institute of Pacific Relations conference said, “We have spent millions of dollars and thousands of lives conquering the Japanese-held islands in the Pacific and we have no intention of relinquishing their sovereignty to another international authority after this war.”¹⁰⁰ As a result, American proposals on trusteeship “had to be whittled down to satisfy the navy,” argued Stone.¹⁰¹

The State Department and others responsible for policy shifts after Roosevelt’s death responded sharply to their critics in the press. In speaking to a British official at the conference, Senator Vandenberg complained:

⁹⁷ Marquis Childs, “A Better World Betrayed,” *Washington Post*, 9 May 1945, 7.

⁹⁸ I.F. Stone, “Pie in the ’Frisco Sky,” *Nation*, 19 May 1945, 561-63.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

I was struck by the fact that the freedom of our press gave all the nations with which we do business a tremendous weapon which they freely employed against our interest. When Molotov wishes to oppose Stettinius at San Francisco he has access to a free and in fact what sometimes seems to be a pro-Russian press in this country...

I also remarked that in England whenever the government took a course in foreign affairs it had the solid support of the British press. I had particularly in mind in my discussion the Washington Post's ([editor] Mr. Eugene Meyers') savage attack on Mr. Stettinius and his associates as "bush league diplomats."¹⁰²

Vandenberg's complaint about media criticism of government policies and officials who formed those policies was repeated in a paper prepared by the State Department on June 2 and sent to President Truman later that month, in which such criticism was linked to its title, "International Communism." Ignoring the reality of the fact that the French resistance was composed largely of communists, the Department called Western European communists "traitors to their own countries." The Communist International, the paper's authors noted, setup "groups to agitate on colonial problems."¹⁰³ The Communist International was a threat because it reached into nearly every country, even the U.S.:

Abundant evidence exists, even with respect to the American Communist Party, of the absolute obedience and primary loyalty of members to the Communist International, even when espionage is involved...

Most persons are prone to dismiss the communist movement as of no importance because it acknowledges few members...In the United States the Party deliberately concealed its

¹⁰² *The Private Papers of Senator Arthur Vandenberg*, 53-54, 177-78, 181. Senator Vandenberg was to sole member of the U.S. delegation to vote against the admission of White Russia and Ukraine to the conference, a refusal to permit these two countries to the United Nations would have been a violation of the Yalta agreement.

¹⁰³ Harriman, 375, 378; Memorandum for the President from Joseph C. Grew, 27 June 1945, *The Conference of Berlin, 1945*, volume I (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1960), 267. Harriman explains that de Gaulle had gone to Moscow in 1944 to negotiate a treaty of alliance and mutual assistance with Stalin to gain support of French Communists who played a "prominent role" in the resistance. Stalin had unsuccessfully attempted to maneuver surreptitiously to get de Gaulle into formally accepting the Lublin Government in the treaty.

national strength by restricting its Party membership and failing to make real campaigns nationally...

American Communists while attacking the policies of the United States carefully implant the feeling in the public mind that any adverse action the United States may take against them for violations of the law will have an unfortunate repercussion on this country's relations with the Soviet Union. By smear campaigns and unbridled criticisms of public servants who view the interests of the United States as paramount to those of the Soviet Union Communists attempt to force these officials to change their views...Communists have the same attitude as Goebbels did—that the civil liberty laws of the democracies are convenient instruments for Communists to facilitate their tearing down the structure of the state and thereafter abolishing all civil rights.

While conjectural, it is possible to anticipate certain changes towards this country...

1. Attacks on the Administration on grounds of abandoning the policies of the late President. Communists reserve for themselves the interpretation of the late President's policies.
2. Attacks on top personnel of State Department on ground they are anti-Russian.

...To recognize such a group as un-American, a potential fifth column with foreign allegiances, and to deal with it accordingly would be realistic. Decisive action against the American Communists would be a convincing demonstration to Stalin of the inherent strength of this country and would strengthen relations between the two countries.¹⁰⁴

Criticism of another sort from this period has been directed at President Truman for his inconsistent approach to relations with the Soviet Union. Some have characterized him as insecure and undiplomatic in his rhetoric. Others blame Roosevelt for not including his Vice-President in foreign policy discussions, or Truman himself for not having experience in foreign affairs. There is another view, that a president can only be as good as his advisors. Truman followed the majority opinion of his advisors, some more expert than others, on this issue, which was pushed by the top State Department officials, the Ambassador to the Soviet Union, and the Secretary of War.

¹⁰⁴ "International Communism," "International Communism," 2 June 1945, *The Conference of Berlin, 1945*, 1, 269-80.

Harriman, despite his harsh rhetoric against the Soviet Union, intimated that he was generally surprised at the influence he wielded on United State-Soviet relations. Proper diplomatic language aside, he had been “taken aback” by how Truman had talked to Molotov in their meeting before the conference even though he had encouraged the President to take a firm approach to the Soviet Union, just hours before. “I did regret that Truman went at it so hard because his behavior gave Molotov an excuse to tell Stalin that the Roosevelt policy was being abandoned.” Harriman could not help but notice that subsequent events at the San Francisco Conference only exacerbated already injured relations. Indeed they did, but Harriman was the leading influence. Foreign ministers Molotov and Anthony Eden, British Ambassador Clark Kerr, Harriman and Bohlen all left the conference during the second week of May. On their return flight to Washington, D.C., Harriman and Bohlen discussed the need for improving relations with the Soviet Union and Bohlen suggested that Harry Hopkins might be the one to help. Harriman liked his idea, recalled Bohlen, and suggested the idea to Truman who agreed after consulting with several other officials about “Hopkins’ integrity.”¹⁰⁵

White House Press Secretary Stephen Early suggested Truman send former Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Joseph Davies, concurrently with Hopkins’ mission, to meet Churchill and, amongst other things, gain his approval for a preliminary meeting

¹⁰⁵ Bohlen, 215; Harriman, 453; *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* edited by Robert H. Ferrell (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 31. Oral History Interview with Loy W. Henderson, Truman Library, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/hendrson.htm> (accessed January 18, 2005). Later, Loy Henderson stated that “One of the surest ways of winning the disapproval of Hopkins was to express suspicion of Soviet motives or to intimate that we could not depend upon Soviet cooperation in the postwar ear.”

between the President and Stalin before the upcoming tri-partite conference.¹⁰⁶ As the predominately Russian and American Allied forces were closing in on the Germans and victory was clearly a matter of weeks, Churchill, who at the Tehran Conference referred to “Stalin the Great,” had begun applying pressure for Eisenhower to take and hold as much territory, including Berlin as possible before the war was over. By early February, Russian lines were only 35 miles from Berlin, and Supreme Allied Commander Eisenhower stated clearly that it “would be foolish in view of the relative situation of the Russians and ourselves....While it is true we have seized a small bridgehead over the Elbe, it must be remembered that only our spearheads are up to that river; our center of gravity is well back of there.”¹⁰⁷ Instead of advancing to Berlin, Stalin, who was at the Yalta Conference, surprised his generals by ordering these forces to the Baltic coast. Vojtech Mastny argues that Stalin’s motivation was to give “the Red Army extra time to move forward in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and toward Denmark—advances less likely to strain the coalition than the attempted seizure of Berlin would have been.”¹⁰⁸

In a telegram to President Truman, Churchill intimated that he wanted to renege on an agreement from the second Quebec Conference on occupational zones when stating that they “were rather hastily drawn...when it was not foreseen that General Eisenhower’s armies would make such a mighty inroad into Germany”:

¹⁰⁶ Bohlen, 215-16; Supplemental Report in RE: Mission to London, 12 June 1945, *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, 1945*, volume I (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1960), 65-66. Davies makes clear that this was one of the important aims of the meetings.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Forrest C. Pogue, *The Supreme Command* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of Army, 1954), 446-47; Bohlen, 229..

¹⁰⁸ Mastny, 244.

As it stands at present, Russian occupational zone has the smallest proportion of people and grows by far the largest proportion of food. The Americans have a not very satisfactory proportion of food to feed conquered population. And we poor British are to take over all the ruined Ruhr and large manufacturing districts, which are like ours, in normal times large importers of food. I suggest that this tiresome question should be settled in Berlin by A.C.C. [Allied Control Commission for Germany]¹⁰⁹

Secretary of State Stettinius advised Admiral Leahy a few days later that to the contrary, the zones were formally agreed to just prior to Yalta, and only after “long and careful study and negotiation.” “Following a deadlock lasting many months,” Leahy explained, “the British obtained the northwestern zone which they were so insistent upon having.”¹¹⁰

On May 11, Churchill had warned Truman that Eisenhower’s proposed withdrawal from the agreed upon Russian zone of occupation “would mean the tide of Russian domination sweeping forward 120 miles on a front of 300 or 400 miles.” After listing the areas the Red Army controlled, Churchill proclaimed: “This constitutes an event in the history of Europe to which there was been no parallel”:¹¹¹

All disagreements over occupation can only be settled before the United States armies in Europe are weakened. If they are not settled before the United States armies withdraw from Europe and the Western world folds up its war machines, there are no prospects of a satisfactory solution and very little of preventing a third world war.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ The British Prime Minister (Churchill) to President Truman, 18 April 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, volume III (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 232.

¹¹⁰ Memorandum by the Secretary of State to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, *FRUS, 1945*, III, 235.

¹¹¹ Woods and Jones, 53; Prime Minister Churchill to President Truman, 11 May 1945, *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, 1945* 1, 7.

¹¹² Prime Minister Churchill to President Truman, 11 May 1945.

Echoing Harriman's exhortations, Churchill concluded his message with "It is to this early and speedy showdown and settlement with Russia that we must now turn our hopes."¹¹³

In one of their subsequent four meetings, Davies and Churchill talked from 11 p.m. on May 26 until 4:30 in the morning. Davies explained that Truman was attempting to resolve what had been agreed to at Yalta and what disagreements still existed to "conserve peace after victory." "Churchill was more concerned about the 'steel curtain' of the Soviets being 'clamped down' on Eastern liberated areas."¹¹⁴ After these talks with Churchill, Davies concluded that Churchill was "more concerned over preserving England's position in Europe than in preserving peace."¹¹⁵

Shortly after Harriman and Bohlen flew back to Washington, D.C. from the San Francisco Conference, another incident exacerbated already tense U.S.-Soviet relations. Influenced, in part, by Harriman, Acting Secretary of State Grew and Foreign Economic Administrator Leo Crowley proposed to Truman on May 11 that all future Lend-Lease aid not required "to complete work on industrial plants already under construction or for the fight against Japan be stopped "as soon as physically possible." The President approved their proposal, but Crowley ordered *all* vessels destined for the Soviet Union not carrying Lend-Lease supplies required for the war against Japan turn around and

¹¹³ Ibid. Churchill had resigned on May 23 and formed a caretaker administration. The election followed on July 5, and the Labor Party won by a landslide giving Clement Attlee the premiership.

¹¹⁴ The Chairman of the President's War Relief Control Board (Davies to the President, 12 June 1945, *Conference of Berlin, 1945* 1, 64-65 Churchill's term "steel curtain," of course, evolved into "iron curtain" in a speech before the British House of Commons on August 16, and then in his extremely eloquent speech at Fulton, Missouri in March 1946. The complete text of these speeches is available in *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches*, volume VII, 7209-19, 7285-93.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Thorne, 499.

return to the U.S. After learning that Crowley had overstepped his instructions, Truman revoked Crowley's order.¹¹⁶

Robert Sherwood offers a thorough account of Hopkins' six subsequent meetings with Stalin in Moscow from May 26 through June 6. Hopkins was accompanied by Harriman, with Bohlen serving as his interpreter, while Molotov and the Russian interpreter, known only as Pavlov, sat on Stalin's side of the table. In expounding on the influence of American public opinion on the U.S. Government, Hopkins drew a thread from Truman's reference to the same during his April 23 meeting with Molotov. He explained that the public supported Roosevelt's goal of working together with the Soviet Union "to bring about a secure peace for humanity" despite their different economic systems. Public support for this approach had eroded, Hopkins insisted, over the failure of the Yalta agreement on Poland. Stalin, in turn, blamed the breakdown in negotiations over Poland on British attempts "to revive the system of *cordon sanitaire*" instead of recognizing the Soviet Union's right to have a friendly Poland on its border.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Gaddis, 218-19.

¹¹⁷ Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 889-910. Harriman, 169-70; *Public Opinion, 1935-1946*, edited by Hadley Cantrill (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 371. It seems a little naïve for Hopkins to talk to Stalin about "secure peace for humanity" if we assume that, at some point as one of Roosevelt's closest foreign policy advisor—at least after Welles' resignation—he had been briefed about the Soviet purges and collectivization of the 1930s. In his memoirs, Harriman notes that in public, Roosevelt "had been careful not to encourage the popular wartime belief that with the passage of time the American and Soviet systems increasingly would come to resemble one another. In private conversations, however, with such close associates as Harriman and Sumner Welles, Roosevelt sometimes talked of his hopes for a gradual blurring of differences between the two systems." From a strictly factual basis, Hopkins was wrong to suggest that the American public support for relations with the Soviet Union had been severely damaged over the Polish issue. The public had not even been aware that there was a dispute until the San Francisco Conference began, and although the numbers of Americans who did not think "Russia could be trusted to cooperate" had risen by May 15 to 38 percent, from a previous average since February 1942 of 29 percent and compared to an increased average afterwards through December 11, 1946 of 42 percent, the same results revealed that 45 percent believed the Russians could be trusted, as against a previous average of 47 percent and a later average of 42

When the meetings resumed the next day, Stalin took the opportunity to list his own complaints, paraphrased here:

1. The invitation of Argentina attend the San Francisco Conference was a violation of the Yalta agreement that only states which declared war on Germany before March would be invited to attend the conference.
2. The U.S. violated a Yalta agreement that restricted the Reparations Commission to the Three Powers by insisting France be included as an equal member.
3. Stalin maintained that the Yalta agreement had stipulated “that the existing government was to be reconstructed” and common sense demands that this mean that the Lublin Government would serve as the basis for the new government.
4. The *manner* in which Lend-Lease supplies to the Soviet Union were curtailed was “unfortunate and even brutal.”
5. Under the surrender terms, “German troops were supposed to surrender to the army against which they had fought,”...”However, as regards to the German fleet which had caused so much damage to Leningrad and other Soviet ports not one had been turned over to the Russians despite the fact the fleet had surrendered.”¹¹⁸

In response to Stalin’s charges, Hopkins first asked Harriman to explain the Argentinian issue because he was not at San Francisco. Harriman used the argument that the Latin countries had forced Argentina’s admission as a condition of accepting Ukraine and White Russia, before criticizing Molotov for not having the procedural savvy to have negotiated a delay on negotiating over Argentina. Hopkins also said that he had not participated in the Yalta discussions on the Reparations Commission because he was sick. However, he argued that it did not seem unreasonable, drawing Stalin’s retort that it should be less reasonable to have Poland and Yugoslavia added to the commission as well. Hopkins apologized for the problem over Lend-Lease calling it a “technical misunderstanding” and explained that the order to have ships returned to the U.S. was

percent. So while there was a shift in the public’s thinking, it is debateable how significant it was at this point.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 893-95.

countermanded within twenty-four hours.¹¹⁹ Finally, he made a concession on Poland, paraphrased here by Sherwood, which could have forestalled all the acrimony between the two countries if it had been made immediately after Roosevelt died:

[The] question of Poland per se was not so important as the fact that it had become a symbol of our ability to work out problems with the Soviet Union. He said that we had no special interests in Poland and no special desire to see any particular kind of government.¹²⁰

In another meeting, Hopkins pressed Stalin to release the fourteen members of the Polish underground arrested by the Soviets (it is not clear why he referred to only fourteen of the sixteen), but Stalin simply refused, claiming their crimes did not warrant their release. From the U.S.'s standpoint, the only satisfactory result of Hopkins' mission was obtaining Stalin's agreement that the veto in the Security Council of the U.N. would be restricted to actions rather than all decisions—negotiations on this point had apparently reached an impasse at the San Francisco Conference due to poor communication between Molotov and Stalin.¹²¹

A short while after Hopkins and Davies returned from their missions, Truman and Churchill conceded defeat on the Poland issue by transferring recognition away from the Government-in-Exile in London to the Lublin Government.¹²² Stalin had prophesied to Yugoslav Milovan Djilas in April, "This war is not as in the past; whoever occupies a territory also imposes his own system as far as his army can reach. It cannot be

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 895-97.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 898-99.

¹²¹ Ibid, 908.

¹²² Bohlen, 219.

otherwise.”¹²³ Nevertheless, by this time the Poland issue had been used by those within the U.S. Government, with the gleeful encouragement of some British and French officials, of casting future U.S.-Soviet relations in a light that irreparably harmed them.

CONCLUSION

The breach in U.S.-Soviet relations which developed in the spring of 1945 led to a Cold War policy approach to Việt Nam that foreclosed any possibility of support for Communist nationalist movement against the return of French colonialism. U.S.-Soviet relations had always been tenuous, but Roosevelt's New Deal economics, attempts from the early 1930s to normalize relations, and ultimately the German invasion of the Soviet Union provided the basis for an alliance. Issues involving Poland's postwar government and disputed territorial boundaries precipitated this breach, but there were conservative elements in the U.S. Government who had always seen Russian Communism as an international threat. Roosevelt's replacement by Vice President Harry Truman, and the influence of advisors such as Averell Harriman and other Russophobes led to a confrontational policy towards the erstwhile ally bringing anti-communism to the fore of foreign policy. The next chapter will examine Hồ Chí Minh's political life up to 1945 and the rise of the Communists to a dominant position of the nationalist movement in Việt Nam.

¹²³ Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*, translated by Michael B. Petrovich (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, Inc., 1967), 114.

At first, it was patriotism, not yet communism which led me to have confidence in Lenin, in the Third International. Step by step, during the course of the struggle, by studying Marxism-Leninism while engaging in practical activities, I gradually understood that only socialism and communism can liberate the oppressed nations and the working people throughout the world from slavery.¹

My party is my country, my program is independence²

Hồ Chí Minh

But overshadowing all else in President Ho was his selflessness, his dedication to other without a thought to himself, and 'his unique and overwhelming desire' to bring happiness to the people, to the country. This life of complete disregard for any self interest had created in him something very pure and radiant. In his immense humanitarianism, even when he was implementing his strategies and tactics, he always wanted to revive the few shreds of conscience still lingering in some people.³

Võ Nguyên Giáp

The Japanese exposed...the hollowness of the myth of the white man's invincibility and, with it, the bankruptcy of the concept of the 'white man's burden.' Perhaps this psychological liberation was just as important as the political liberation, which in a decisive way was a result of the Japanese occupation.⁴

Huỳnh Kim Khánh

Chapter 10

Nguyễn Ái Quốc and the rise of the Việt Minh

The Vietnamese nationalist movements of World War II were not organizations with bureaucratic traditions conducive to documenting their every move. Instead, they were poorly funded, inadequately organized groups operating in a largely illiterate society. As a result, the literature documenting their activities comes from contemporary propaganda literature, reports made by their enemies or groups with only a peripheral

¹ Ho Chi Minh. "The Path Which Led Me to Leninism," *Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works*, IV (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Press, 1962): 450. Originally written in April 1960 for the Soviet review Problems of the East in celebration of the 90th anniversary of Lenin's birthday.

² Quoted in Harold R. Isaacs, *No Peace for Asia* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1967), 165.

³ Vo Nguyen Giap, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, translated by Mai Van Elliott (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1975), 60.

⁴ Huỳnh Kim Khánh, *Vietnamese Communism, 1925-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 238.

understanding of their organization, and often doctrinaire memoirs and histories from a later period. Scholars such as Hue-Tam Ho Tai, King Chen, Huỳnh Kim Khánh, William Duiker, and David Marr, in many cases, have done a remarkable job of reconstructing the story of the Indochina Communist Party's development and organization through World War II from fragmentary Vietnamese, French, Chinese, and other sources, but we have to be particularly mindful of these concerns over documentary sources when examining this period.⁵

This chapter provides a political-biographical sketch of the Vietnamese man known prior to the end of World War II by the name he attached to his anti-colonial and nationalist articles, Nguyễn Ái Quốc (Nguyễn “the Patriot”), and the communist organizations he founded and helped to nurture. It is necessary to examine the developmental origins of the Vietnamese Communist nationalists to understand the extent to which foreign associations influenced their orientation and later successes. In all likelihood, however, their story would be forgotten if the Japanese had not initiated Operation *Bright Moon* on March 9, 1945, neutralizing the French colonial administration and military that had so effectively suppressed Vietnamese nationalism up to that date. The importance of this crucial point should not be obscured by the breadth of discussion devoted to the pre-coup activities of Nguyễn Ái Quốc and development of

⁵ Vu Anh's 18-page article, “From Kunming to Pac Bo,” *Days with Ho Chi Minh*, edited by Hoi Thanh and Thanh Tinh (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1962): 163-80, provides a good example of the problem with documentary evidence of the Vietnamese during this period. Vu Anh often fails to offer any introspection or explanation for much of the crucial information he provides, and yet this brief article is one of the most widely relied upon Vietnamese pieces available in English, even by those who use Vietnamese-language sources. Several of Võ Nguyên Giáp's works, some more doctrinaire than others, which have been translated into English present similar problems and scholars who have interviewed him, have only supplemented these works with minor success. Ho Chi Minh's *Selected Works* (Volumes I, II, III, and IV. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961) and Trường Chinh's *Primer for Revolt; the Communist Take-over in Viet-Nam* (New York, Praeger, 1963) tend to be much more didactic than revelatory.

the branch of nationalism which coalesced around him as a symbol of Vietnamese aspirations.

NGUYỄN ÁI QUỐC: NATIONALIST OR MARXIST-LENINIST NATIONALIST AGENT OF THE COMINTERN?

In June 1920, a Japanese journalist asked V.I. Lenin, “Where has communism the greater chance of success, in the West or the East?” Lenin replied:

Real communism can so far have success only in the West. But the West, after all, lives at the expense of the East. The European imperialist powers get rich mainly in the Eastern colonies. But at the same time they are arming their colonies and training them to fight, and thereby the West is digging itself a grave in the East.”⁶

Nguyễn Ái Quốc had not read this interview, but had read Lenin’s “Theses on the National and Colonial Questions,” penned the same month and later published in *l’Humanité*, organ of the French Communist Party. Lenin’s words were an epiphany for Nguyễn. Sitting alone in his room reading the article, he claims to have shouted out loud: “Dear martyrs compatriots! This is what we need, this is the path to our liberation!”⁷ Perhaps what moved Nguyễn most was Lenin’s denunciation of the Versailles Treaty as a revelation to “all nations and to the oppressed classes of the world the falseness of bourgeois-democratic phrases” of the “celebrated ‘Western democracies’ is an even more

⁶ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, “Theses on the National and Colonial Questions,” in *The Lenin Anthology*, edited by Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1975): 619.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 213, 239, 243, 245 and 619-25; and Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, volume IV (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), 449. “These on the National and Colonial Questions,” was a theoretical continuation of Lenin’s influential work, “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” written about 1915-16. The earlier work was an explanation for why World War I occurred. Lenin described how capitalism had gone through a stage from 1860-70 of free competition, followed by a period where cartels were developed and capitalism was transformed into imperialism, the monopoly stage of capitalism. As capitalism developed, Lenin argued, the Great Powers (Great Britain, Czarist Russia, France, German, the U.S., and Japan) began competing for colonies, “for in the colonial market it is easier to employ monopoly methods” and spheres of influence to gain both needed raw materials and highly industrialized regions.

brutal and foul act of violence against weak nations than was the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk of the German Junkers and the Kaiser.”⁸ The Versailles Treaty was regarded by colonized peoples throughout the world as a failure because it failed to establish the concept of self-determination from President Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points as an international imperative.

Nguyễn Ái Quốc was a member of the group, which had included Phan Chu Trinh, Phan Văn Trường, Nguyễn Thế Truyền, and Tôn Đức Thắng, which drafted an eight-point proposal, “Revendications du Peuple Annamite” (Demands of the Annamite People”). It is likely that the elder Phan Chu Trinh influenced the moderate tenor of the proposal which included a call for the release of all political prisoners, equality under the law for both natives with Europeans, basic democratic freedoms, replacement of government by decree with government by law, appointment of a permanent Vietnamese advisor council, and an abolition of forced labor, the salt tax and rice alcohol monopoly. Nguyễn Ái Quốc was chosen as the group’s carrier for submission of the plea to the secretariat of the Paris Peace Conference in June 1919, but the proposal was ignored.⁹

⁸ Lenin, 621. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, signed on March 3, 1918 between the Russians and the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey), was seen as a crushing defeat by the Russians who had to surrender Ukraine, Finland, the Baltic Provinces, the Caucasus and Poland. The Treaty of Versailles was condemned because the Fourteen Points proposed earlier by President Woodrow Wilson were ignored particularly as they pertained to national sovereignty determined by “the interests of the populations concerned” and “mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.” The Versailles Treaty replaced these earlier covenants with Article 22 of The Covenant of the League of Nations, directed at the former German colonies in Africa and “certain of the South Pacific Islands,” and emphasized provisional independence under the tutelage of a “Mandatory.” Japan, through secret agreements, gained control of German territories in eastern Asia and the Pacific and was no more threatened with losing its possessions in China or Korea than the victorious European powers and America were of losing their colonies.

⁹ Isaac Milton Sacks, “Communism and Nationalism in Viet Nam 1918-1946” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1960), 37-38, 62; Trường Chinh, *President Hồ-Chi-Minh: Beloved Leader of the Vietnamese People* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1966): 13.; N. Khac Huyen. *Vision Accomplished? The Enigma of Ho Chi Minh* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1971): 11; David G. Marr, *Vietnamese*

Nguyễn Ái Quốc, was born in a village hamlet near Vinh in the province of Nghệ An in 1890. His family names were Nguyễn Sinh and his given name was Cung. Cung's father was a scholar official, and a friend of both Phan Chu Trinh and Phan Bội Châu, a native of a nearby village. He was appointed sub-prefect of Binh Ke district in the province of the same name in 1909, but was removed from office by the French Resident on false charges possibly related to French suspicions of this association with these two Phans. Cung's great-uncle was also a comrade of De Tham, the rebel revolutionary who fought the French for more than two decades in Northern Tonkin. Following tradition Cung's father gave him a new name upon entering adolescence, Tất Thành. Thành, according to William Duiker, was dismissed from school at Huế in May 1909 for his involvement as an interpreter in a Vietnamese peasant protest against taxes, which was violently suppressed by the French.¹⁰

Anticolonialism, 1885-1925 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 256; Hue-Tam Ho Tai, *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 67-69; and William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life* (New York: Hyperion, 2000), 59, 590 note 22. Trường Chinh only states that Nguyễn Tất Thành (Nguyễn Ái Quốc's legitimate name upon entering adolescence) submitted the proposal as a representative for a group of Annamite patriots, but does not suggest who the author was. Marr states that the document was drafted by Thành, Phan Chu Trinh, and Phan Văn Trường. The basis for Thành's relationship with Phan Chu Trinh, according to Marr, is explained by their mutual work as photograph retouch artists and a mutual friend, Marcel But, who had helped obtain Phan Chu Trinh's release from Côn Lôn prison. Huyen, states that Thành collaborated with "Nguyen The Truyen, a Vietnamese chemical engineer," but makes no mention of Phan Chu Trinh or Phan Văn Trường. Duiker's argument relies on the fact that the document was signed: "Nguyen Ai Quoc [though clarifies later it was spelt as "Quac"], of 56 Rue Monsiuer-le-Prince, in the name of the Association of Annamite Patriots." However, Tai suggests that the document "bore the collective signature 'Nguyen Ai Quoc'" and Thành adopted this name afterwards—there does not seem to be any evidence that Thành had used it even as a penname before this point. Ái Quốc later claimed to be the author, but admitted that Phan Văn Trường helped him with his French. However, Duiker states that Thành's radicalism predated the petition. If it did and he was its author, then why is his radicalism not reflected in the document?

¹⁰ Hoai Thanh and Thanh Tinh, "His Native Village and His Childhood," in *Days with Ho Chi Minh*, edited by Hoi Thanh and Thanh Tinh (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1962): 13-22, 29; Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, 25, 36-37, 44, 585 notes 17, 19; and Jean Sainteny, *Ho Chi Minh and His Vietnam: A Personal Memoir*, translated by Herma Briffault (Chicago: Cowles Book Company, Inc., 1972), 12-17. Phan Bội Châu, *Overtured Chariot: The Autobiography of Phan-Bội-Châu*, translated by Vinh Sinh and Nicholas Wickenden (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press Books, 1999), 54. Phan Bội Châu reminisced in his

A couple of years later, Thành obtained a position as a mess-boy on the *Admiral Latouche-Tréville* of the *Chargeurs Reunis* shipping company. His travels took him to France, French colonies in Africa, India, Saudi Arabia, Great Britain (where he studied English), Brazil, Argentina, and even the United States (New York and Boston).¹¹ Some who suffered the oppression of European and American hegemony in eastern Asia saw the possibility of traveling to those places to learn from the enemy in order that they may one day become strong enough to defeat them. The Japanese, for example, had sent several missions to learn from the Americans, English, French and Germans prior to their military buildup which enabled them to defeat the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War. Knowing what we do about his later life, there is a tendency to project our knowledge of who Thành became into every action of his early life. There is simply not enough evidence, however, to believe that he set out with a plan.

Thành, according to William Duiker, began writing articles for leftist Parisian journals under his pseudonym Nguyễn Ái Quốc immediately after the petition was submitted to the peace conference in 1919. His first two articles were similarly moderate in tone to the petition, but his regular involvement in leftist circles had increasingly radicalized him, and Ái Quốc began to argue with Phan Chu Trinh by December for more radical change. He regularly attended meetings of the French Socialist Party during 1920,

autobiography about reciting a Chinese poem to Nguyễn Ái Quốc when the latter was a boy of ten years. Duiker has attempted to corroborate what Vietnamese scholars have written about Hồ's early life. He found, for example, that "a French police report dated February 23, 1920, reported that Thanh and his brother showed an attitude of 'clear resistance' to authority, prompting school officials to discipline them severely." It is difficult to say how reliable any of these documents are written, however, in the politically charged atmosphere surrounding Hồ. Duiker, 582 note 2. Scholars have uncovered in excess of 75 pseudonyms believed to have been used by Hồ Chí Minh.

¹¹ William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, 48-51.

read Marx's *Das Kapital* and other works, but was most transformed by Lenin's criticism of colonialism. During the Socialist party's national congress at Tours in December where the Communist Party was formed, Ái Quốc delivered a twelve-minute speech criticizing French colonialism. While working retouching photos he helped establish *L'Union Intercoloniale*, which included Arabs, African and Asian subjects of French colonialism, and began publishing and writing for the French-language *Le Paria* (*The Pariah*) in April 1922. He did piecework to earn a living during the morning, and devoted his afternoons to reading in libraries, writing various articles or other activities for *Le Paria*.¹²

A French neighbor from the poor worker's quarters of Compoint Impasse recalled how around this time he and Ái Quốc would go each Monday evening to a meeting of the Young Communists where "Nguyen spoke at every meeting, and was skilful [sic] at bringing back any topic to an accusation against colonialism."¹³ He consistently focused his attack on colonialism in his writings as well, though depending on his audience, he would connect his criticism to a Leninist critique of capitalism as in this excerpt from a May 1922 article Ái Quốc wrote for *l'Humanité*:

The French workers look upon the native as an inferior and negligible human being, incapable of understanding and still less of taking action. The natives regard all the French as wicked exploiters. Imperialism and capitalism do not fail to take advantage of

¹² Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*. 63-69, 72-73, and 79; Bui Lam, "Meeting Ho Chi Minh in Paris," and Jean Fort, "Three Bottles of Champagne," *Days with Ho Chi Minh*, edited by Hoi Thanh and Thanh Tinh (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1962): 50-51, 58; and Sacks, 39. A short portion of his speech at Tours appears in Ho Chi Minh. *Selected Works*, volume II (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), 11-13. Duiker quotes from Nguyễn Ái Quốc's writing in which he explains: "We sold the newspaper to Vietnamese workers who could not read French; however, they liked to buy the paper because they knew it was anti-West and, after they purchased it, they would have French workers read it to them."

¹³ Fort, "Three Bottles of Champagne": 58-59.

this mutual suspicion and this artificial racial hierarchy to frustrate propaganda and divide forces which ought to unite.¹⁴

His writings soon captured the attention of the government. The French police placed him under constant surveillance, and on June 22 he was invited by Minister of Colonies Albert Sarraut for a superficially hospitable interview.¹⁵



Nguyễn Ái Quốc at the first congress of the French Socialist Party, December 1920.¹⁶

A senior Comintern official from the USSR, Dmitri Zajarovich Manuilsky heard Ái Quốc deliver a speech on the colonial question at a Party congress in Paris and enlisted the Vietnamese national to come to prepare a report for presentation at the Fifth Comintern Congress in Moscow. On June 13, 1923 Ái Quốc secretly stole out the rear door of a movie house, so the policemen who followed his every move would not follow him. After arriving at the Gare du Nord, he caught a train for Berlin. Later, he took a

¹⁴ Ho Chi Minh. *Selected Works*, I, 13-14.

¹⁵ Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, 83.

passenger liner to Petrograd, where he arrived by the end of the month under the assumed name Chen Vang. In December he enrolled in a seven-month “short course” program at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow. During his stay in Moscow, Ái Quốc met Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin, Chiang Kai-shek, who at the time was Sun Yat-sen’s 孫逸仙 (*pinyin*: Sun Yixian) chief military advisor, and renewed his acquaintance with Zhou Enlai 周恩来, whom he had first met in Paris. He never had the opportunity to meet Lenin who died of a stroke in January 1924. His stature grew in the international communist community when he delivered two speeches at the 5th Comintern Congress in June and July as Nguyễn Ái Quốc.¹⁷

He secretly left Moscow for China just as he had earlier from Paris. Moving with stealth and constantly changing his name as he went to avoid arrest, he continued publishing anti-colonial messages under the name Nguyễn Ái Quốc to increase his prestige amongst a relatively small, but dispersed group of literate Vietnamese.¹⁸ He arrived in Guangzhou in November under another assumed identity, this time as a Chinese. Ái Quốc initially moved in with Mikhail Markovich Borodin, who served as Soviet advisor to the Sun Yat-sen Government during the period of collaboration between the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Nominally an interpreter, he also worked as a correspondent for a Soviet news agency and representative of the Peasant International. Within a few months, Ái Quốc began work to transform the Vietnamese nationalist organization, Tâm Tâm Xã (Society of Like Hearts), into his own

¹⁶ Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, ninth unnumbered page after 330.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 85-86, 92-94, 99-100.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 104.

Hội Việt Nam Cách Mệnh Thanh Niên (Vietnam Revolutionary Youth League), espousing both nationalist and communist platforms. By June 1925 the Revolutionary Youth League began publishing a journal *Thanh Niên (Youth)* and two less important periodicals to broaden the reach of their program. The Revolutionary Youth League got off to a slow start, but recruits swelled during the two years following Phan Chu Trinh's death on March 23, 1926, which sparked Vietnamese labor protests aimed at French owners and extensive student activity. In 1927, Chiang Kai-shek attempted to wipe out the threat to his power by violently purging Chinese Communists, first in Shanghai then in Guangzhou. Ái Quốc was forewarned of this purge by a local police contact and went into hiding, but other members of his nascent organization were not as fortunate.¹⁹

Ái Quốc's organizational efforts had begun in southern China, but following in Phan Bội Châu footsteps, he established another organizational base in northeastern Siam where there were an estimated 20,000 Việt kiều (generic term for Vietnamese living abroad). The Việt kiều and their children living in Siam had either fled Đại Nam during the French conquest or were living in Siam as the result of various factors related to border changes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He had sent two former Việt kiều members of the Tâm Tâm Xã back to Siam in July 1925 to establish

¹⁹ Ibid, 104, 113-22, 127, 131-32, 144, and 291; Tai, 64-65, 155-57, and 175-76; and Ranbir Vohra, *China's Path to Modernization*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992), 122-30. The League was actually preceded by the secret organization known as Thanh Niên Cộng Sản Đảng (Communist Youth) which was known publicly as Việt Nam Cách Mệnh Thanh Niên (Vietnam Revolutionary League) or Hội Việt Nam Cách Mệnh Thanh Niên (Vietnam Revolutionary Youth League). Tai and Duiker dispute allegations that Ái Quốc was responsible for the arrest of Phan Bội Châu, whom he had met through the Tâm Tâm Xã. Phan Bội Châu believed his secretary, Nguyễn Thường Huyền, was responsible. Cường Để thought that Lâm Đức Thụ, an agent for the *sûreté* who had infiltrated the Tâm Tâm Xã, was culpable. Those who blame Ái Quốc assert that he took advantage of an opportunity to rid himself of a popular, non-communist adversary for the nationalist movement, and may have gained something from the French in the process. Duiker does not believe that he could have had an advantage in aiding the French in Châu's arrest, but admits the French archives have yet to present a conclusive answer to this dispute.

links amongst the Vietnamese community there, and the Comintern eventually agreed to send Ái Quốc there in mid-1928.²⁰

After the suppression of Communists in China, the Revolutionary Youth League was reestablished in the neighboring British Colony of Hong Kong. While Ái Quốc was in Siam, the French Indochina government sentenced him to death in absentia, but later commuted his sentence to hard labor for life, and the Revolutionary Youth League split into two antagonistic parties, the more Soviet doctrinaire Đông Dương Cộng Sản Đảng (Indochina Communist Party) and the moderate An Nam Cộng Sản Đảng (Annam Communist Party). Both parties applied for admission to the Comintern, but were rejected. Only then did Ái Quốc travel to Hong Kong to convene a conference, in a position of authority as a Comintern official, to resolve the division between the two factions. He decided to dissolve both parties in favor of a new one, the Việt Nam Cộng Sản Đảng (Vietnam Communist Party). However, the Comintern forced the party to change its name a short while later to Đông Dương Cộng Sản Đảng (Indochina Communist Party or ICP) so it could include Cambodians and Laotians.²¹

Just as this one crisis was resolved, a new one arose. In early April 1931 all of the ICP Central Committee's Standing Bureau was arrested during a meeting with the Regional Committee of Cochinchina as part of the suppression campaign unleashed after the Nghệ-Tĩnh uprising (see Chapter 2). Although the General Secretary, Trần Phú, escaped the raid, he, too, was arrested on the 18th, and died a short while later in the

²⁰ Christopher E. Goscha, *Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of the Vietnamese* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999), 21-23, 49. A Việt kiều, Phan Hồng Thái, was a member of the Tâm Tâm Xã who died while trying to assassinate French Indochina Governor General Martial Henri Merlin in 1924.

²¹ Tai, 31, 231-32; Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, 150, 153, 157-59, 164, 187.

hospital, purportedly from wounds suffered under torture by the *sûreté*. Ái Quốc escaped the suppression campaign which devastated the ICP leadership in Sài Gòn, but encountered his own problems in Hong Kong. The British colonial police found a letter from T.V. Wong, one of the pseudonyms he used, in the possession of a Comintern agent they had earlier arrested. They then raided Ái Quốc's Kowloon apartment in the middle of the night in early June 1931 and arrested him. He hired a Hong Kong solicitor, Frank Loseby, who waged a battle with the French Government that involved the Hong Kong court and governor, the British Foreign Office, the Colonial Office in London, and the Privy Council. Loseby and his wife spread a rumor that Nguyễn Ái Quốc had died of tuberculosis, and *The Daily Worker*, published in London, printed his obituary in August, as did *l'Humanité* and the Soviet Press. He was finally set free on December 28, 1932 and ordered to leave Hong Kong within twenty-one days. Following a circuitous route, he arrived in Moscow in the spring of 1934.²²

There is evidence that Nguyễn Ái Quốc was tried during the Stalin's purges of the 1930s, but the details held in Russian archives have still not been released to the public. This certainly explains the length of his stay in Moscow, over four years. He returned to China in 1938 and spent two weeks in the Communist stronghold at Yanan 延安 (Yan'an). From Yanan, Ái Quốc made his way to the Guilin 桂林, (Kweilin) where he joined the Communist Eighth Route Army serving as a public health cadre and journalist. The Eighth Route Army was led by Ye Jianying 叶检英 (Yeh Chien-ying), a high ranking CCP official trained in the Soviet Union and close associate of Zhou Enlai.

²² Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, 196-97, 199-211; Sainteny, 26-27.

Unfortunately we only have fragmentary pieces of evidence of Ái Quốc's relationship with such Chinese Communist leaders.²³

THE INDOCHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY & THE VIỆT MINH FRONT

During the years that Ái Quốc spent away from Indochina, future leaders of the ICP spent much of their time in prison. The *garde indigène* were often sympathetic to and colluded with the Vietnamese communist prisoners over their French administrators. Colonial French efforts to police prisoners' political activities were hindered somewhat by overcrowded prisons. The commingling of political and criminal prisoners in close confinement provided a fertile breeding ground for communist doctrine, which was propagated in prison newspapers, "typically handwritten at night on tiny sheets of tissue or cigarette paper," according to Peter Zinoman. "In some cases, inmates produced 'oral newspapers'...in which articles, essays, and editorials were committed to memory rather than paper and broadcast throughout the prison by word of mouth." Songs and theatrical productions, the value of which cannot be underestimated in a largely illiterate society, were also a device for political indoctrination. Younger inmates were particularly susceptible to communist propaganda.²⁴

The networks that survived the French colonial prisons were reconstituted after the general amnesty issued by the newly elected Front Populaire in 1936. Amongst the

²³ Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, 231. As a close associate of Zhou Enlai, Ye would later play a prominent role in the People's Republic of China as a leading figure in the fall of the "Gang of Four" and a member of the Politburo Standing Bureau from 1973-1985. "An Outline of a Plan for Indo-China," DM, [date not given], M1642, Reel 57, NARA. An undated OSS document probably from around late 1943 to early 1944 stated: "there are ways and means to approach Chao-En-Lao [Zhou Enlai] secretly."

²⁴ Peter Zinoman, *The Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 111, 209-10, 223, 227, and 229. Segregation based on crimes seems to have varied at different times and places (see Zinoman, 111, 199 and 209).

communist leaders released that year were Trường Chinh, who had been arrested in late 1930 in Hà Nội and eventually sent to Sơn La where prisoners labored to build roads through the jungle, Phạm Văn Đồng (arrested in 1929), Hoàng Quốc Việt (arrested in 1930), and Trần Văn Giàu (arrested 1935) who were all incarcerated on the island prison at Poulo Condore (Côn Sơn). Trần Huy Liệu also served at Poulo Condore, amongst other places, but was released in 1934.²⁵

Trường Chinh joined the Thanh Niên in 1928 and the ICP in 1930. He earned a living as a private teacher. He and Hoàng Quốc Việt were later members of the Standing Bureau of the ICP.²⁶ Phạm Văn Đồng would become one of Nguyễn Ái Quốc's closest associates. Trần Văn Giàu would become a pivotal communist leader in Cochinchina. Trần Huy Liệu was a journalist who is credited with having written Việt Nam's first prison diary, and later became the Minister of Propaganda. In June 1927, he was arrested for "expressing anti-French views" in one of the Sài Gòn papers he wrote for and jailed for six months at Maison Centrale (or *khám lớn*, "the big jail"). After his release, he joined the VNQDĐ (Vietnam Nationalist Party) and was arrested again in 1929. This time he was sent to the island prison Poulo Condore where he became a communist. In 1937, he started a newspaper, *Le Travail*, with the help of several former political prisoners and ICP adherents such as Võ Nguyên Giáp, Trường Chinh, and Hoàng Quốc

²⁵ Ibid, 202, 289; R.B. Smith, "The Work of the Provisional Government of Vietnam, August-December 1945," *Modern Asian Studies* 12, 4 (1978): 586-87; Huỳnh Kim Khánh, *Vietnamese Communism, 1925-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 258; Trường Chinh, *Primer for Revolt; the Communist Take-over in Viet-Nam*, xii; and SSU SN: ZM 2281, 7 November 1945, Folder 5, Box 217, Entry 210, RG 226, NARA. Phạm Văn Đồng and Trần Huy Liệu was one of several arrested and imprisoned for murders related to an internal purge of the Thanh Niên known as the Rue Barbier Murders.

²⁶ Trường Chinh, *Primer for Revolt*, xi-xii. From the introduction by Bernard Fall.

Việt. Liêu was arrested again in 1939, deported to Son La and after his release ran an ICP paper, *Cứu Quốc* (*National Salvation*).²⁷

According to a classmate, Võ Nguyên Giáp, another leading Vietnamese communist, was first motivated to do something for the nationalist cause after hearing a speech given at the elite school in Hue by Phan Boi Chau after the French released him from house arrest. He was dismissed from school in 1927 for participating in the wave of demonstrations following Phan Chu Trinh's death. After he returned to his home village, he read a speech by Nguyễn Ái Quốc in a pamphlet on communism given to him by a classmate. He heard more stories about this nationalist after returning to school in Huế. In 1930 he was arrested for leading a demonstration and sentenced to a three years' imprisonment at Lao Bảo Penitentiary near the Laotian border. Released after 13 months due to a general sentence reduction, he married a fellow inmate, Nguyễn Thị Quang Thái.²⁸

The ICP experienced had suffered several additional setbacks from 1939 and 1940. After France declared war on Nazi Germany in September 1939 following the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact and the invasion of Poland, Governor Georges Catroux took advantage of the mood in the *métropole* to ban the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP)

²⁷ Zinoman, 199, 248-49; SSU SN: ZM 2281, 7 November 1945, Folder 5, Box 217, Entry 210, RG 226, NARA; and Marr, David G. Marr, *Vietnam 1945: the Quest for Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 211.

²⁸ Cecil B. Currey, *Victory at Any Cost: The Genius of Viet Nam's Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap* (Washington: Brassey's Inc., 1997), 14, 25; General Vo Nguyen Giap, "Ho Chi Minh, Father of the Viet Nam Revolutionary Army," *Days with Ho Chi Minh* edited by Hoi Thanh and Thanh Tinh (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1962), 185; *The Military Art of People's War: Selected Writings of General Vo Nguyen Giap*, edited by Russell Stetler (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 141; and Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, 240. Giáp's biographical information in Cecil Currey's work is based on a lengthy interview followed up by a questionnaire. Biographical information appearing in *The Military Art of People's War* is based on an introductory essay written by Russell Stetler. Where the two works conflict, Currey's is relied on here as the more reliable of the two.

and various Trotskyist groups, and arrested many of the ICP's top leaders and a few thousand of their followers in the first major crackdown since the beginning of the decade.²⁹ Secretary General of the ICP Nguyễn Văn Cừ was arrested in early 1940.³⁰

Attempting to take advantage of Japanese pressures on the colonial French administration, the ICP's Regional Committee in Cochinchina began preparing for an insurrection in March 1940. They sent one of their members to seek approval from the Central Committee in Hà Nội. The proposal was discussed at the Seventh Plenum in November, but the Central Committee rejected it, instructing the Cochinchina Regional Committee to postpone the insurrection until it could be coordinated with a general uprising involving all three portions of Việt Nam. The French learned of plans for the insurrection a few days before its planned launch and took steps to defend against it. Fearing that some Vietnamese *tirailleurs* units were planning to take part, the French authorities confined them to their barracks or sent them out of Sài Gòn altogether. The governor of Cochinchina closed schools, imposed a curfew, sent out guards to protect vital areas, and initiated a search for suspects. An abortive insurrection took place on the 22nd because its leaders in several provinces such as Gia Định, Chợ Lớn, Tân An, Mỹ Tho, Cần Thơ, Vĩnh Long, Sóc Trăng, and Bạc Liêu did not receive the message in time. In some places large groups of peasants were led by ICP agents, in others they appeared to act on their own, often armed with machetes and spears to attack symbols of French

²⁹ Huỳnh, 234-35, 250.

³⁰ Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, 239.

administration, from police posts to administrative bureaus. They also destroyed communications facilities, roads and bridges.³¹

The French administration responded decisively and brutally, calling in Foreign Legionnaires, a company of North Vietnamese or Cambodian *tirailleurs*, two armored batteries, a mechanized unit, marines, and as many as twenty planes that bombed and burned villages. Though casualty figures were not recorded, they were likely to have reached into the thousands. In four provinces alone, 5,648 were arrested and as a result of the overcrowded prisons, detainees held together by iron wires pierced through their hands and heels were loaded onto ships dry-docked on the Sài Gòn River. The Nam Kỳ (Cochinchina) Insurrection, as it has come to be called, decimated the ICP's strongest area of organization and forever weakened the Comintern's influence over it.³²

The Cao Đài, meanwhile, suffered attacks unleashed by Governor General Catroux in August 1940, and renewed assaults by the new Governor General Decoux in mid-1941. In the long run, they were more fortunate than the ICP. The Japanese, who

³¹ Trường Chinh, *History of the August Revolution* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1972), 21-22; Huỳnh, 252-53; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 161.

³² Huỳnh, 254, 256; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 159, 162; and Sachiko Murakami, "Japan's Thrust into French Indochina, 1940-1945," (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1981), 432-33. In the official *History of the August Revolution* (an English translation of *Cách Mạng Tháng Tám 1945*), Trường Chinh lumps the Nam Kỳ (Cochinchina) insurrection, a suppressed uprising of 1,000 Vietnamese and minority nationalities led by two ICP members at Bắc Sơn, and a small mutiny in Nghệ An (January 13, 1941) as notable resistance efforts affecting the Việt Minh's later activities. However, David Marr states that the available evidence fails to support official Vietnamese government historiography that the Bắc Sơn "uprising" was of much significance, and the mutiny at Nghệ An was even smaller. In this particular work, Trường Chinh exaggerates the ICP/Việt Minh prowess by listing numerous armed activities while remaining silent about the numbers of participants, however, other sources make clear that very few people were typically involved in such incidents.

had begun settling in Cochinchina during the latter suppression campaign, helped the Cao Đài rebuild their organization.³³

The ICP reacted to the spate of suppression campaigns that coincided with the gradual Japanese military occupation of Indochina by emphasizing development of the rural movement. In this way they reacted similarly to the Chinese Communists following their similar experience during 1927 in Shanghai, Guangzhou and other cities where they had openly collaborated with the Guomindang. The only significant difference was that Vietnamese also fled to neighboring countries like Thailand and China, which were beyond the reach of the French.³⁴ In May 1940, Phạm Văn Đồng and Võ Nguyên Giáp fled to Kunming. Giáp's sister-in-law, Nguyễn Thị Minh Khai, who was a member of the ICP's Central Committee, however, was arrested in July, tortured, and shot on April 25, 1941. Minh Kai deserves more than a brief mention, particularly because the role of women in the nationalist movement is little studied.³⁵ She had called for a transformation of the social system aimed at equality for women alongside men, but in a communist context:

As long as society remains in the stage of capitalist oppression, exploitation and injustice, as long as contradictions between classes still exist, women will never be completely emancipated. To create a movement to promote equality between men and women, to escape from the tyranny of the family, we support that principle, but we want to advocate a higher principle, that is, we want equality among all of mankind. Therefore, in order to completely solve the question of women, we cannot stand on one side and consider only the question of inequality between men and women. On the contrary, the fundamental issue is the common dimension, the class dimension which we must solve together.³⁶

³³ Murakami, 432-33.

³⁴ Huỳnh, 250.

³⁵ Currey, 43-44; General Vo Nguyen Giap, "Ho Chi Minh, Father of the Viet nam Revolutionary Army," 183.

³⁶ Quoted in Tai, 244-45. Hue-Tam Ho Tai has done more than most to add Vietnamese women's voices to the historical record of this era.

Moments before her own arrest in May 1941, Quang Thái, Giáp's wife gave their daughter to her parents. Quang Thái was subsequently tortured during her imprisonment and either committed suicide or was beaten to death by her French jailers.³⁷

In a perceptible change, the ICP drew away from the Soviet Union towards the Communist Chinese after Ái Quốc's return from Moscow in 1938. Whether or not this was related to his experience during the era of purge trials there is not known. This shift has yet to be fully explored by scholars using primary Chinese, Russian, and Vietnamese sources, but Huỳnh Kim Khánh comes closest to recognizing this fundamental change, where others seem nearly oblivious to the most obvious Chinese influences.³⁸

After failing to meet with an agent they sent to see him at Longzhou in January 1940, Ái Quốc went to Kunming near where the ICP maintained a base. In February, he met an old acquaintance and member of the Central Committee, Phùng Chí Kiên, and ICP members, Hoàng Văn Hoan and Vu Anh. He spent the next few months writing propaganda and giving advice for the party's organ published in Kunming, *D.T.* (Dảng Ta

³⁷ Currey, 43-44.

³⁸ Huỳnh, 272, 275-76, and 279; William J. Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), 74-75; David G. Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 168; Stein Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945: Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh, and De Gaulle in a World at War* (London: Sage Publications, 1991), 335; and Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1968), 159-60. David Marr proposes that Nguyễn Ái Quốc decided to ignore the Comintern by May 1941 because he was convinced the Nazis were about to invade the Soviet Union (the invasion occurred on June 22, 1941). William Duiker argues that Việt Minh "strategy" was "essentially an elaboration of ideas developed by Ho Chi Minh over several years and fleshed out with the practical experiences of the Chinese revolution." Stein Tønnesson offers this excerpt penned by Ái Quốc for a 1928 Comintern publication: "One of the reasons for the defeat of the Canton insurrection is that no genuinely revolutionary peasant movement existed in the surrounding regions when the proletariat rose inside the city." Mao's tactics were being developed as early as mid-1925 amongst Hunanese peasants and he had written three pamphlets enunciating these ideas at this time, long before Hồ Chí Minh's earliest known articulation of "military work among the peasants" in 1927, and he was in a position to have learned of these tactics through connections with the CCP such as Zhou Enlai and others in Guangdong.

or Our Party), and learning about the ICP's organization along the China portion of the Haiphong-Kunming Railway. In May, he met Phạm Văn Đồng and Võ Nguyên Giáp. Ái Quốc had apparently learned that the CCP had developed a working relationship with the highland nationality, the Nùng. Around June, he set out with several of his new associates and forty Indochinese recruits, including some from another highland group, the Tay, to establish a guerilla training camp at the border town of Jingxi in southern Guangxi, but soon changed his mind. After the French signed an armistice with the Germans, Ái Quốc flew to Chongqing and met with Zhou Enlai in July. In December, he sent Vũ Anh from Jingxi into Tonkin to find a "secret place easily protected by the population and provided with a retreat." Anh chose a cave at Pác Bó, approximately forty miles from Jingxi, in an area thinly populated by the Nùng. Ái Quốc moved to this new base in January 1941, but moved his abode from time to time out of concern for his security.³⁹

The French, in a pattern typical of the Western European colonial powers' conquest and control of Southeast Asian territories, had exploited traditional tensions between minority highland nationalities (often referred to by the derogatory terms: Moï, Mán, or Thô) and the lowland majority Kinh nationality in what we now call Việt Nam. Huỳnh Kim Khánh argues that the Communist Vietnamese were the first nationalist group to call for unity of action with the highland groups in 1932 and again in 1935 with the approval of the Comintern. Two Tays, Hoàng Văn Thụ and Hoàng Đình Ròng,

³⁹ Vu Anh, 163-66; General Vo Nguyen Giap, "Ho Chi Minh, Father of the Viet Nam Revolutionary Army," 183; *The Military Art of People's War: Selected Writings of General Vo Nguyen Giap*, edited by Russell Stetler (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 52; Huỳnh, 283; and Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, 214, 220, and 242. Phùng Chí Kiên had studied at Communist University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow during the 1930s and either knew Ái Quốc from this time or before.

became politically active while attending school in Hà Nội, later joined the ICP, and recruited from among other minorities nationalities in their native areas of Cao Bằng and Lạng Sơn. However, Ái Quốc was the first to establish a base in the caves at Pác Bó as concealment against the French and Japanese, either coincidentally or not, after he had visited the Communist Chinese base at Yanan where the CCP generally lived, as the local residents did, in manmade caves.⁴⁰

After firmly establishing this base at Pác Bó, Ái Quốc convened the 8th Plenum of the ICP Central Committee from May 10 to 19, 1941. He set the orientation of the communist movement for the duration of the war by establishing the Việt Nam Độc Lập Đồng Minh (Hội) (Việt Minh front or Vietnam Independence Alliance), through which the ICP would work for Vietnamese independence by broadening the base of the independence movement while temporarily placing the social revolution on hold. Ái Quốc was to continue to oversee the *chiến khu* (revolutionary base) at Pác Bó (referred to as the Cao-Bắc-Lạng base to represent the provinces it was supposed to cover) along with Phạm Văn Đồng, Võ Nguyên Giáp, Hoàng Văn Hoan, and Vu Anh. Phùng Chí Kiên was sent to establish a second base established at Bắc Sơn-Vũ Nhai (overlapping the border of Lạng Sơn and Thái Nguyên), with Chu Văn Tấn (a Nùng) and Lương Văn Chi.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Trường Chinh, *Primer for Revolt*, viii-x. Hoàng Đình Ròng joined the Revolutionary Youth League in 1927. Hoàng Văn Thụ joined the ICP in 1930 and later became a member of the Central Committee. In the introduction he wrote for the English translation of two of Trường Chinh's works, Bernard Fall credits Chinh as offering the basis for Võ Nguyên Giáp's successful guerilla tactics "rather than Mao."

⁴¹ Vu Anh, 171; General Vo Nguyen Giap, "Ho Chi Minh, Father of the Viet nam Revolutionary Army," 193; Chinh, *History of the August Revolution*, 24-30, 33. The attendees to the 8th Plenum included Nguyễn Ái Quốc, Phùng Chí Kiên, Hoàng Văn Hoan, Vu Anh, Trường Chinh, Hoàng Quốc Việt, and Hoàng Văn Thụ, and others. Chinh later made the odd statement in official history of this period for the communist

As the members of the Standing Bureau were returning to their base in the Red Delta under a detachment from the Bắc Sơn-Vũ Nhai base, the French attacked. As the French began to close in at Vũ Nhai, the Việt Minh split, with the larger contingent, led by Phùng Chí Kiên and Lương Văn Chi, heading towards the Chinese border, while a smaller group under Chu Văn Tấn remained behind. Kiên was killed as his group moved through Bắc Cạn province. Chi was wounded and captured. He later died in prison. Members of the Standing Bureau eventually made it back to their base near Hà Nội. Chu Văn Tấn and others remained behind, but the base was shattered by repeated attacks from the French.⁴²

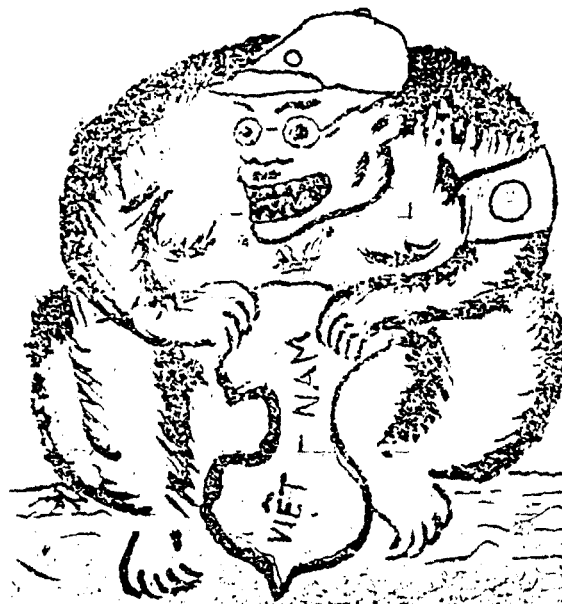
Ái Quốc's activities from his first arrival at Pác Bó had reflected his design to propagandize, agitate, and train others to extend this work, as well as to prepare to fight using guerilla tactics when the time for widespread insurrection was appropriate. He established a newspaper, *Việt Lập* (abbreviated form of *Vietnam Doc Lap*, or *Independent Vietnam*), wrote propaganda pamphlets in verse, a provincial atlas, and a Vietnamese history book in verse. The language used in the newspaper was simple, with emphasis on ease of understanding. Articles were short, and cartoons were often included. Ái Quốc organized mobile training groups that would move from village to village training as few as two or three persons at a time over a few days. His goal was was establish self-

movement, "The Plenum paid particular attention to the building of the Party...It found that the Party lacked cadres, had few proletarian elements, that the revolutionary movement had an unequal development; and that the peasant and rural movement was stronger than the worker and urban movement...to 'consider agitation work among the workers a foremost task in mass organization'...it had to continue developing the revolutionary movement in the cities, industrial regions, factories, mining areas and plantations." This suggests where he differed from Ái Quốc, and may be part of the reason he was given the Secretary General seat. However, prior to the coup, the ICP was never successful in sustaining a strong urban movement due to the effectiveness of the colonial French suppression efforts.

⁴² Chinh, *History of the August Revolution*, 24-35.

defense units, and expand them eventually into an army. Ái Quốc also formed mobile units which would conduct progapanda work, assassinate “reactionaries,” and ambush French and Japanese patrols. Because their base was in an area populated by highland groups who typically did not speak Vietnamese, the teachers had to rely on rudimentary explanations. This approach proved effective for training the largely illiterate Vietnamese masses. Giáp recalled having to learn from his minority students some simple phrases in their languages (Thô, Mán Tiền, Mán Tráng) to better communicate with them.⁴³

After establishing the direction for the Communist nationalist movement in Indochina at the Eight Plenum, Nguyễn Ái Quốc began working to gain support from abroad. In August 1942, he went to China to contact the Central Committee of the CCP. All his identification papers, including a military passport issued by Zhang Fakui 张发奎 (the military



Caricature, “Việt Nam in the grips of Japanese imperialism,” from *Việt Nam Độc Lập*, No. 110, 1 November 1941.⁴⁴

commander of the area where he crossed the border) in 1940, were outdated, and he was

⁴³ Chinh, *History of the August Revolution*, 23-24; Giáp, “Ho Chi Minh, Father of the Viet Nam Revolution,” 200, 202, 207, and 211; *The Military Art of People’s War*, 56-57,61; Vu Anh, 173, 176.

⁴⁴ Tønneson, *The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945*, 75. In remarking on the shape of Việt Nam, Tønneson argues that Hồ Chí Minh intended “to establish a Vietnamese state on the whole territory of French Indochina.” As was mentioned above, the name Indochina Communist Party was imposed on the Vietnamese Communists by the Comintern. While there is no doubt that nationalists within Indochina sometimes conceived of all three states: Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos as one independent state or federation free from French rule, there does not seem to be any evidence that there ever existed a sustained Vietnamese-inspired drive to subjugate the other two countries during this period.

arrested along with his traveling companion on suspicion of being a Japanese spy. After receiving a secret message from Hồ, the ICP launched a vigorous lobbying effort to gain his release. They sent a cable to Dr. Sun Yat-sen's son, Sun Ke 孫科 (Sun K'o) who was the President of the Executive Yuan. The ICP also sent appeals to foreign wire services in Chongqing such as UPI, Reuters, Agence France Presse, and Tass requesting them to intercede with the Guomindang on behalf of a prestigious, "leading member of the Viet Nam Branch of the International Anti-Aggression League." The conditions under which he was jailed were deplorable and took their toll on the exceedingly ascetic Ái Quốc, who at this time assumed the name Hồ Chí Minh (He who is "enlightened" or has "wisdom") and tried to cope with the physical deprivations by writing classical Chinese poetry.⁴⁵ He would later tell an American correspondent that during his ordeal his teeth began to fall out: "I looked at myself once and then tried never to look again. I was skin on bones, and covered with rotten sores. I guess I was pretty sick."⁴⁶ Zhang obtained permission from the General Secretariat to release Hồ on September 10, 1943 at Liuzhou, thirteen months after his initial arrest.⁴⁷

After the Japanese army began moving into Indochina in September 1940, Chiang Kai-shek instructed General Zhang Fakui, whose concern was Indochina, the only foreign territory bordering on the Fourth War Area. Zhang sent Trương Bội Công to Jingxi to enlist Vietnamese intellectuals, ethnic minority survivors of a minor insurrection in Bắc Sơn in September, and members of the Phuc Quoc for guerilla fighting and intelligence

⁴⁵ Vu Anh, "From Kunming to Pac Bo," 177-79; Chen, 55-56; Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, 263-64, 268.

⁴⁶ Harold Isaacs, *No Peace for Asia*, 164.

⁴⁷ Chen, 60, 65.

training in Liuzhou. Công was a senior staff officer in the Guomindang army at Nanning who had fled Indochina as the French launched their suppression of the VNQDĐ in 1930. Several Vietnamese nationalist émigré representatives convened at Liuzhou in June, August, and October, 1942 under the sponsorship of Zhang, leading to the formation of the leading to the formation of the Việt Nam Cách Mệnh Đồng Minh Hội (Đồng Minh Hội, or Vietnam Revolutionary League). Despite his efforts to unify the disparate Vietnamese nationalist groups, however, Zhang was frustrated with the new organization: “Factions against factions, criticism against criticism; some of them enjoyed merely empty talks without any action; and a few of them did not even possess any quality as a revolutionist.”⁴⁸

Zhang appears to have been influenced by the director of his Waishi Si 外事司 (Foreign Affairs Section), Chief General Xiao Wen 蕭文 (Hsiao Wen), whose concern was the only foreign territory bordering the Fourth War Area, Indochina. Chen depicts Xiao Wen as a “pro-Communist,” one of many “Communists and pro-Communists” who

⁴⁸ King C. Chen, *Vietnam and China, 1938-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 46, 61-63; Peter Worthing, *Occupation and Revolution: China and the Vietnamese August Revolution of 1945* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, China Research Monograph 54, 2001), 41; Sacks, 184; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 257-58; and Stein Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945*, 112 note 127. These Vietnamese nationalists included former followers of Phan Bội Châu: Hồ Ngọc Lâm and Nguyễn; and several members of the VNQDĐ, who like Trương Bội Công, were adherents of the original Nationalist Party. Hồ Ngọc Lâm, a graduate of a Chinese military academy near Beijing and a major in the Guomindang Army General Staff since 1927, had convened various nationalist exiles from Thailand, Guangzhou, and Kunming in Nanjing to form the first Đồng Minh Hội in 1935-1936. Ever since members of the VNQDĐ arrived in China, they had formed new groups, merged these groups with others, and split off from the consolidated groups in a seemingly endless cycle of activity that replaced effective resistance to French colonialism so their group affiliation may have changed by 1942. From the original VNQDĐ, Nghiêm Kế Tổ and Vũ Hồng Khanh were known to have attended, but other VNQDĐ such as Nguyễn Tường Tam and Nghiêm Kế Tổ were likely participants as well. Nghiêm Kế Tổ was arrested in Dongxing by Zhang Fakui's command either because he was working on building an intelligence network inside Indochina for Dai Li (Marr's argument based on a Vietnamese history of the VNQDĐ) or for the British (Chen's argument, based on a report originating from Zhang's command) while trying to establish an intelligence network in Indochina where he had planned to establish three radio posts. He was expelled to Chongqing in December 1942.

surrounded Zhang, but evidence seems to suggest that David Marr's characterization, relying on Vietnamese sources, that he was more of an opportunist than communist sympathizer is more accurate. After his release, Hồ lived "under the protection" of Xiao, which meant that his movements were confined. It is not clear why he was released, but it appears that it had something to do with an offer to broaden the participation of the *Đông Minh Hội* with Hồ's associates in the ICP. While he cooperated with Xiao in participating with the *Đông Minh Hội*, the ICP came to dominate the association at a cost to the prior strength of the VNQDĐ. Finally, by August 1944, Zhang granted Hồ permission to return to Indochina.⁴⁹ The *Đông Minh Hội* split up again a short while later, and the Japanese attacked Liuzhou in November, forcing Zhang to move his headquarters about 400 miles west to Baise 百色 (Poseh).⁵⁰ Vietnamese in China as well as Thailand were increasingly isolated from the rapidly changing events in Viet Nam after the Japanese coup.⁵¹

Before Hồ Chí Minh returned to Pác Bó around September 1944, Phạm Văn Đồng, Võ Nguyên Giáp, and Vu Anh had been considering staging an insurrection. Hồ was alarmed when he heard of this and advised against it: "We are still weak, the enemy is

⁴⁹ Chen 60, 65-79; Worthing, 44; and Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 254. Xiao was aware that Hồ was affiliated with the ICP before he was released, but, according to the evidence presented by Chen. He does not seem to have learned that Hồ was Nguyễn Ái Quốc until after he was granted freedom of movement, ostensibly to return to Indochina. To dispel Philippe Devillers' argument that Hồ agreed to send intelligence to China in exchange for his freedom in August 1944, Chen presents an "Outline of the Plan for the Activities of Entering Vietnam" submitted by Hồ. All Hồ appears to agree to in this document is work "with Chinese and other Allied troops...for the complete independence and freedom of Viet-Nam." This seems clear and simple enough, but Chen somehow interprets Hồ's juxtaposition of numbered points to place "China's interest above Vietnam's."

⁵⁰ Chen, 94.

⁵¹ Goscha, 127.

strong. But we must not let them annihilate us, must we?”⁵² Considering the Vietnamese Communists’ history, Hồ’s patience proved to be a providential blessing. The Việt Minh remained a relatively weak military force until the Japanese surrendered, but had acquired an unquantifiable, but large, number of weapons between March and August. Giáp claims the Cao-Bắc-Lạng base expanded to include neighboring Hà Giang and Tuyên Quang provinces, and the Bắc Sơn-Vũ Nhai base grew to include all of the Thái Nguyên by April 1945 leading Hồ Chí Minh to declare it a “liberated area,” and to designate all troops under the Việt Minh there as members of the “Liberation Army.” However, this is clearly an exaggeration of the Việt Minh’s prowess at this point.⁵³ While this area was liberated from the French after the Japanese coup, we shall see in the next chapter that the Việt Minh did not in fact liberate it until after the Japanese surrendered to the Allies.

JAPANESE COLLABORATIONISTS OR NATIONALISTS: BẢO ĐẠI AND THE TRẦN TRỌNG KIM GOVERNMENT

After the Japanese coup, General Tsuchihashi Yūichi effectively replaced Decoux as Governor General. Emperor Bảo Đại was permitted to administer Tonkin and Annam. However, Ambassador Yokoyama Masayuki 横山正行, in his role as supreme counselor, replaced simply a French official who oversaw the Emperor’s activities, and the Japanese directly administered the most important cities in his jurisdiction: Hà Nội, Hải Phòng, and Tourane (Đà Nẵng). Japanese officials also replaced the Frenchmen sitting as

⁵² *The Military Art of People’s War: Selected Writings of General Vo Nguyen Giap*, 66-67.

⁵³ Chinh *History of the August Revolution*, 47; Chinh, *President Hồ-Chí-Minh*, 26; *The Military Art of People’s War: Selected Writings of General Vo Nguyen Giap*, edited by Russell Stetler (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 73. In *History of the August Revolution*, Trường Chinh claims “a political corridor” existed as early as August 1943, “creating conditions of the birth of the future liberated zone,” but in *Hồ-Chí-Minh: Beloved Leader of the Vietnamese People*, he says the Liberated Zone came into being in the summer of 1945.

resident superior and supreme advisor to the emperor's delegate in Tonkin. Cochinchina was also to be administered entirely by the Japanese with a Japanese governor.⁵⁴

Beyond these measures, the Japanese were willing to give the Vietnamese token autonomy. They introduced policies long carried out in other countries of their control in Southeast Asia under the concept of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere where Japan was to act as a tutor to fledgling nationalities "freed" from Western European colonialism. Censorship laws were revised to permit expression of Vietnamese national pride, to criticize the French, and to honor pre-World War II nationalist heroes.⁵⁵ After accepting Yokoyama's proposal that he collaborate with the Japanese, Bảo Đại delivered the following proclamation on March 11:

In conformity with the general world conditions and the special circumstances relating to Greater East Asia, the Government of Annam, Indo China, makes effective this day the denunciation of the Treaty for the protectorate previously signed with the Government of France and she hereby declares the complete restoration of Annam's independence and sovereignty.

Annam will march forward on her own strength until she finally earns recognition as a qualified independent state such as that announced in the Greater East Asia proclamation.

Annam is part of the Greater East Asia and will therefore exert her every effort to help bring about the realization of the Co-prosperity Sphere. The Government of Annam, therefore, places sole trust upon the Imperial Government of Japan, and will sincerely and loyally cooperate with Japan by contributing all its available economic resources for the mutual purpose of achieving the common cause.⁵⁶

This announcement had, of course, been encouraged and revised by the Japanese command in Indochina. While he specified only Annam, by extension, people assumed

⁵⁴ Ralph Smith, "The Japanese Period in Indochina and the Coup of 9 March 1945," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 9, 2 (Sept. 1978): 285; Huỳnh, 294; and Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 130. David Marr states that the Japanese resident superior increasingly granted the highest Vietnamese official in Tonkin, the imperial delegate or the Khâm Sai, free rein to govern the territory exclusive of security issues.

⁵⁵ Stein Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945*, 374.

⁵⁶ Statement of Puppet Government, 11 March 1945, Folder YK5525, Box 385, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA.

that he was declaring independence for Tonkin as well which was nominally under his control as well. Did this mean Hà Nội, Hải Phòng, and Tourane had become independent as well? Not in the Japanese occupiers' minds. Although some Japanese officers in Indochina wanted to bring Cường Để, a descendant of Gia Long who, as Stein Tønnesson so evocatively puts it, "built his whole career on the hope of carrying out a 'Meiji Restoration' in Hue," General Tsuchihashi assured that the more compliant Bảo Đại position as emperor remained uncontested. He also interfered with Bảo Đại's advisers' efforts to give make Ngô Đình Diệm, a pro-Japanese, Catholic, nationalist politician and supporter of Cường Để head of a new Vietnamese government, apparently out of fear that he would be less manageable than others might be. Tsuchihashi made sure that two messages the Emperor sent to Diệm inviting him to form a government had been intercepted. In the meantime, the Japanese had brought Trần Trọng Kim to Sài Gòn. Kim was a respected scholar of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Vietnamese history, whom the Japanese had taken abroad as protection against the French. They had convinced Bảo Đại to offer the premiership of a new government to him by March 30. After some trepidation, Kim accepted, formed a government on April 17, and convened his first cabinet meeting on May 4. However, it was clear its mandate was much more limited than the colonial French administration had been. It continued to rely on French administrators for the Banque de l'Indochine, the colony's communications network, and coal production, and it was not permitted to have a defense portfolio or army.⁵⁷ So while

⁵⁷ Huỳnh, 294-96; Vu Ngu Chieu, "The Other Side of the 1945 Vietnamese Revolution: The Empire of Viet-Nam (March-August)," *Journal of Asian Studies* 45, 2 (February 1986): 301-02, 304-05; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 90, 116; Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945*, 82, 284-86, 288, and 291; and Tran My-Van, "Japan and Vietnam's Cao daists: a wartime relationship (1939-45)," *Journal of Southeast Asian*

the Vietnamese were given nominal independence, it was technically restricted to Annam, excluded the most important commercial cities, and neither the Emperor nor the premier were truly legitimate representatives of the Vietnamese people.

On March 24, de Gaulle's Government reacted to events in Indochina by proposing a more liberal administration, refusing to acknowledge they were no longer in a position to administer their former colony. Indochina was to "enjoy its proper freedom" within a "Union Française." Definitions of such concepts were purposefully vague. The French appeared to be offering the Vietnamese more representation than ever before, such as in an elected Assembly, but this was largely constrained by the vague prescription "elected according to the most appropriate electoral system for each of the Federal lands, and in which French interests will be represented." The Assembly was to be vested with the power to vote on taxes and the budget, but the appointed Conseil d'Etat (Consul of State), whose membership was to be comprised of "the Federation's most eminent personalities," was responsible for drafting legislation. Whatever power was vested in ministers and this upper house were still checked by the supreme authority of the Governor General. Promises of a free press and association seemed more promising. Finally, industrialization was to be promoted, largely because the French realized the failure in not having industrialized colonies upon which they could really in

Studies 27, 1 (March, 1996): 41. Chieu argues that the Trần Trọng Kim Government "has been either underrated or largely forgotten...However,...During its brief existence and under extremely difficult conditions, Kim's government partially initiated a revolution from above." This revolution consisted of "the stimulation of mass political participation, and...the Vietnamization of most social institutions." He simply confuses the easing of restrictions on the Vietnamese after the removal of French control with capabilities of a government that was completely beholden to the Japanese. The structure of the government, the manner in which it was formed, the continued reliance on French administrators, the reluctance to let Bảo Đại and Trần Trọng Kim's cabinet administer all of Việt Nam until right before it surrendered, and its ultimate resignation are clear enough evidence that it was merely a puppet government.

desperate times. It was clearly an appeal to the Allies to help them resume their control over the colony after the war was concluded, rather than the Vietnamese people themselves.⁵⁸

Unlike Bảo Đại and the Trần Trọng Kim cabinet, the Việt Minh chose not to collaborate with the Japanese, no doubt because they recognized that such a temporary expedient would work against their long term goal of independence since the Japanese were rapidly losing the war. In reality, however, they did not become a potent revolutionary force until after the Japanese coup. Despite organizational efforts in Thailand, southern China and Việt Bắc (the region of Việt Nam bordering China), French efforts to suppress them had simply been too effective for the ICP or Việt Minh to gain much organization or military mass. This is made strikingly apparent by the fact that at the date celebrated for Võ Nguyên Giáp's formation of Vietnamese People's Army, December 22, 1944, its budget consisted of 500 *piastres* for thirty-one male and three female fighters armed with "two rear-loading rifles, one submachine gun with 150 bullets, and six time bombs."⁵⁹ These figures understate the broad organizational strength of the Việt Minh, and other weapons dispersed amongst their followers. However, they highlight the importance of the Japanese coup as the most significant reason for their later successes.

In the absence of the French military, the Việt Minh became increasingly bold, and they netted tremendous favorable propaganda through their efforts to aid peasants

⁵⁸ Martin Shipway, *The Road to War: France and Vietnam, 1944-1947* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), 60-61.

⁵⁹ Huỳnh, 288.

survive a famine. While the Vietnamese had suffered repeatedly from famine during the colonial era, the greatest famine in recent history occurred in late 1944 to early 1945, resulting in an estimated 1.5-2 million Vietnamese deaths in Tonkin, with more than a half million of these in the province of Nam Định. The causes are numerous, ranging from the cumulative effect of colonial rule, decreasing acreage under cultivation while the population increased, heavy rains and floods that destroyed irrigation canals, Japanese military procurement of crops and conversion of land for industrial crops (such as cotton, jute, ramie, peanut, castor-oil, plant and sesame), and wartime destruction of transport facilities (destroyed bridges and railroads, and mined harbors) hindered relief efforts which relied on shipments from Cochinchina. People in the areas most affected ate the rice they usually set aside for the next planting, then subsisted on ground corn husks, roots, bark, leaves, and the like.⁶⁰

In recording his personal observations of the famine, Trần Văn Mai puts a face on the stark statistics. The “Vuocs,” were a family of six, but faced with the real concern for

⁶⁰ Huỳnh, 299-302; Nguyễn Thê Anh, “Japanese Food Policies and the 1945 Great Famine in Indochina,” in *Food Supplies and the Japanese Occupation in South-East Asia*, edited by Paul H. Kratoska (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1998), 211-18; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 97, 101; Patti to INDIV, 1 September, and INDIV to Parrot for Gallehger [sic] and Davis, 109, McBaine, 6 September 1945, Folder 96, Box 7, Entry 148, RG 226; SSU NR A-62911, 5 November 1945, Folder ZM 2200, Box 401, Entry 108 RG 226; SSU NR A-64385, 28 December 1945, Folder ZM 2500, Box 401; and SSU Intelligence Summary Number 54, 14-20 March 1946, Folder Intelligence Summary 1/46, Box 407, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA, Tonkin had also suffered from famine conditions from 1936 to 1939, 1943 and. In 1937 alone, 732,000 were reported to have died due to famine. Acreage converted to industrial crops from 1942 to 1944 increased by 125 percent. Meanwhile, the price of rice increased a mere 25 percent in 1943 after a small increase in 1941, while the cost-of-living index more than trebled between 1940 and 1943. Anh does not explain how why the population in this region expanded, while the staple food was declining. As long as the colonial system controlled the entirety of Indochina, or even Việt Nam however, the administration could compensate for regional variations, the relative peace would also have been a factor, and the cash economy lessened the reliance on rice as a necessary producer good since some residents of Tonkin could seek employment as migratory workers in Cochinchina’s plantations or the mines of Tonkin. There is also an assumption that for most of this period, the decline would have affected surplus rice for export rather than for subsistence, though this is not necessarily the case.

survival, the father reminded his wife that they were still young and should concentrate on saving themselves or the entire family would die:

Mrs. Vuoc was silent. From that day on, the couple ate alone and no longer divided the food up for the children.

The children being so hungry, would charge in on their parents' table whenever the latter sat down to eat and would grab at the food. Mr. Vuoc would beat them off and drive them out into the streets, allowing them to come back only at night to sleep.⁶¹

Ten days later, the first daughter died at the base of a guava tree in the Vuc's front yard before reaching the door one night. Then two other children died on the front step of the house "with their arms wrapped tightly around each other." The last daughter was never seen again.⁶²

Mai, and his friend "Tam" came across a the following scene while returning from a meeting of the Tổng Hội Cứu Tế (General Relief Association) in some unnamed town:

On the streets there were only the municipal oxcarts rolling along in the process of collecting corpses. On one cart we saw that there were from five to seven corpses piled in a disorderly way on top of each other. The mat cover exposed pairs of legs that looked like dried and withered branches and also heads with straggly, tangled hair, like dry grass.

I asked one of the coolies, "How many corpses do you bury in a single morning?"

"There's no telling. From fifteen to thirty. But for the last few days the average has been about thirty. A lot of people have come up from the countryside."

"Look," Tam cut the coolie short. "That corpse down below there is moving its legs still!"

⁶¹ Ngo Vinh Long, 249, 260. "Whole families died of starvation," recalled Mai, "and nobody knew about it." Someone passing by the house of a village chief noticed a rank smell, and upon entering the house found that the chief, his wife and their three-year old child "had been gnawed to pieces by rats, and their insides strewn all over the floor."

⁶² Ibid, 249-50.

“No,” replied the coolie, “it’s the car that is shaking. Anyway, even if there were somebody still moving, by the time we get to the graveyard, he will be completely dead. If we leave him behind, then for sure we’d just have to pick him up again the next morning. It’s all the same.”⁶³ Governor General Decoux had acknowledged that “food situation was bad” in Tonkin in discussions with the Japanese in mid-January 1945, but neither the French nor the Japanese reduced their obligatory sales or taxes paid in rice sufficiently to ameliorate the crisis prior to the coup. The Trần Trọng Kim Government, however, was able to get the Japanese to put an end to forced sales, ordered public and private stockpiles reduced by thirty to fifty percent, and promulgated new regulations to end price speculation. There were also relief efforts which resulted in the conveyance of rice to Tourane by junks and carts, “and thence to the North,” but it is not clear how successful these efforts were.⁶⁴

By mid-1945, the Việt Minh recognized the famine as the most important political issue confronting it. Relying mostly on internal documents, Huỳnh Kim Khánh and David Marr argue that the Việt Minh owe their rise to power to their efforts to aid the peasants in the North in making appeals to government administrators, and directly seizing government granaries owned by the government or big landlords for public consumption. Most rice seizures were small, one or two tons, and were distributed

⁶³ Ngo Vinh Long, *Before the Revolution* (Cambridge: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1973), 242, 257. The General Relief Association was a private venture organized in the North by a prominent scholar and raised nearly 800,000 *piastres* to purchase rice from government stocks. Emphasizing the fact that death was certain for many, Mai tells of seeing several men, women, and young girls near a market “who were still breathing lightly, rolled up in mats and lying on the side of the road. They were waiting for death and hoped that by lying there they would be seen by some kindhearted person who would bury them.”

⁶⁴ No. 1033, 22 January 1945, 5, *Intercepted Japanese Messages: Operation “Magic”* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., [1979?]); Nguyễn Thế Anh, “Japanese Food Policies and the 1945 Great Famine in Indochina,” 219; and Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 101.

locally, but Hồ Chí Minh's efforts to broaden the base of the independence movement by employing mobile training teams paid off. Citing a contemporary Việt Minh source, Marr states that 40,000 people in Hưng Yên, a province in the Red River Delta, "received a total of six hundred tons of liberated paddy between 2 May and 8 June." Huỳnh Kim Khánh argues that the Trần Trọng Kim Government "could do nothing practical to ameliorate the situation." Instead, it was the Thanh Niên Tiền Phong (Vanguard Youth), who collected in excess of 1 million *piastres* and 1,500 tons of rice to the North in June.⁶⁵

The Vanguard Youth was one of two organizations that he built on French naval captain Maurice Ducuroy's pre-coup, youth movement to build Vietnamese youth paramilitary groups after the coup. In June, Minister of Youth Phan Anh established the Tiền Tuyến Thanh Niên (Front Line Youth) program in Tonkin and Annam, and Phạm Ngọc Thạch Thanh Niên Tiền Phong (Jeunesse d'Avant Garde or The Movement of the Vanguard Youth) in separately administered Cochinchina. Phan Anh, a prominent lawyer who had studied in Paris, hoped to build the Front Line Youth into a force for national liberation. Youths underwent month-long paramilitary training at provincial centers that apparently had been set up under Ducuroy. On June 2, he established a national academy for officer training—using live firearms—at Huế, and additional schools were established in Huế, Hà Nội, and Sài Gòn by late July. Although his brother,

⁶⁵ Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 103, 207-10; and Huỳnh, 301-2, 314. Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945*, 348. Stein Tønnesson points out that ICP propaganda exploited the famine in propaganda blaming the Japanese and French "but refrained from including US bombing among the causes."

Mỹ, was an active member of the Việt Minh, Anh maintained throughout his life that he had been a non-partisan.⁶⁶

Phạm Ngọc Thạch was a wealthy land-owning son of a royal princess, who studied to become a doctor in Paris between the wars. He married a French woman and returned to Sài Gòn where he established a medical practice specializing in lung disorders, particularly tuberculosis. His medical practice apparently allowed him to establish important relationships with the Cao Đài, Japanese officers and diplomats, and the post-coup Japanese Governor of Cochinchina. According to his close associate, Trần Văn Giàu, Thạch had been influenced by communism while in Paris, treated ICP adherents for free, and joined the Regional Committee at some point, possibly after the Vanguard Youth was formed. After obtaining the essential support of Japanese Consul Iida, Thạch founded the Vanguard Youth nominally to work for the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Iida, whom he described as an “anti-militarist,” had been Thạch’s patient two years earlier. A former secretary of the Scout Association of Cochinchina, Thạch built the Vanguard Youth movement around Captain Maurice Ducoroy’s sports movement as Phan Anh had done. He claimed that Ducuroy’s movement had only 11,000 members throughout the country, while the Vanguard Youth’s membership grew to over 100,000 during its first month in Cochinchina alone. The movement’s popularity was due in part to its humanitarian work such as disaster relief, the building of public bomb shelters, and attempts to ship rice to the North. Vanguard Youth members were divided into two categories, Boy Scouts, aged twelve to seventeen years, and Rover-Scouts, over eighteen

⁶⁶ Tonnesson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945*, 107, 287-88, and 296; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 119-20, 214, 431.

years of age. The Vanguard Youth flag, a red star on a yellow background, was an inverted version of the Việt Minh flag. Communists widely infiltrated the movement with Thạch's knowledge and the assistance of Trần Văn Giàu, though they apparently remained a minority.⁶⁷

Trần Văn Giàu had studied in France, but was exiled. He then studied in Moscow at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East. As was mentioned earlier, he had escaped from Tà Lại penal camp in 1941. Afterwards he lived in Annam, Cambodia and Cochinchina where he established the Regional Committee of the Việt Minh at Cần Thơ in late 1943 without any apparent approval from the ICP Central Committee. "Authorized" representatives of the ICP, known as the Giải Phóng (Liberation) Group reacted by establishing rival regional committee. In May 1945, Giàu, who claims not to have known a Central Committee existed and only guessed this was so, sent a messenger to talk the party leadership in Tonkin. In the meantime, the rival regional committees remained separate due to opposing viewpoints over strategy. In accordance with guidelines they had received from the party leadership, the Giải Phóng group wanted to build a guerilla force. Giàu, on the other hand, was using Phạm Ngọc Thạch to infiltrate communists into the Japanese-sponsored Youth Vanguard, which he had hoped to turn

⁶⁷ SSU SN: ZM 2324, 17 November 1945, Folder 5, Box 217, Entry 210, RG 226, NARA. Thạch's Vanguard Youth was not officially recognized by the Japanese until August 12; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 77-78, 134-35, and 217-18; and Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945*, 297, 342. David Marr states that by 1944 Ducuroy's movement had 86,075 registered members divided amongst the Young Buddhists, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Red Ribbon Youth, Christian Workers Youth and Jeannettes (named in honor of Joan of Arc).

into a force for insurrection at the appropriate time. This caused Trường Chinh to reproach Giàu for his effort to “exploit the Japanese to gain government.”⁶⁸

By early August, nervous energy filled the air of Indochina. The Japanese had nearly lost the war, and everyone knew it. Trần Trọng Kim’s cabinet resigned. His own resignation was not accepted. The Japanese tried to shore up Vietnamese support by handing over administration of Hà Nội, Hải Phòng, and Tourane to the imperial government at Huế, and that did so for Cochinchina a short while later.⁶⁹ What loomed in everyone’s mind was who would take power first after the Japanese surrendered: the Allies, the French, the imperial government, the Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo, or the Việt Minh, who had secretly infiltrated groups throughout the country.

CONCLUSION

Hồ Chí Minh’s experience in Moscow remains a mystery despite recent evidence that suggests he was found innocent of whatever charges he faced. After 1938 there was a perceptible shift in his relationship from the Soviet Union to the Communist Chinese, though this may have been precipitated by the war in Europe as much as by his experience in Moscow. We simply will not know until more evidence surfaces in Russia. The circumstantial evidence that Communist Chinese influences played a dominant role

⁶⁸ SSU SN: ZM 2281, 7 November 1945, Folder 5, Box 217, Entry 210, RG 226, NARA; Zinomanm 222; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 190-92; Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945*, 336, 340-41. Later in life, Giàu had apparently said to Stein Tønnesson in an interview, “after my *release* from detention in 1941.” This was apparently just a misstatement. Phạm Ngọc Thạch told the OSS in 1945 that he had escaped and both the French and Japanese had put a price on his head, and a Vietnamese history cited by Marr apparently corroborates Thạch’s contemporary comment. Marr states that there was no direct communication between Cochinchina and the ICP Standing Bureau prior to mid-1945.

⁶⁹ Tønnesson, *Vietnamese revolution of 1945*, 297, 374; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 131, 348-49.

on Hồ's activities following his arrival there in 1938 is overwhelming. He was already inclined toward the Maoist orientation focusing on rural rather than urban movements. The base he established at Pác Bó cave resembled the Chinese base at Yanan. While he had been writing on nationalist issues since the early 1920s, he became extremely sensitive to publishing papers that could spread the ICP's doctrines to an illiterate mass through cartoons, poems and brief, simple language stories. The Việt Minh also used songs and plays as a means of propagandizing. His stay at Yanan has yet to be explained, and there is fragmentary evidence that he had a relationship with both Zhou Enlai and Ye Jianying, two high-level CCP officials who were extremely close associates themselves. Again, however, we will not know enough about Hồ's connection to the Chinese during this period until more research is conducted in China.

There remains little doubt, despite the tendency of Vietnamese writers of the Communist era to venerate "Uncle Hồ" even before he died, that Hồ Chí Minh was the guiding influence of the Vietnamese Communists. His plan to establish the Việt Minh front and rejection of the ICP's Secretary Generalship reinforced the fact that he placed supreme importance on broadening the base of the independence movement above doctrinal organization. As a result, after the all important Japanese coup, the Communist nationalist movement was well distributed throughout the country, but lacking proper coordination from the center. Although the Japanese remained hostile to the ICP and Việt Minh, they tacitly supported the independence movement. The removal of the French breathed new life into the nationalist movement as a whole. The Communists, in particular, benefited the most from the end of French suppression because they had

remained the strongest nationalist organization outside of Cochinchina, and yet were national in scope.

The next chapter examines two issues: the U.S.' role in Indochina following the Japanese coup, with a particular emphasis on their relationship with the Việt Minh; and the accession to power of the Việt Minh over Việt Nam in the two weeks after the Japanese surrendered, known as the August Revolution.



The OSS *Deer* Team with Hồ Chí Minh and Võ Nguyên Giáp (standing left to right: unidentified, Lieutenant René Défourneaux, Hồ, Major Allison Thomas, Võ Nguyên Giáp, Pfc. Henry Prunier, Đầm Quang Tưng, unidentified, and Paul Hoagland; kneeling left to right: Lawrence Vogt, Aaron Squires, and unidentified)¹

How could we train somebody to win a war in a week? It's ridiculous on the face of it.

People also say that as a result of our support, Ho came to power. I don't believe that for a minute. I'm sure Ho tried to use the fact that the Americans gave him some equipment. He led many Vietnamese to believe that we were allies. But there were lots of reasons why Ho came to power, and it wasn't because we gave a few arms for 100 men or less.²

Major Allison Thomas, *Deer* Team leader

Chapter 11

GBT, the *Deer* Team, and the August Revolution

As previously noted, in September 1944 Colonel John Coughlin, head of OSS China-Burma-India Theater at the time, had recognized that the intelligence functions of GBT were the “crown jewel” of the operation, and Colonel Robert Hall, Chief of Intelligence for the joint OSS-14th Air Force unit named AGFRTS had assigned

¹ René J Défourneaux, *The Winking Fox: Twenty-Two Years in Military Intelligence* (Indianapolis: Indiana Creative Arts, 1997), 199.

² Harry Maurer, *Strange Ground: Americans in Vietnam, 1945-1975, An Oral History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1989), 35.

Lieutenant Charles Fenn to be the OSS liaison with GBT. GBT had been using both civilian and contacts within the French colonial army who resisted the formal policy of collaboration with the Japanese in his intelligence network. Meanwhile de Gaulle, who had established his government in Paris after the liberation, was maneuvering to persuade the U.S. that France was resisting the Japanese in Indochina by establishing a secret intelligence and operations network of his own through the existing military structure there headed by General Eugène Mordant.

In response to what he recognized only as “Mordant’s campaign,” Laurie Gordon appealed to the OSS for assistance through more intensive collaboration with GBT. OSS Director General Donovan’s desire to expand OSS operations into Indochina, however, was hampered by President Roosevelt’s October 16 dictum: “that in his judgment at that time we should do nothing in regard to resistance groups or in any other way in relation to Indochina.” The Japanese coup d’état eliminated the French colonial army’s usefulness as an intelligence network for both de Gaulle and GBT. It also created a unique opportunity for OSS to skirt Roosevelt’s prohibition on activities in Indochina, and, for the first time since the Meynier Group’s mission was scuttled by de Gaulle’s political maneuvering, new impetus for working with the Vietnamese within Việt Nam against the Japanese. GBT, under the direction of Fenn and in association with the unit known as the Air Ground Aid Section, generated the most controversial OSS mission of World War II in Indochina linking up its *Deer* Team with Hồ Chí Minh and the Việt Minh.

Although the Việt Minh, as described in the previous chapter, seemed less than formidable, it seized power in Việt Nam after the Japanese surrendered in August 1945. How was this possible? Some scholars, influenced by contemporary French propaganda and OSS agents' writings exaggerating the influence of their exploits, have come to the conclusion that OSS aid to the Việt Minh was the vital element responsible for its rapid ascent. This chapter explores the range of post-coup OSS operations in Việt Nam, including those involving the Việt Minh to test this hypothesis. Finally, a small portion at the end will explain how the August Revolution, the name attributed to the Việt Minh's seizure of control over the country in the second half of August, unfolded.

PROJECT *QUAIL*

The OSS had, by the end of January 1945, drawn up a plan to organize and work with small guerilla bands in the mountains who would act as "escorts and guides for OSS teams of trained saboteurs" to sabotage the Hà Nội -Sài Gòn Railway. The railway was to be divided into six areas for operations carried out by five teams, or 30 teams with each composed of one officer over four men for a total of 150 personnel.³ This was a secret operations contingency plan which never went beyond the conceptual stage, but demonstrates the direction of OSS planning. A more elaborate plan was developed the following month for secret intelligence gathering in Indochina.

The Intelligence Division of OSS China Theater, eager to show that it could outperform GBT, developed a plan codenamed *Quail*, to establish twelve radio stations

³ "Plan for Sabotage of Hanoi-Saigon Railway by OSS Guerillas," 31 January 1945, Reel 90, M1642, NARA."

throughout Indochina (except Laos) with a base at at Simao 思茅 (Szemao, north of Laos in Yunnan) and a sub-base at Malipo 吗 (northeast of Lào Cai in southern Yunnan) in southern China and operational stations located throughout Indochina, including four in Việt Nam. The plan was to be supervised by a Secret Intelligence (SI) officer assisted by two other SI officers, and initiated by a core group consisting of a Chinese Catholic priest, Father Jean Tong who spoke French and had already done work with the OSS in Thailand, and seven trained “native” radio operators. The priest and his native operators were expected to recruit additional agents in Indochina.⁴

This scheme, relying upon local recruits or soldiers commanded by OSS officers, was the pattern adopted in operations later on. When OSS chief of the China Theater, Colonel Richard Heppner, attempted to gain approval for the plan from the Theater Command, however, authorization was held in abeyance until Wedemeyer’s return from a trip to Washington, D.C. Heppner told his Secret Intelligence chief, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Helliwell, not to deal either with the French or “native individuals or revolutionary groups” in Indochina. It is not clear what caused Wedemeyer subsequently to change his mind, but it is likely that his decision was based on a directive from Washington.⁵

⁴ “The Quail Project,” 26 February 1945, Folder 3431, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA; Patti, 347, 545 note 23, and advance manuscript of E. Bruce Reynolds, *Thailand’s Secret War: The Free Thai, OSS, and SOE during World War II* courtesy of the author.

⁵ Colonel Richard P. Heppner to Lt. Colonel Paul Helliwell, 4 March 1945, Folder 215, and French Indo-China, to Brigadier General M.E. Gross, Acting Chief of Staff, 9 April 1945, Folder 200, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA. Bradley Smith, *The Shadow Warriors* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 324. Bradley Smith quotes from a February 9 message from General John Hull, Chief of the War Department Operations Division, to General Wedemeyer authorizing him “Pending receipt of instructions to stop it, I certainly would continue such intelligence activities as you feel necessary to carry on and maintain such contacts with the French as necessary...”

Heppner was working to place GBT completely under OSS control when the Japanese staged Operation *Bright Moon*, the coup d'état. Two days after the coup began GBT sent two messages to the OSS requesting that arms be dropped in to Indochina to help a unit of the French Indochina Army at Móng Cái consisting of twenty French officers and 1,000 native troops headed by Colonel LeCoq, who had been providing intelligence for over a year. Lieutenant Colonel Willis Bird, who had temporarily replaced a sick Heppner as head of OSS China Theater, immediately saw an opportunity to infiltrate OSS agents into Indochina along with such supplies, and convinced the Acting Theater Commander, General Mervin Gross, to contact Wedmeyer to obtain approval for such an operation. This plan was approved, but altered before it could be carried out due to a more urgent request to assist 2,000 European troops under General Marcel Alessandri at Son La, based on the belief that this latter group could hold out as a resistance force within Indochina.⁶

The decision to divert efforts from LeCoq's force at Móng Cái to Alessandri's at Son La was based in part on an agreement with the French Military Mission in China to set up an American radio network in Tonkin under the protection of Alessandri's force.⁷ The plan was effectively approved in a Theater Directive issued on March 20 stating, in part:

⁶ [Handwritten small scrap, no date or author's name], REPO and OPSO to Bird, and Bird to 109, 11 March 1945; OPSO to Bird, NR 713, 19 March 1945, Folder 3431, Box 202, Entry 154; Bird to OPSO and REPO, 11 March 1945, Folder 200, Box 14, Entry 148; Lt. Colonel Paul L. E. Helliwell to Chief, Japan-China Section, FESI, Washington, D.C., 9 March 1945, Folder 4, Box 228, Entry 210, RG 226, NARA. David G. Marr, *Vietnam 1945: the Quest for Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 60; Stein Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945 : Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh, and De Gaulle in a World at War* (London: Sage Publications, 1991), 244. Alessandri had demobilized 1,000 *tirailleurs*, leaving them without their rifles, as he fled into the highlands to escape the Japanese.

⁷ Bird to Heppner, 18 March 1945, and 20 March 1945, Folder 3431, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA.

Establish necessary and adequate intelligence channels in French Indo-China for the purpose of obtaining military information for use of the United States and Chinese Armed Forces.

...Render military aid *by supply and/or United States controlled personnel* to any and all resistance groups opposing the Japanese forces...

Extreme care will be exercised in carrying out all operations under this directive to insure that all groups will be dealt with impartially and irrespective of any particular governmental or political affiliations. The criterion will be that the resistance to the Japanese accrues to the advantage of United States and Chinese military operations. Problems insolvable under the provisions of this directive will be referred to the Commanding General, U.S. Forces, China Theater for decision.⁸

This order opened the door for Project *Quail* to begin and guide OSS operations in Indochina. Even after the immediacy of the coup and obligation to aid the retreating French colonial force inside Indochina passed, the Truman Administration policy switch offered the OSS an opportunity to turn this temporary expedient into a permanent opportunity. OSS Director Donovan restricted the phrase “*by supply and/or United States controlled personnel*” for OSS Indochina, when reaching a tentative agreement to a French proposal for joint intelligence operations in Indochina under the condition that they were under OSS control.⁹ Later, upon his return to China, General Wedemeyer independently applied Donovan’s restriction to the earlier Theater directive in a May 2 Theater policy guideline governing operations in Indochina.¹⁰

Between March 12 and 28, Chennault’s 14th Air Force had flew thirty-four missions (ninety-eight sorties) in Indochina, of which twenty-three were bombing,

⁸ Brigadier General Mervin E. Gross, By command of Major General Chennault to OSS, China Theater, 20 March 1945, Folder 3431, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA. (italics added)

⁹ Bird to 109 Eyes Alone, Heppner Eyes Alone, 24 March 1945, Folder 3431, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226; 109 to Bird, 30 March 1945, Reel 90, M1642, NARA.

¹⁰ By command of Lieutenant General Wedemeyer, to Chief, OSS, China Theater (and others), 2 May 1945, Folder 3427, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA

twenty-four offensive reconnaissance, and fifty-one regular reconnaissance.¹¹ The British conducted their own own air operations in Indochina when between March 20 and April 14 their B-24s flew thirty-six sorties dropping thirty individuals and 139,980 lbs of supplies.¹² This pressured the Americans to act more aggressively in Indochina for fear that British encroachment on the China Theater might lead to Indochina being added to SEAC in accordance with the Gentlemen's Agreement (see Chapter 8). Acting Theater Commander General Gross, General Chennault, and Colonel Heppner resolved to continue plans to reestablish their own intelligence network. A relative flurry of activity followed. Lieutenant Robert Ettinger was the first OSS officer to be dropped into *Điền Biên Phủ* in western Tonkin on March 28 (Operation *Chaires*) and he established a radio station at *Son La* in the vicinity where Alessandri's soldiers were "holding out." A second OSS officer left Simao in Southern China about the same time to establish another radio station in Laos near Fort Carnot (though little information has been found on this agent's activities).¹³

Although he did not provide details, Lieutenant Ettinger reported that on the day he dropped into Tonkin, he "Met 7 US Navy pilots and one US officer who had come a

¹¹ Memorandum to the Department of State, Attention H. Freeman Matthews from Davidson Sommers, 4 April 1945, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center.

¹² Lt. Colonel William C. Wilkinson, Jr. to Colonel John G. Coughlin, 14 April 1945, Folder 214, Box 14, Entry 148; ; Bird to Heppner, 24 March 1945, Folder 3426, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA.

¹³ Heppner to 109, 27 March 1945, Folder 25, Box 2, Entry 90; Lt. Colonel Paul L E. Helliwell to Chief, SI, OSS and China Theater, 29 March 1945, Folder 3426, Box 202, Entry 154; Heppner and OPSO to Bird, 954, 4 April 1945 and Heppner to Bird 10 April 1945 Folder 200; and JJ001 to General Donovan, 29 March 1945, Reel 90; and Operational Report, "Chaires," 9 May 1945, Folder 215, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA. Reynolds, *Thailand's Secret War*, 188, 283-85. This officer appears to have been one of three intelligence agents Lieutenant William Pye (OSS conducting officer for a group of American-trained Thai officers) and three Thai officers brought into Laos from Simao. The officer was probably accompanied by a Chinese interpreter and radio operator. This would explain why OSS documents refer an individual OSS officer rather than three.

week before to take care of them.” This suggests the U.S. Navy may have attempted to provide aid to the French after the coup during the first week though they may have been downed before the coup. He was nearly always moving the first two days. After meeting with Generals Sabattier and Alessandri on the first day, he moved to the front of the retreating French force, and set up his radio on the second day, but was forced to move once again due to a Japanese attack. He had managed to make contact with Chennault’s 14th Air Force, however, and on the 30th, six P-38s bombed and strafed the Japanese attackers. Ettinger could not establish a permanent base, because he had to constantly move with the French force fleeing Japanese forces.¹⁴

Gorilla Team (Major John Summers, Captains Charles Gennerich, Nelson Guillot and Shirly Trumps, and First Sergeant Donald Spears) awaited Ettinger’s report on conditions before leaving to establish additional radio stations. Ettinger sent a message out of Tonkin on April 4 explaining that the original plan would not work because Alessandri’s troops were using guerilla tactics and retreating to Điện Biên Phủ rather than establishing a longterm resistance. By the 10th, the OSS had prepared two more agents to be dropped into Pleiku.¹⁵ GBT, in their connection with Air Ground Aid Section (AGAS), had also sent six members to Baise before entering Indochina to attempt to reestablish radio and intelligence stations.¹⁶ On April 20, the French force under Sabattier and Alessandri were destroying French and British weapons, grenades and

¹⁴ Operational Report, “Chaires”; Report of Summers Mission, 6 June 1945, Folder 200, Box 14, Entry 148, Entry RG 226, NARA.

¹⁵ Report of Summers Mission.

¹⁶ Lt. Colonel Paul L E. Helliwell to Chief, SI, OSS and China Theater, 29 March 1945, Folder 3426, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA.

36,000 rounds of ammunition “due to lack of transportation and withdrawal towards China.”¹⁷

Gorilla Team was dropped in “Outay” [in the vicinity of Dien Bien Phu], Indochina on April 24. General Alessandri arrived in the area of the *Gorilla* Team’s position on the 25th and left by that evening. They had hoped to gather a protective French force so they could establish a radio station, but were unsuccessful. While waiting for the French rearguard they had been told was behind one group of retreating soldiers, they realized *they* had become the rearguard. Ettinger met up with the *Gorilla* team on the 25th and left them two days later.¹⁸

On the 28th, while bathing in a stream, Major Summers heard “rifle bullets cracking around my ears and splashing in the water.” He grabbed his .32 and began to run back to the camp:

I emptied my .32 at them, saw one fell, and the other two stopped, threw the empty gun away and made it to camp. I grabbed a pistol belt and pair of pants, looked around and estimated 15 Japs were within 50 yards, yelling “banzai” and firing erractically [sic] as they ran. Bullets were cracking all around, one hit at my feet and grazed may [sic] left foot. By that time the other men had moved around to the flank and I was unable to contact them in the thick underbrush and elephant grass. I was without maps, shoes, or food, and the situation didn’t look very good by myself and my feet already inured and cut...By May 1, I had forgotten the Japs and was concerned with just getting out of the jungle. My feet were getting infected so I wrapped them in leaves, got some rice from a native and I was making headway NW.¹⁹

Captain Guillot, who had just finished bathing, escaped the estimated thirty to fifty Japanese soldiers with Captain Trumps and Sergeant Spears by crawling through the

¹⁷ Operational Report, “Chaires”; Report of Summers Mission, 6 June 1945, Folder 200, Box 14, Entry 148, Entry RG 226, NARA.

¹⁸ Ibid; *Maj. Summers – 28 April – 11 May* (individual report of *Gorilla* Team), Folder 200, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

¹⁹ *Maj. Summers – 28 April – 11 May* (individual report of *Gorilla* Team).

grass, crossing a stream, and running to a trail next to it. While fleeing, they met up with Lieutenant Ettinger the following morning. Captain Gennerich, led by a French-speaking native guide who the team had engaged after parachuting into Indochina, caught up with them on May 2. Ettinger walked out of Indochina and arrived at Simao on the 4th. The *Gorilla* Team, including Summers, were airlifted out to Kunming on the 9th and 10th.²⁰

Ettinger wrote a highly illuminating, “strictly unofficial” report on his observations of Generals Sabattier, who was “essentially a politician,” and Alessandri, who had “no taste for politics.” After talking to several officers on both their staffs, Ettinger learned that after the coup, de Gaulle had nominated Alessandri Commander-in-Chief. However, Sabattier told Alessandri, “You only rate two stars; I have three; I take over.” Alessandri relented and de Gaulle later confirmed his position as commander. Ettinger explained that de Gaulle had congratulated Sabattier for the way he had conducted the withdrawal of French troops, but it was really Alessandri who deserved the praise. Ettinger felt that Alessandri “would be easily fooled by any game of intrigue, U.S., British or De Gaulle’s.” Alessandri was well liked by his troops, but Ettinger noted, he was “sometimes perhaps too lenient with them (failed to keep misbehavior of legionnaires towards natives by a few court martial executions).” Sabattier “was always the first to leave.” While acknowledging that it was a safety measure for the Commander in Charge to leave first, Ettinger said that his withdrawals were “exaggerated and produced a very bad impression upon the troops.” His preference of Alessandri over

²⁰ Operational Report, “Chaires”; 1st/Sgt Spears – April 28 – May 11 (individual report of *Gorilla* Team), Folder 200, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

Sabattier, however, did not extend to their staffs. He felt Sabattier's was "clever and able," while the Alessandri's was "inefficient."²¹

Based on encounters with an estimated 500 soldiers of General Alessandri's force in retreat, the *Gorilla* Team's final report was more broadly critical:

The French forces we saw had no intention of doing any more fighting and were merely moving toward China the best they could. They carried only the bare essentials of equipment. Many were armed with American carbines which they said were dropped them by the British. Many were sick, had cut and sore feet, some had no shoes...None of us remember seeing a wounded Frenchman. None of the French we saw or talked to had any Jap insignia, equipment, souvenirs, etc. Our impression was that the French did very little fighting. No Frenchman could tell us of any place where they made a determined stand. We are of the opinion that the fighting mainly consisted of rear-guard action when leading Jap patrols caught up with the retreating French. We found no Frenchman who had seen Jap tanks or tankets, none who had been under Jap artillery fire. We talked with French pilots who had fought the Germans in 1940 and then came to FIC when France fell...They frequently flew around [Hà Nội] but were always under orders never to fire at Jap planes. One said he and two other planes were shot down by Japs, but that none of the French planes returned the Jap fire...The French officers who had families in Hanoi left them there when they themselves fled from the Japs but seemed to have no fear of Jap reprisals or ill-treatment...From what we say, the American officials were right in not sending the French supplies as they probably would have only destroyed them as they did much of the equipment sent in by British.²²

It was based on the existence of this force that de Gaulle had asserted the right to reclaim Indochina for the French in the wake of the Japanese coup.

GBT AFTER THE COUP: CHARLES FENN & HỒ CHÍ MINH

GBT's attempt to reestablish an intelligence network was a minor success. Although they either established or helped establish several radio stations in Indochina, their network was never as impressive as it had been, and now it had competition from

²¹ Report on General Sabattier and General Alessandri, 9 May 1945, Folder 3427, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA.

²² Report of Summers Mission.

the OSS which had far superior material, though minimal human, resources.²³ Lieutenant Charles Fenn, who had become an increasingly important influence on GBT's direction after Laurie Gordon went to the U.S. for a rest, took advantage of the crisis created in the wake of the coup to remold the group.

It was during Gordon's absence from the group he founded and led, and after the coup, that Fenn claims to have decided to work with Hồ Chí Minh and the Việt Minh. Fenn, an avowed leftist, viewed himself as a black sheep in the OSS which he described as "distinctly, selective, right-wing and university educated." He was from a working-class British family, dropped out of high school, and immigrated to the U.S. in while in his early twenty's. He worked for a while as a textile salesman before he married a successful painter and became a photojournalist for *Friday*, described as a left-wing version of *Life* magazine with limited circulation due to its politics. Fenn, however does not appear to have been a staunch ideologue. His work with *Friday* took him to Japanese-occupied areas of China in 1940, but a little over a year later he began working for Associated Press, attracted by the higher pay. His pay was still too low, though, so he returned to the U.S. in search of a higher-paying job by 1943. Fenn met Buckminster Fuller, who apparently was attracted to the photographer's overseas experience and limited ability to speak Mandarin Chinese. In his capacity as an advisor to the OSS, Fuller invited Fenn for an interview in Washington, D.C. Fenn joined the OSS a short

²³ 1st Lt. Charles Heppner to Colonel Richard Heppner, 24 May 1945, Folder 3429, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226. Individual *Indochina Intelligence Reports, G.B.T. Group*, 16 March through 30 May 1945 in Folder 314, Box 40, Entry 140, RG 226, NARA, demonstrate this general degradation in the value of GBT intelligence after the coup. The OSS began recruiting experienced officers from the European Theater after Germany was defeated, but operations they planned continued to rely on non-U.S. military for the bulk of their personnel.

while later, and enlisted in the Marine Corps where he was commissioned a first lieutenant. After basic training in the Marines followed by OSS training, he was sent to the Morale Operations branch of the OSS for the Far East, before being assigned to work with GBT.²⁴

Major Austin Glass, Lieutenant Jacques Blaise de Sibour (whom Glass had been sent to replace at Nanning), and William Powell, the Office of War Information (OWI) air liaison in Kunming, are purported to have helped draft a plea for support of the Ligue de l'indépendance de l'Indochine's (Indochinese Independence League, or Việt Minh) independence movement. This letter, signed by Phạm Việt Từ (or Phạm, "son of Việt Nam"), Vương Minh Phương and Tống Minh Phương, was sent to Ambassador Hurley via the Consul William Langdon, on August 18, 1944.²⁵ An OSS agent with the alias "Cayuga" (this is likely to have been Austin Glass) reported on the 28th where three of the seven members of the Kunming committee resided, adding that the OSS would have had no difficulty contacting them if it so desired.²⁶

Cayuga's report also mentions Ho Tin Chin, clearly Hồ Chí Minh, despite the OSS officer's characterization of him as "Chinese," "in his early 30's," and "not a member of the League but his sympathies are with them." Ho Tin Chin was of special interest because he gave ten-minute broadcast in Vietnamese on the Kunming Radio Station from 7:20-7:30 every night. In late 1943, the OSS had considered mobilizing the

²⁴ Dixie R. Bartholomew-Feis, *The Men on the Ground*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2001), 82-83.

²⁵ Patti, 53, 543 note 2.

²⁶ *The Nationalist Movement in Indo-China*, Cayuga, 28 August 1945, Folder 273, Box 35, Entry 140, RG 226, NARA; William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life* (New York: Hyperion, 2000), 287-88, 631 note 41. Vương, for example, owned the Quảng "Lac" restaurant where both he and Tống resided (Duiker states that Hồ Chí Minh stayed here in early 1945).

indigenous movement through pamphlet droppings and radio communication. They had even considered enlisting the aid of Nguyễn Ái Quốc, who they knew had been associated with Borodin in Guangzhou and could be contacted secretly through Zhou Enlai. This channel was never pursued by the OSS due to Roosevelt's prohibitions against activities in Indochina, the GBT's criticism of the efficacy of the nationalist movements, and the subsequent anti-communism of the Truman Administration. Presumably unaware that Ho Tin Chin was Nguyễn Ái Quốc, Powell of the OWI had hoped to bring him to San Francisco for their Vietnamese broadcasts there. Citing the "tenor of some of his earlier broadcasts," the French consul objected, so the matter was temporarily dropped. Although the visa request was resubmitted, it was refused by the State Department around December.²⁷

In a summary report of his experience in the field, Glass mentions a handful of Vietnamese contacts he made who might be helpful in future operations within Indochina. Dixie Bartholomew-Feis states that Phạm Việt Tử introduced Glass to these contacts. Glass' description of the men, referred to only by their pseudonyms: George, Jimmy and Jean, as being "strong Annamite Nationalists," in one case having contacts in Jingxi, and across the border in Tonkin, in another having close relations with the native partisans in

²⁷ *The Nationalist Movement in Indo-China*; F.L. Mayer to Director, OSS, 20 October 1943, Reel 3, M1642, NARA; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 254; and Patti, 50-51. Conditions in French Indo-China—Late 1944, 9 December 1944, Folder 1616, Box 119, Entry 139, RG 226, NARA. The OSS, perhaps influenced by reports from the GBT's Laurie Gordon (see Chapter 4), had reported in late December 1944: "Observers agree that the nationalist movement in Indo-China, now nominally organized in a league of about nine parties, does not have any real popular basis. It is largely a façade, composed of relatively small number of Indo-Chinese intellectuals and other dissatisfied elements in the colony...Its aims are basically nationalist and anti-French, and in consequence the league has sought vicarious support. The Japanese...have not been a promising source of aid. Looking in another direction, the league in the summer of 1944 submitted a petition to the United States government through the American Embassy in China, and has circulated other propaganda in the form of histories of Indo-China and other petitions for American attention."

the mountainous regions of Hà Giang and Yên Bái. This suggests they were likely Việt Minh. However, Glass' reports betray neither bias towards the Vietnamese nor their nationalist movement.²⁸

Fenn may not have read these particular reports, but it is likely that he was aware of Glass' activities since there were so few Americans conducting activities related to Indochina from southern China and, exclusive of the 14th Air Force, all were OSS officers. Fenn's reassignment to liaison with GBT in September 1944 is likely to have added to his understanding of the significance Glass' contacts with the Việt Minh since the GBT's intelligence networks in Inochina were superior to the OSS's prior to the coup. This is important because Fenn suggests that he only learned about the Việt Minh much later.

In his biography of Hồ Chí Minh, which includes his own personal account, Fenn wrote that "AGAS told me of an old Annamite who was reported not only to have helped

²⁸ Bartholomew-Rice, 158; Major Austin O. Glass to Colonel John G. Coughlin, 20 May 1944 and Major Austin O. Glass to Lt. Col. Robert Hall, 1 June 1944, Folder 340, Box 432, Entry 140; and *A Report of the Situation in the Field*, Major Austin O. Glass, 7 February 1945. Lt. Col. J.B. deSibour to Planning Board, 21 December 1944, folder 3427, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226. It is *highly* unlikely that deSibour helped draft this document because in late December he had told the Theater's Planning Board that any OSS operations in Indochina "should be taken with full knowledge and consent of the French and coordinated with them for any plans which did not include them, officially, could not be carried out successfully... The Annamites are unreliable and not united. Some Extremists would use our equipment against the French as well as with Japanese. The French would resent any kind of association with any Annamites other than those approved by them," also known members of the Ligue de l'Indépendance de l'Indochine, were signatories as well. In addition to these three known members of the Việt Minh, the OSS had also been in contact with Lê Tung Sơn, a member of the Việt Minh. In secret intelligence proposals for Indochina from May and June 1944, Glass had spoken of the value of French Indochina Army officers such as Lieutenant Colonel Robert at Lạng Sơn, Major Reul at Cao Bằng, and Lieutenant Colonel Lecoq at Móng Cái. He also stated "If our French friends of the F.M.M. (French Military Mission) can furnish us ample and accurate information quickly on the military, political, economic and morale situation in Indochina there will be no justification whatsoever of setting up an elaborate network to parallel or duplicate existing agencies." Batholomew-Feis states that Phạm Việt Từ provided Glass with these agents, but does not provide a source for this point.

a downed pilot escape but also to be connected with a large political group.”²⁹ He conveniently glosses over the political orientation of the group which he undoubtedly knew at the time was Marxist-Leninist. On November 11, 1944 Lieutenant Rudolph Shaw of the 51st Fighter Group had engine trouble and crash landed in Cao Bằng. The Việt Minh’s Cứu Quốc Quân (National Salvation Association) rescued Shaw and protected him from the French and Japanese search parties. They took him to Phạm Văn Đồng, who sent him on to Hồ Chí Minh. After speaking to Hồ, according to Vũ Anh of the Việt Minh, Shaw “said that he had heard distorted propaganda concerning the Viet Minh, and it was not until then that he realized the truth.” Following this circuitous route which served the Việt Minh’s propagandistic purposes, Shaw was led into China, and flew home a short while afterwards.³⁰

An extremely suspicious letter enclosed in an envelope, written in Chinese, with a Kunming address, was forwarded to General Chennault, apparently before Shaw returned. Most of this letter is devoted to detailed complaints of the sufferings the Vietnamese had to endure under French colonial rule based on a conversation with a “young patriot,” but there is the occasional mention of Shaw’s journey to the Chinese border, such as the following:

For 30 days, playing hide and seek with the French and the Japs, the patriots brought me from one place of hiding to another...Whenever and wherever they could, the villagers, men and women, boys and girls, hold secret meetings to welcome me. When the speakers finished, I always replied with a brief and simple speech [sic]: “Viet Minh! Viet

²⁹ Fenn, 76.

³⁰ Vũ Anh, “From Kunming to Pac Bo,” in *Days with Ho Chi Minh*, edited by Hoi Thanh and Thanh Tinh (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1962), 179-80; C.L. Chennault to Commanding General, USF China Theater, 2 January 1945, Folder 212, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

Minh!” They then stood up and said in chorus: “America! Roosevelt! America! Roosevelt. The meetings ended by an all round handsheking. [sic]³¹

In reporting the incident to General Wedemeyer, General Chennault wrote that he understood the rescuers were “violently anti French,” but added, “I am heartily in favor of maintaining good relations with any organization in French Indo China that will effectively aid in escape the US military personnel likely to require aid in that country, regardless of their local political affiliations.”³² The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence in the China Theater, Colonel Joseph Dickey, subsequently expressed willingness “that we undertake to contact the people.”³³ There is no reason to suspect that Chennault or Dickey were influenced by the propagandistic elements of this letter or others received by U.S. authorities in China related to this incident. They simply recognized the benefit of having another resource to aid downed airmen in hostile territory. Fenn, on the other hand, had learned from the Chinese, about three weeks before Shaw’s plane crashed, about “an Annamite named Hu Tze-ming who heads up the

³¹ Handwritten note signed “R. Shaw” and delivered to the 14th Air Force via Kunming, Folder 212, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA. The letter itself is written in impeccable script, has unusual spelling errors such as “speach,” “slendering,” and “threeding” instead of “speech,” “slandering,” and “threading”; improper usage such as “subsidy” instead of “subsidize”; the use of the word “vanguard” instead of “forward guard”; the letter shows signs that it was transcribed (in one portion the writing begins to fade before becoming very dark, looking at first as though the word was rewritten on top); there are very few corrections made in the letter except for awkward words such as where “sincirity” and “Democrat” have been changed to “sincerity” and Democracy; and other words that are left uncorrected are often simpler words than those not misspelled, such as “unhuman,” “haterogeneous,” “strategical,” and “mesery.”

³² C.L. Chennault to Commanding General, USF China Theater, 2 January 1945, Folder 212, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA. The Central Committee of the League of Independence of Indochina to the President, 15 November 1944, Folder 212, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA. Shaw carried a letter for the President from the Việt Minh suggesting that “More than ever, our antifascist ideal as well as our interests, present or future, command us to form a union, a frank and loyal alliance against the common foe.” Central Committee of the League for Indo-China Independence to the Commanding General of the U.S.A. Expeditionary Forces in China, 27 November 1944, Folder 214, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA. They also sent a letter to General Wedemeyer, while Shaw was still making his way back to China, proposing to establish “regular and close relations,” and solicited weapons.

³³ *Indo-China Project*, [no date or authorship provided], Folder 212, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

International Anti-Aggression Group (Anti-fascist) who might be used essentially against the Japs, but I have not yet tracked him down.”³⁴ He had also written a report in November 1944 in which he mentioned that the “Communist group seems to be the backbone of the so-called Revolutionary part.”³⁵

Fenn says that he arranged for a meeting Hồ through “one of my friends.” They had three meetings in which Hồ was accompanied by someone named “Fam” (presumably Phạm Việt Từ). Fenn provided a radio set and arranged for Frank Tan and a Chinese radio operator (Mac Sin) to accompany Hồ into Indochina. When Fenn asked him what he wanted in exchange for providing intelligence, Hồ answered, “Arms and medicines.” Fenn explained that it would be difficult to get the Vietnamese weapons because of the French, but Hồ convinced him that his group was not anti-French, only anti-Japanese. Hồ agreed to take one of GBT’s Chinese radio operators and, at first, for Fenn to be parachuted into his base, but agreed to bring Frank Tan along with him instead after the two met. Although they arranged for one radio set initially, Fenn agreed that later “we might later drop in light weapons, medicines and futher radio sets.”³⁶

Fenn does not make clear whether it was part of their agreement or not, but he and Bernard took Hồ to meet Chennault and introduced him as belonging to the group that had saved Shaw. Hồ asked for a photograph of the famous General of the 14th Air Force, and received an eight-by-ten glossy which Chennault signed along the bottom, “Yours

³⁴ 1st Lieutenant Charles Fenn to Colonel Robert Hall, 22 October 1944, Folder 340, Box 423, Entry 140, RG 226, NARA. Fenn claims that later, in March 1945, “the Chinese merely called” Minh Việt Minh “tricky.”

³⁵ Quoted in Dixie R Bartholomew-Feis, “The Men on the Ground” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2001), 161.

³⁶ Fenn, 76-78.

Sincerely, Claire L. Chennault.” Afterwards, Hồ asked Fenn for “six new Colt .45 automatic pistols in their original wrappings,” which he was able to obtain from OSS. Hồ flew with Tan and Shin from Kunming to Jingxi and then walked across the border and along the mountainous, jungle trails to Pác Bó.³⁷

In his biography of Hồ, Fenn states that he gave this leader of the Việt Minh the codename “Lucius,” but there is evidence to suggest that his real codename was “Dixiana” as part of GBT’s *Lark* Mission.³⁸ Agent “Ariton,” who appears to be Tan, began providing intelligence to GBT on April 22 after setting up a headquarters “somewhere north of Nguyễn Bình.” Pác Bó fits this description. In his first report to GBT, Ariton drew attention to the fact that the 14th Air Force had strafed “native guerillas and civilians,” and asked that they be given the following suggestion: “If natives first display a three-foot-square red flag with a white star, and then stand still, would this prevent their being shot at?”³⁹

Ariton’s reports from the last days of April and early May also reflected sympathy for the Vietnamese nationalists. On the 25th, he reported: “Japs are

³⁷ Ibid, 78-79, Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 228. Hồ was going by the pseudonym “C.M. Hoo” in his dealing with the Americans at this time. Fenn states that Hồ left the two GBT agents at Jingxi, and went to his base at Pác Bó by himself. Only after arriving at Pác Bó, according to Fenn, did Hồ send a 20-man escort to Jingxi which arrived there on April 15 to bring Tan and Shin to his base. However, Marr, who bases his version on an interview with Tan and a copy of a six-page document typed by Hồ which Tan provided him, states that Hồ, Tan and Shin all went to Pác Bó together. Marr also states that Hồ’s document was aimed at supplementing “Tan’s own impressions of the arduous walk from the border,” comments that the document is “crafted entirely as if Tan himself was the author, not Ho Chi Minh (who is referred to in the narrative as ‘our old friend H’)” making it sound very similar stylistically to Shaw’s letter. Marr’s explanation fits with an account of a meeting Archimedes Patti (see below) states he had with Hồ near Jingxi around April 27, while Fenn’s version places Hồ in Pác Bó earlier than the 25th.

³⁸ Fenn, 77; 1st Lieutenant Charles Fenn to Colonel Richard Heppner, 24 May 1945, Folder 3429, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226. The third member of Lark was codenamed Boligee, and the location of their operation was “North of Hanoi.”

³⁹ Activities in FIC, Source: Ariton, 23 April 1945, Folder 314, Box 40, Entry 140, RG 226, NARA. This was clearly a variant of the Việt Minh flag.

subsidizing banditry as convenient counter-measure to rising anti-Jap patriotic groups” on the Indochina frontier. The next day he reported that an incident two weeks earlier in which a group of Vietnamese *tirailleurs* had killed French officers before deserting was “attributed to the influence of certain Annamite Revolutionists.” The GBT summarized another report from Ariton: “Lt. Ronaut and three other Frenchmen claim that they are disgusted at the lack of French resistance and are willing to train Annamite Revolutionists in the use of French weapons which these natives have acquired; the purpose having guerilla warfare against the Japs. Source believes however that Ronaut’s real purpose is to spy on native activity which is now gaining momentum.” On April 29, a report summary begins, “The Independent Indochina United Party, sometimes referred to as the Viet Minh League, has established its headquarters somewhere near Nguyen Binh.” This report also condemns the Đại Việt, whose crimes included “to spy on Viet Minh League.”⁴⁰

In a May 1 report, Ariton lists ways in which the Việt Minh had been cooperating with the French before concluding:

VML are adopting this conciliatory policy to convince fellow Annamites that French are to be pitied, not feared. This will have effect of (1) uniting in a common cause against the Japs; (2) giving Annamites a new-self-reliance that will eventually help to win them independence.⁴¹

Such reports could have come from Hồ himself, and we might suspect that he was Ariton were it not for a link between Ariton and “Dixiana” provided in a segment of a report on the 6th. This report mentions a group, originating from amongst 120 Vietnamese who had

⁴⁰ “Tonkin,” Source: Ariton, (source dates 25 and 26 April) 26 April, “Tonkin,” Source: Ariton, (source date 26 April) 27 April 1945, Folder 314, Box 40, Entry 140, RG 226, NARA.

⁴¹ “Tonkin,” Source: Ariton, 2 May 1945, Folder 314, Box 40, Entry 140, RG 226, NARA.

moved from Liuzhou to Baise, and were enroute to Tonkin for counterespionage. In it, Dixiana is quoted by Ariton as stating: “These men are still pro-Jap. *My own followers* have overheard them on many occasions telling how good and smart the Japs are.”⁴² Fenn had also requested the following “protective weapons” required by the *Lark* and *Sparrow* Missions which had been combined: 20 Thompson submachine-guns with 300 rounds for each, 40 Carbines with 200 rounds for each, 120 pistols with 100 rounds for each, and 240 fragmentation grenades.⁴³

In late May, the GBT sent its “Monthly Report,” to Heppner providing a progress report of all its missions. *Lark* was completing a five-station radio network and “final arrangements for two ‘escape corridors’ for AGAS operations.” Fenn has written: “Tan and Hồ between them had already set up an intelligence network of native agents that amply replaced the French net lost by the Japanese coup. This Vietminh net eventually rescued a total of seventeen downed airmen.” Fenn’s new network, established with help from the Việt Minh, did not extend to the South. *Robin* Mission, the only mission being run outside of Tonkin, was a post-coup GBT operation to parachute a radio team into Cochinchina. Although the team had been dropped “successfully,” they had not been in

⁴² “Annamite Activities,” Source: Ariton, 7 May 1945, Folder 314, Box 40, Entry 140, RG 226, NARA. (italics added) These were probably a contingent of the *Đông Minh Hội* then led by Nguyễn Hải Thân. If this is true, “Dixiana”’s claim that they were pro-Japanese would have been a ploy to delegitimize the group. However, a less likely possibility that it was a group headed by Nguyễn Tường Tam, who did believe the Japanese could help the Vietnamese gain independence. Tam and Vũ Hồng Khanh were later sponsored by the Chinese army in Yunnan (about 80 miles west of Baise) under the command of Lu Han. Chen, 94, states that “within six months after” Hồ Chí Minh left Liuzhou, “Nguyễn Hải Thân, Trương Bội Công, Nghiêm Ke To, Vũ Hồng Khanh, Non Kinh Du, and Trần Bảo—had left the Fourth War Area for either Yunnan or Kweichow. The Vietnam Special Training Class had only 140 men staying at” Baise. Discussion of the *Đông Minh Hội* and VNQDD continues in Chapter 14.

⁴³ 1st Lieutenant Charles Fenn to Lieutenant Colonel Paul Helliwell, 2 May 1945, Folder 314, Box 40, Entry 140, RG 226, NARA..

radio contact with the group and it was suspected its members had been captured by the Japanese or the radio sets had been damaged.⁴⁴

On April 10, Laurie Gordon had gone to Washington, D.C. before returning to China and told Lieutenant Commander Turner McBaine, chief of OSS Secret Intelligence Far East, that his “‘bastard’ organization was nearing end of usefulness,” adding that if the OSS planned on taking over the group, they had better do it quickly because he felt the British in SEAC “might clap him into uniform.”⁴⁵ By the time Gordon returned to the GBT base, Tan and Shin had reached Pác Bó. Gordon was “dismayed” to learn GBT had begun backing a Communist Vietnamese nationalist organization.⁴⁶ Gordon blasted Fenn: “You’ve linked us up with an Annamite group whose real interest is to kick out the French, who happen to be my friends. One day they’ll be killing some of those friends and it’s you I’ll have to thank for it.” He insisted that Tan return, saying, “I feel responsible for his welfare, he’ll get shot if he stays in that dicey set-up. Apart from everything else, by working with anti-French Annamites, he’s ruining his prospects of getting a job with Texaco.”⁴⁷ Tan and Shin did not return to the GBT base, but followed Hồ and his group, who were perhaps emboldened by this limited American support to move from the border area, on their move to the village of Kim Lũng which they renamed Tân Trào (New Tide).⁴⁸

⁴⁴ 1st Lieutenant Charles Fenn to Colonel Richard Heppner, 24 May 1945; Fenn, 82.

⁴⁵ “McBaine conference with Gordon,” 10 April 1945, Folder 25, Box 2, Entry 90, RG 226, NARA.

⁴⁶ Fenn, 82.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Bartholomew-Feis, 214-15.

⁴⁸ Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 228, 284.

THE OSS: ARCHIMEDES PATTI, THE *DEER* TEAM, & THE VIỆT MINH

Head of OSS Secret Intelligence for Indochina, Captain Archimedes Patti, who arrived in Kunming on April 13, states that he met Hồ in a village six miles from Jingxi around the 27th. Patti, who had served in the European Theater, admits to have been mentored in Washington, D.C. in his preparation for being assigned to work in Asia by Glass and Lieutenant Colonel Duncan Lee, born to missionary parents in China and head of the Far East Division for the OSS. In an early analysis of Project *Quail*, Glass had argued that of the list of nine “Asiatic” personnel in the mission, only one was Vietnamese, and suggested that more Vietnamese be used for the project.⁴⁹ Glass’ influence on Patti in this regard is unmistakable.

Patti had been contacted by Vương Minh Phương in Kunming, probably on April 21. Patti knew AGAS was going to use the Việt Minh for their operations and was clearly maneuvering in competition with them.⁵⁰ Helliwell, as head of secret intelligence for the China Theater, and Patti, his chief for Indochina, saw GBT and AGAS as a threat to their turf even though Fenn remained an OSS officer and GBT was still responsible to Heppner while it was associated with AGAS. Patti disguises his dislike for GBT in his

⁴⁹ Duncan C. Lee to Chief, SI, OSS, CT, 6 April 1945, Folder 3431, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226.

⁵⁰ Patti, 67-71, 83, 542 note 6; and 545 note 19. Patti states that Vương first visited him on a Sunday morning, and that by the end of their conversation, which ran into the early afternoon, and said he “could arrange to visit” Jingxi. The next morning, Vương told Patti that Hồ might have crossed the border by the time he got there, but gave him instructions on how to arrange for a meeting once he arrived in Jingxi. Under these circumstances, it is likely that he would not have pursued a meeting with Hồ any later than was necessary. The first Sunday prior to Saturday, April 27, was the 21st. Patti also suggests that Fenn’s places the date for his first meeting with Hồ later in March than it really was because Fenn had provided him with six Colt .45s on request. Helliwell, according to Patti, provided these to AGAS, along with several thousand rounds of ammunition in “early March.” We can only guess from this if it was before or after the coup.

memoir, but Captain Dan Phelan, an AGAS agent who was assigned to work with the group, made this revealing comment:

In evaluating of this information I found that Agas Headquarters had taken G.B.T. reports at their rated value and had left the original classification on this information. I had found out however that OSS had re-rated most information coming from G.B.T. to a rate far lower than the rate at which it had been given. Upon questioning in OSS, their reason seemed to be that Capt. Paddy [sic] (in charge of SI for F.I.C.), considered G.B.T. information completely unreliable. Not knowing Capt. Paddy at the time well enough to judge his ability to evaluate information and having worked with SI units in Europe I was quite frankly extremely puzzled. In general in my previous contacts with SI I had found them usually reliable. However, as the mission was deemed necessary and Mr. Tan was there to meet me, it seemed like fairly risky. My future operations proved that G.B.T., especially the information sent by Mr. Tan, had been completely right and future knowledge of Capt. Paddy proved him to be an egotist of almost psychopathic degree, and that he had personally authorized the re-rating of this information. From a problem like this it is apparent that too much decentralization of Intelligence agencies causes unnecessary confusion on the part of agents.⁵¹

Phelan parachuted into Hồ Chí Minh's base on June 23rd to work assist Tan and Shin.⁵²

“Despite my studied objectivity and purposeful awareness of not allowing myself to become involved in the political aspects of the Indochina question,” claims Patti in his account, written with hindsight of the Cold War and the Vietnam War, of the meeting with the leader of the Việt Minh, “Hồ's sincerity, pragmatism, and eloquence made an indelible impression on me”:

He did not strike me as a starry-eyed revolutionary or a flaming radical, given to clichés, mouthing a party line, or bent on destroying without plans for rebuilding. This wispy of a man was intelligent, well-versed in the problems of his country, rational, and dedicated. I also felt he could be trusted as an ally against the Japanese. I saw that his ultimate goal was to attain American support for the cause of a free Viet Nam and felt that desire presented no conflict with American policy. From a practical viewpoint, Ho and the Viet

⁵¹ Report on “problems encountered in our missions, and second, suggestions as to how these could be alleviated,” 11 October 1945, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center. Author's name not given, but later document of 17 October clarifies that it is Captain Phelan

⁵² Ibid. Captain Phelan to Commanding Officer, AGAS, 17 October 1945, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center. Upon arrival at the Việt Minh base, Phelan discovered they “had been using jungle trails exclusively as a means of communication.”

Minh appeared to be the answer to my immediate problem of establishing operations in Indochina.⁵³

They made no agreement during this meeting, though, only agreeing to keep the option of working together in the future open. Despite Patti's assertion above that the Việt Minh solved his immediate problem, joint Việt-Minh-OSS operations would be the exception rather than the rule. This simple fact is probably the most misunderstood reality of U.S.-Việt Nam relations for the period discussed in this work.

The scope of Project *Quail* was drastically scaled down based on the after effects of the Japanese Operation *Bright Moon* and, shortly after Patti had arrived in China, a plan was drawn for an Allied offensive against southern China codenamed *Carbonado*. *Carbonado* was to be an overland drive from Leizhou Bandao 雷州半島 (Leichou Pantao or Luichow, the peninsula extending from southern China towards Hainan island), through Nanning and then to Guilin. Although *Carbonado* was really a diversionary scheme, a fact known only by top officials, OSS operations in Indochina were used to supplement the offensive. It is not exactly clear how, but *Carbonado* put the chief of OSS secret intelligence in Indochina in a position also to manage secret operations. Thus Patti worked both with and independently of Captain Robert Wampler, chief of the Secret Operations Branch of the Secret Operations Branch of the OSS in the China Theater, to direct SI and SO missions for the OSS in Indochina focused on preparatory work for the

⁵³ Patti, 86.

impending offensive by destroying rails, bridges and tunnels between Nanning and Hà Nội.⁵⁴

The most significant missions evolving out of Project *Quail* were codenamed *Chow*, *Pakhoi*, *Comore*, and *Poitou*. Originating as a three-man secret operations mission planned about April 26, *Chow's* initial objective was to disrupt Japanese traffic in Guangxi in southern China, between Guilin and Indochina through Liuzhou. The three-man team was to be led by Major Gerald Davis, with signal officer Lieutenant Paul Martineau, and interpreter Lin Ko. On May 14, Davis recommended to OSS headquarters that Vietnamese be used for the border area portion of the mission. Patti flew to Baise two days later "to contact rebel Annamites reported to be in the area." Patti makes no mention of this trip in his memoir, but we can assume that this trip was precipitated not only by Davis' recommendation, but by his earlier meeting with Hò and whatever arrangement they had made for future communications. Mysteriously, *Chow Mission's* objective was changed the day after Patti arrived in Baise, to focus exclusively on operations against the railroad and road from Hà Nội to Lạng Sơn in Indochina. Zhang Fakui agreed on the 18th to supply 250 Chinese soldiers to be divided into five groups of 50 for this mission. Since the mission had originally been designed for operations inside China, we can assume that negotiations for these troops had begun much earlier.⁵⁵

Also on the 18th, according to Patti, Major Jean Sainteny, son-in-law of former Governor General of Indochina Albert Saurrat, head of the Mission Militaire Française

⁵⁴ Patti, 96-99; By command of Lieutenant General Wedemeyer: Colonel Edwin O. Shaw to Commander, Chief, Office of Strategic Service, 10 May 1945, Folder 204, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

⁵⁵ Major Gerald Davis to Chief SO, OSS, 25 June 1945, Folder 98, Box 7, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

(MMF, or French Military Mission) in Kunming, and head of French clandestine operations in China, proposed the first joint French-OSS operation.⁵⁶ Codenamed *Pakhoi*, the mission that emerged from this agreement was a joint AGAS-OSS operation headed by Lieutenant Ettinger and Naval Lieutenant James Jordan attached to AGAS. In association with the French colonial navy, they were to provide intelligence through a coastal watch system from Beihai 北海 (*Pakhoi*), on the Chinese coast between Leizhou Pandao and Móng Cái, to Tourane (Đà Nẵng), just south of Huế, and from Leizhou Bandao to Hainan Island. Their operating field base was located at Beihai, and they directed a fleet of “junks and sampans” manned by French colonial army personnel from two patrol boats, the *Crayssac* and the *Frézouls*.⁵⁷ While the timing of Sainteny’s proposal may have been coincidental, the Baise-Jingxi area, like Longzhou, was a notorious hotspot for spies (French, Việt Minh, Chinese, OSS and GBT), and Patti’s earlier visit was not likely to have gone unnoticed. Seemingly, Sainteny’s proposal was aimed at forestalling any arrangement between the OSS and the Việt Minh.

The French-OSS arrangement for *Pakhoi* Mission was formalized in a meeting on June 1 between three representatives of the French Military Mission (including Sainteny) and Heppner, Helliwell, and Patti. The meeting was concluded with an ominous comment from Patti, that Sainteny had agreed to the joint operations “despite the warning

⁵⁶ Patti, 104-06; *Notes on French-OSS Conference*, 1 June 1945, Folder 3427, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA. Patti states that the mission began operating on May 31, but representatives of the French Military Mission at Kunming, which included Sainteny, stated on June 1 that they “can begin operating in Pakhoi Project within 48 hours.” The French had apparently already been operating a mission by themselves at Beihai before the agreement was negotiated.

⁵⁷ *Project “Pakhoi,”* Folder 2428; Captain Archimedes L.A. Patti to Lieutenant Robert Ettinger, 30 May 1945 and Floroso to Chaires, 11 July 1945, Folder 3428; [Draft] Lieutenant Colonel Wichtrich to Commanding Officer of OSS and AGAS, 24 June 1945, Folder 3427, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA; and Patti, 106-07.

by the French naval officer that approval from Calcutta” (i.e., SLFEO attached to SEAC which presumably had authority over clandestine activities in Indochina) had not yet given been received.⁵⁸ About this time, OSS had also concluded an agreement with General Sabattier to use “100 Annamite troops and 10 officers” for *Stew* Mission.⁵⁹ It is not clear why Sainteny was not approached for this arrangement as well, but it laid the basis for a feud between Patti and Sainteny that extended beyond the end of the war. *Comore* and *Poitou* were the codenames for two other significant joint OSS-French operations. The *Comore* Mission was “a special commando-type operation against the Japanese 22nd Division headquarters in” Lạng Sơn area. The team was comprised of eighty-five French officers and soldiers, forty-five Vietnamese *tirailleurs* of the French colonial army, and six Americans, including its chief, Captain Lucien “Lou” Conein, “an expert in demolition and guerilla tactics, fluent in French, trustworthy,” and according to Patti, “not entirely in accord with French politics” there. *Comore*’s operations did not begin until late July.⁶⁰ *Poitou* Mission was a secret intelligence operation run out of

⁵⁸ *Notes on French-OSS Conference*, 1 June 1945, Folder 3427, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA.

⁵⁹ Patti, 107; Bird to Heppner, 26 May 1945, Folder 123, Box 8, Entry 148, RG 226; and Heppner to Buxton, 4 June 1945, Reel 90, M1642, NARA. In his memoir, Patti states only that the agreement was made with “the French in Chungking,” which would mean Ambassador Zinovi Pechkoff, but OSS documents clarify that this was the agreement at the center of his initial confrontation with Sainteny (see below). Patti to Helliwell, 5 May 1945, Folder 3427, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA. Patti notified Helliwell on May 5 that “Sabattier to establish his hqs Kunming with two area commanders.” Other OSS documents, however, clarify that the agreement was made with Sabattier.

⁶⁰ Patti, 113, 549, note 25; *Project “Comore,”* Folder 3431, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA. Conein was the CIA Station Chief and chief spokesman for the U.S. in several conversations with the South Vietnamese Army’s generals who staged a coup in November 1963 in which President Ngô Đình Diệm and his brother Nhu were assassinated in response to their anti-Buddhist policy (a Buddhist monk’s self-immolation during this period was one of the most important visual images of the Vietnam War). Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge instructed Conein to tell the generals that the U.S. would do nothing to interfere with the coup and would continue to support a successor regime. Conein even offered the generals money and arms, but they purportedly refused claiming they wanted the coup to be purely a Vietnamese affair. Neither Conein nor Lodge shared their knowledge with President Diệm, or agree to lend the generals a plane to exile the Ngô brothers to a neutral third country. See Ellen J. Hammer, *A*

Liuzhou on the Chinese border with Tonkin. Its operations were directed at Cao Bằng. The two Americans who ran the team and his radio operator are unknown, but the twenty French colonial army personnel (mostly Vietnamese *tirailleurs*) were led by Captain de Montpezat (see Chapter 5).⁶¹

Stew was the codename for the redesigned *Chow* Mission, which now had two new OSS teams, codenamed *Deer* and *Cat*, which assembled at Baise on May 26.⁶² The *Deer* Team was led by Major Allison K. Thomas and had the following additional six members: Lieutenant René Défourneaux (Assistant Team Leader), First Sergeant William Zeilski (Radio Operator), Staff Sergeant Lawrence Vogt (Weapons Inspector), Sergeant Aaron Squires (Field Photographer), Private First Class (Pfc.) Paul Hoagland (Nurse), and Pfc. Henry Prunier (Vietnamese Interpreter).⁶³ Major Thomas was drafted into the Army in 1941 and had served in France before being reassigned to the China Theater. He knew very little about Indochina before he was assigned to head the *Deer*

Death in November: America in Vietnam, 1963 (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1987), 263-65, 271-72; The Pentagon Papers (The Senator Gravel Edition): The Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on Vietnam, Volume II (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 217.

⁶¹ *Project "Poitou,"* Folder 119, Box 8; INDIV to Davis, 20 August 1945, Folder 101, Box 7, Entry 148; Patti to Holopaw, 7 July 1945 and Helliwell to Farrell, 24 July 1945, Folder 3431, Box 202, Entry 154; INDIV to Davis, Folder 119, Box 8, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA; and Patti, 546, note 2.

⁶² Major Gerald Davis to Chief of SO, OSS, 25 June 1945, Folder 98, Box 7; *Project "Stew"* and Captain Archimedes L.A. Patti to Lieutenant James Stewart, 1 June 1945, Folder 123, Box 8, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

⁶³ *Report on Deer Mission*, Allison K. Thomas, 17 September 1945, Folder YKB 823, Box 387, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA; Patti, 107. This report has been published in "Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War," *Hearings before the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 92nd Congress* (Washington: United States GPO, 1973), beginning on page 234. There is one page missing from the published version and it lacks handwritten corrections and the section entitled *The Vietminh Party or League* lacks handwritten changes of the original. For example, although both versions of *The Vietminh Party or League* bear the statement that the report was based on two months of study from "16 July to 16 September 1945," the handwritten-edited version shows "Date of Info: 17 August."

Team.⁶⁴ Before he met Thomas, Assistant Team Leader Défourneaux had learned that he had once accidentally shot himself through his hand and leg while demonstrating a standard Army-issue handgun's characteristics. "It was difficult for me to imagine that an Army major would shoot himself accidentally," recalled Défourneaux, admitting to the lack of respect he held for the team's leader. "Those who did it usually wanted to go home and as a rule their toes were the victims. They never shot their hands and legs accidentally!"⁶⁵

Défourneaux was born and raised in France. He had immigrated to the U.S. in 1939 when he was about nineteen years old and had fought in Europe before being reassigned to the China Theater. Before he arrived, though, he was sent, as we can presume all his team members were at some point, to jungle survival training at OSS Detachment 101 K-Camp located in Assam, India. In his memoir, Défourneaux recalls the training which took place in the hills near the camp was led by the local Naga "head-hunters." He tells us, in one of the colorful accounts which pepper his memoir, the Naga taught the trainees what was edible in their environment, including monkey meat, which they said, "tasted almost the same as human flesh!" Défourneaux had been in China for nearly three weeks before he learned about *Chow* Mission and his assignment to *Deer* Team. He was relieved to have Pfc. Hoagland on his team after hearing a rumor that the

⁶⁴ Maurer, 30. "About all I knew is that it was called French Indochina," Thomas told an interviewer several years later. "I knew vaguely that it was a French colony and the missionaries came over first, followed by the French soldiers. I knew that French had rubber plantations, and they took the profits out to France. That's about it."

⁶⁵ Défourneaux, 128.

team's medic had once performed a successful emergency appendectomy on a fellow soldier relying on his pen knife as his only surgical instrument.⁶⁶

Pfc. Prunier had been raised in a French-speaking American household. He was recruited by the OSS while attending an Army-assigned seven-month intensive Vietnamese language training program at the University of California, Berkeley. It appears that he was never used as a Vietnamese interpreter, though.⁶⁷ Less is known about the other members of *Deer* Team. *Cat* Team's three members were Captain Charles "Mike" Holland, Team Leader, Sergeant John Stoyka, and Sergeant John Burrowes.⁶⁸ A third team led by Captain Zachariah Ebaugh arrived at Baise on June 5, but no other facts of this team's composition or its codename are known.⁶⁹

Chinese soldiers were still assigned to work with *Chow* Mission even after the focus of operations had moved from China to Indochina, but both Davis and his superiors in Kunming decided to use Vietnamese *tirailleurs* commanded by French officers deeper in the interior of Tonkin and restrict the use of Chinese soldiers to the border area. Ebaugh was assigned to work with the Chinese soldiers. Problems arose with the use of the Chinese soldiers immediately. On May 28, Zhang Fakui warned the Americans that the troops assigned to work with the OSS were individually only receiving 300 Chinese Dollars (CNs) per month instead of the 3,000 CN of regular Chinese troops received. Before Ebaugh received the money to pay the bulk of the Chinese soldiers' salaries, they

⁶⁶ Défourneaux, 88, 120, 128, and 134.

⁶⁷ Dixie R. Bartholomew-Feis "The Men on the Ground" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2001), 232.

⁶⁸ Patti, 107.

⁶⁹ Major Gerald Davis to Chief of SO, OSS, 25 June 1945. Thomas was notified that two Vietnamese interpreters were available and he requested they be sent to Baise. Since Prunier was assigned to the *Deer* Team, we can assume either Stoyka or Burrowes of the *Cat* Team was the other.

began to desert. Forty from his contingent of 200 soldiers deserted on June 1 and three more deserted on the 17th.⁷⁰

Joint operations with the French posed a more complex problem, based from the outset on mutual suspicions. Colonel Passy (André Dewavrin), head of de Gaulle's Direction Générale des Études et Recherches (DGER, or French clandestine Intelligence and Operations, literally "Study and Research") met with Colonel Bird on March 24, and revoking an earlier agreement between OSS and the French Military Mission in China, proposed that French control any joint OSS-DGER intelligence network in Indochina through use of French codes. He added the stipulation that only military intelligence would be given to the U.S. Bird replied skeptically that he would have to gain Theater approval, at which point Passy offered an alternative whereby OSS codes would be used, but all information would be given to the French. Passy said he would need approval from Paris, so the issue was left in limbo. As a result, Bird notified General Gross that the OSS would not be establishing an intelligence network with French cooperation, but directed the planning group to proceed with or without the French.⁷¹ Bird then notified Heppner that the Theater reaction to the discussion with Passy was to go ahead with any arrangement of cooperation that could be made with "Frenchman Animite [sic] or anyone else who wishes to cooperate with us."⁷²

Passy learned that OSS China Theater was negotiating with General Sabattier for joint operations and told Director Donovan that Sabattier "has neither the means nor the

⁷⁰ Ibid;

⁷¹ Bird to 109 Eyes Alone, Heppner Eyes Alone, Bird to OPSO, and Willis H. Bird to General Gross, Acting Chief of Staff, USF Hq., China Theater, 24 March 1945, Folder 3431, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA.

⁷² Bird to Heppner, 29 March 1945, Folder 3431, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA.

right to collect” intelligence in Indochina “and that authority for such collections rests with DGER.” Sainteny was recalled to Paris the following day, apparently to clarify the French policy on joint operations with the U.S. in Indochina.⁷³ Based on information received from Wedemeyer’s deputy, Brigadier General George Olmsted, Heppner informed Donovan that “we have already concluded an agreement with Passy’s people.” They had, by this time, the tentative agreement covering *Pakhoi* Mission with Sainteny, who was the head of DGER in China. However, Heppner was notified on June 3 by Donovan’s deputy in Washington, Brigadier General John Magruder, that André Manuel, Passy’s deputy, was “apparently unaware of your having already reached an agreement.”⁷⁴

General Wedemeyer affirmed an agreement with General Sabattier on the 4th for 100 Vietnamese *tirailleurs* and twenty-five French officers “to be under the control of China Theater OSS and to be used in connection with training of Commandos and for intelligence work in French Indo-China.” Even this negotiation had its difficulties. At one point Sabattier said that Wedemeyer had delegated authority to him to control intelligence work in Indochina. Wedemeyer made clear to him that this would not be the case; that Americans would retain control.⁷⁵ On the June 5, Colonel John Whitaker, chief of secret intelligence in the Theater, notified Heppner that he had seen the DGER directive signed by General de Gaulle”:

⁷³ Stein Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945 : Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh, and De Gaulle in a World at War* (London: Sage Publications, 1991), 318.

⁷⁴ 109 to Heppner, 25 May 1945, Folder 25, Box 2, Entry 90; Bird to Heppner, 26 May 1945 and Heppner to 109, 26 May 1945, Folder 123, Box 8; Magruder to Heppner, 3 June 1945, Folder 96, Box 7, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

⁷⁵ General Wedemeyer and General Sabattier, 4 June 1945, Folder 3427, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA.

This is a very strong document and gives DGER complete and exclusive responsibility for all intelligence, military and political, on behalf of the French, in the whole of the Far East. It is clear, therefore, that General Sabattier is not likely to be successful in any effort to claim complete and sole responsibility for French intelligence in FIC in spite of the fact that I have read another directive of de Gaulle which names him Civil Delegate and Commander-in-Chief of French troops in FIC...I think [Sabattier] is clumsy, not merely because of ignorance, but because of undue ambition since his character leads me to believe that had he been successful...Moreover, I do not believe that in a fight to the finish Sabattier, who went to FIC originally on behalf of Vichy, would win over DGER.⁷⁶

A few days later, GBT's Harry Bernard suggested to Heppner that the OSS secret operations branch drop a team into "the HQ of a guerilla outfit where Mr. Tan is now located. Quoting from one of Tan's reports, Bernard illustrated the potential of collaboration with the group:

Spirit to fight Japs excellent, success attacks Japs with small losses, examples 5 days ago 10 kms away 10 guerillas led by foreign legionnaire ambushed 180 Japs killed 30, Jap could not go right of trail steep rise, left rail steep gully, attack from both sides range 20 yds, one grenade kill 7, middle jungle. At Bac Kan 12 days ago moonlight attack Jap house killed 10. This country with help natives perfect for ambush, guerillas attack convoy 5 trucks near Cho Chu blew off road but got nothing as other 4 rescued all, such target good bazooka job. This Indian style stab in back fighting just down OSS alley. Automatic fire power needed in ambush for quick attack, double quick scam otherwise surrounded.⁷⁷

Unaware of the political conflict brewing over their use, the *Cat* and *Deer* Teams began training the French colonial army (French and Vietnamese *tirailleurs*) contingent of *Stew* Mission on June 12, out of site of the Chinese at "Onning" (possibly Anning 安宁) about six miles southeast of Jingxi on the China frontier.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Colonel John Whitaker to Colonel Richard Heppner, 5 June 1945, Folder 3427, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA.

⁷⁷ H.V. Bernard to Col. Richard Heppner, 9 June 1945, Folder 3429, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA.

⁷⁸ Défourneaux, 147, 150; Commandant Courtelhoc, Notes, for the O.S.S., Kunming, 5 June 1945, Folder 96, Box 7, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA; and Major Gerald W. Davis to Chief SO, OSS, 25 June 1945. There were 8 French officers and 40 French soldiers, and 50 Vietnamese *tirailleurs* from Raul Battalion, as well as 2 French officers and 15 soldiers (no distinction was made as to whether they were French or

In Jingxi, Major Thomas met with Simon Yu, an experienced French-Chinese agent for GBT who had previously been working in on the coast at Dong Xing. Thomas quickly learned how this one representative of the semi-autonomous group “was in excellent relationship with the Chinese, was respected by CCC” (Chinese Combat Command, the American military liaison group with the Chinese military) “and all concerned. His intelligence on Jap activities in FIC was of the best and rated the highest by all at” Jingxi. “It was he who informed me that it would be impossible to work with the French in FIC,” reported Thomas. Yu had told Thomas that it would be easy to get agents through Tan, but he received a message from GBT the day after training of the French and Vietnamese *tirailleurs* had started prohibiting him from furnishing the OSS mission with guides. He was recalled to Kunming, but left a message behind for Thomas, which he received on the 19th, telling him that Tan had said, “Please advise Thomas if he enters FIC with French he will find whole population against them and will get no food, will also be sniped at as natives hate French.”⁷⁹

This message from Tan corroborated other information Thomas had heard. When he tried to make the point to Davis, French officers, and the French consul at Jingxi, he was reminded that “the natives had helped the French in FIC-in fact had helped many escape from the Japs, that the majority of the population was pro-French, and that the

Vietnamese) from the 9^{me} Régiment d’Infanterie Coloniale (RIC, or Colonial Infantry Regiment). The consummate story teller, Défourneaux, tells us that the Americans, who apparently lived separately from the French force, would go to the French village twice a day for meals. He had learned a few things from listening to their conversations. For example, he heard that “In combat the call of nature could place a soldier in a very awkward if not dangerous position, so the French colonial troops used opium to freeze their innards. They ingested the residue scraped from opium pipes. For days they did not have the urge to relieve themselves.”

⁷⁹ Charles Fenn to Robert Hall, 22 October 1944, Folder 340, Box 423, Entry 140; Richard Farr to Commanding General, 14th Air Force, 21 April 1945, Folder 4, Box 228, Entry 210, RG 226, NARA; *Report on Deer Mission*, Allison K. Thomas; and Major Gerald Davis to Chief of SO, OSS, 25 June 1945.

mission was sure to succeed especially with American Officers present and using American cover.” Davis, who belonged to that group of OSS officers who could not fathom that GBT was effective, came to the conclusion that the French or Chinese somehow controlled Simon Yu and pressured him not to cooperate with the OSS.⁸⁰

The collaboration with the French in the *Stew* Mission also encountered a problem with the French Military Mission. On June 14, the entire *Pakhoi* intelligence network suddenly shut down. Patti later learned from Lieutenant Jordan that the French military component of the mission had been ordered to stop sending intelligence to the Americans or face court martial.⁸¹ Three days later, Sainteny notified Heppner that before leaving for Paris (apparently the day before this message was sent), General Sabattier had asked the MMF to take charge of the French component of the “guerilla operation” (i.e., *Chow* Mission). It is doubtful that Sabattier asked the MMF for anything, and the control of French forces should have reverted to Alessandri in Sabattier’s absence. Sabattier would never return. As the French Military Mission’s representative, Sainteny had decided to suspend all French involvement in any “guerilla operation” (i.e., all collaboration with OSS in the *Chow* and *Pakhoi* Missions, *Comore* and *Poitou* had not yet begun) until he received a response to the following questions:

1. The true purpose of this operation
2. The orders given to the chief of operation and the means of execution foreseen.
3. What has already been undertaken.⁸²

⁸⁰ *Report on Deer Mission*; Major Gerald W. Davis to Chief SO, OSS, 25 June 1945.

⁸¹ Patti, 107-08.

⁸² The Chief of Squadron H.J. Sainteny to Colonel Heppner, [undated, penciled in “15/6 45 ?,” and letter from Heppner to Donovan offers confirms that this was received on 15 June], Folder 3427, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA. Patti, 107. Patti states that this letter was sent to Heppner on the 12th.

These questions transparently revealed the continued distrust of American postwar ambitions in Indochina, as well as the struggle between General Sabattier and DGER that Colonel Whitaker had warned was imminent. On June 22, Alessandri and Sainteny had made it clear in a meeting held with General Mervin Gross and other officials that Sainteny was in charge of all clandestine activity in Indochina and that he was responsible only to “Paris and/or the Ministry of Colonies.”⁸³

Meanwhile, Défourneaux met the French Consul Thiery, his *métis* “sidekick” named Alex, and Major Revole. Thiery’s main “duties were to intercept and interrogate Indochinese refugees crossing the border and provide them with documentation for China.” His impression by this time was that “the French were more concerned about the activities of the Indochinese people, both in and out of China, than the activities of the Japanese.” He reported this impression to Major Davis. Revole, who Défourneaux described as “an old colonial officer” struck him as someone who “knew a lot more about the situation than he was telling us.”⁸⁴ He told Thomas quite clearly that “unless we had an agreement with the Vietminh party, permitting the French to enter” Indochina it “was hopeless.”⁸⁵

After hearing of a report on the 18th that 200 Japanese were moving in the direction of the training camp at “Onning,” Davis became concerned about sending the

⁸³ Minutes of Conference Between Brigadier General Mervin E. Gross and General Alessandri, 22 June 1945, Folder 215, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

⁸⁴ Défourneaux, 153-54. Patti, 90. Patti makes no mention of meeting Revole during his visit to Baise-Jingxi area, though we can presume that he did because “over a period of ten days I interviewed perhaps a dozen officers and twice that number of senior NCOs and personnel from lower ranks, both French and Vietnamese, in addition to a number of civilian officials and businessmen.” Is it possible that Revole did not open up to Patti the way he did with Defourneaux and Thomas?

⁸⁵ *Report on Deer Mission.*

main body of *Chow* mission “through 200 miles of enemy and hostile native occupied country.” Davis thought the mission had a better chance of survival if two advance parties of fifteen men walked into Indochina at different times to establish a suitable advance base. The main body of the mission would parachute into the first base established by one or both of these advance teams. Patti approved this change in the plan by the 20th, but further modified it. Since there were sixty parachutes available for the mission, the two advance teams would be dropped into Indochina, somewhere near the target area. After they established a base for operations, a reduced main body of the thirty most suitable trained soldiers would be dropped into the base, and this group would be complemented by “natives” recruited “from the area of the advance base.”⁸⁶

Thomas was told on the 18th not to issue supplies or equipment to the French “pending solution of difficulties.” He received authorization to proceed by the 26th, so apparently the OSS had reached some accommodation with Sainteny by this time since we know the other missions (*Pakhoi*, *Comore* and *Poitou*) resumed as well.⁸⁷ However, Patti states in his memoir, that “After Sainteny suspended collaboration with the OSS, Wampler and I favored substituting the Vietnamese for the French in the sabotage operation, but Helliwell was doubtful.” Yet we know that Patti had gone in search of the Việt Minh in Baise before any agreement was made for joint French-OSS operations associated with *Pakhoi* or *Stew* Missions. He also sent word to Hồ Chí Minh that he

⁸⁶ Major Gerald W. Davis to Chief SO, OSS, 25 June 1945.

⁸⁷ *Report on Deer Mission*.

would like to proceed with an OSS-Việt Minh operation if Hồ would cooperate. Patti received Hồ's acceptance on the 30th.⁸⁸

Patti does not make clear why he did not tell Davis or Thomas that headquarters had decided to drop the French in favor of the Việt Minh. Perhaps Captain Patti could not order Thomas or Davis to do anything because they outranked him—note the leaders of the other missions mentioned above were either captains, like Patti, or lower ranking lieutenants—but this seems unlikely because they accepted orders from “headquarters in Kunming,” where Patti operated.⁸⁹ Thomas makes no mention in his mission report of any communication about Patti's agreement with Hồ or any understanding of the fact that Tân Trào was a base for the Việt Minh. He states simply:

Davis received a message from Hq which in turn came from AGAS, giving the DZ [parachute drop zone] coordinates, stating that there were about 3,000 armed guerillas in Tonkin, and that a combined French-American mission would not be welcome. I again discussed the matter with Davis and since there was *no directive* from Kunming on the subject, I decided to jump in as Advance Party with one French officer who would report back himself to the rest of the French on the subject.⁹⁰

Patti offers an alternative version in his memoir:

We advised Major Davis at Poseh of our change in plan and suggested he send the “Deer” and “Cat” cadres to the Tuyen-Quang area by plane where AGAS and GBT would have prepared drop zones. I asked Davis to caution Thomas and Holland to reconsider the original plan of taking French troops on their mission and informed him we had reliable information from the Viet Minh that a sizeable contingent of Vietnamese guerillas was available in the drop area and that, although their political orientation was Marxist, their immediate concern was to fight the Japanese, the major consideration in our operation.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Patti, 126.

⁸⁹ Major Robert Wampler to Major Gerald Davis, Letter of Instruction Re Stew Project, 1 June 1945, Folder 204, Box 14, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

⁹⁰ *Report on Deer Mission*. (italics added)

⁹¹ Patti, 127.

This was essentially the same information Simon Yu had given him a month before from Tan's report. The lack of clarity on this issue reveals a dangerously poor level of communication, indecision, or both. Had the OSS dropped a large contingent of armed French in Tân Trào there is little doubt that fighting would have broken out.

Thomas parachuted into the area of Kim Lung on July 16 with Sergeant Zeiski, Pfc. Prunier, a French officer (Lieutenant Monfort), and two *tirailleurs* (Sergeant Phac, a Vietnamese and Sergeant Logos, a *métis*). Thomas, Monfort and Zeilski landed in trees, but were rescued by the Tan, Phelan and 200 armed Việt Minh. They were fêted upon their arrival with welcoming signs, a specially built hut, Hà Nội beer and a freshly slaughtered "fatted calf" (an extravagance considering they were in the midst of a famine in Tonkin). Thomas' hut was a few yards from the huts occupied by Hồ, Phelan, and Tan. The camp was located about a mile from the small village of Tân Trào in a bamboo forest on the side of a hill, opening out into a flat valley covered with rice paddies. Tân Trào was about seventeen miles east of Tuyên Quang and roughly twenty-nine miles north of Thái Nguyên.⁹²

Hồ talked with Thomas the next day and "tabooed the idea that the party was communistic," and argued that "It would be obvious to the most ordinary observer that

⁹² *Report on Deer Mission*, Maurer, 32, and Défourneaux, 134. Thomas used scarcity of food as the principal reason why a third team under Captain Jack Singlaub should not be dropped into Kim Lũng on July 31. "Bank" Project, 2 August 1945, Folder 343, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA; Aaron Banks, *From OSS to Green Berets* (Novato: Presidio Press, 1986), 2, 101-04. Captain Aaron Banks was to lead *Bank Mission*, guerilla operation targeting the area from Hà Giang to Bắc Quang "to raid camps of the enemy, harass troops on the march, ambush vehicles, make road blocks, kill small patrols, if necessary kidnap individuals (officers and NCO's)," and gather intelligence. Banks spoke French and had commando experience in the European Theater. The other members of his team were Lieutenant Irving and Sergeant Baumgold (radio operator), and they were to work with the French-Vietnamese force that had been trained for *Stew Mission*. After Banks had trained them in commando tactics, he was told the mission was scrapped because the "Viet Minh will turn from harassing the Japanese to attacking" the French Indochina Army group.

the peasants didn't know what the word communism or socialism meant-but they did understand liberty and independence." What made Thomas suspicious of the Việt Minh, was not anything he had heard, he claimed, but their style of salute with a clenched fist. Thomas asked Phelan and Tan about Hồ and his rebel group, because they had been at Tân Trào for so much longer, but they both felt strongly that he was a true patriot, not a doctrinaire Communist. He thought Hồ's "eyes were piercing":⁹³

You could see how he could be very impressive to his people, almost like a Gandhi. He didn't dress in fancy clothes. He wore sandals and shorts, maybe a khaki shirt or a white shirt. Very simple, almost ascetic. But how could he impress our group too much? He was a very thin man with no pretense, nothing elegant about him... There was an inner confidence, an inner force that you could feel. But still, here were a few guerillas in ragged outfits with poor weapons, and here's a frail little old guy, y'know....here's a frail little old guy, y'know...⁹⁴

Hồ told Thomas that Monfort, who was recognized a member of the Việt Minh had served under him, could not stay. Similarly, Logos and Phac were permitted to stay, but only if they swore off allegiance to the French, which they were unwilling to do. As it turned out, all three were DGER agents. Hồ was willing to replace the French colonial army contingent that had been trained at "Onning" by 100, handpicked Việt Minh soldiers from a group of 200 he would make available. He also suggested a new target area for demolition, secretly aimed strengthening the *Liberated Zone*. The Hà Nội-Lạng

⁹³ *Report on Deer Mission*; Maurer 33-35. As in his meetings with GBT, Hồ continued to go by the pseudonym "C.M. Hoo." Later in life, Thomas complained "Everybody keeps telling me, 'Well, when you found out he was a Communist'—but that wasn't my job, to find out whether he was a Communist or not. We were fighting a common enemy." Défourneaux, 154, 163-64. This is hard to believe because Défourneaux commented that when he spoke to the French Consul Thiery and his sidekick in Jingxi, "One name kept coming up: Nguyễn-Ai-Quoc, who was also known as Ho Chi Minh. They believed that this known communist troublemaker was somewhere in China but out of their reach. They French had not given up trying to capture him, but they had thus far failed... They considered him ruthless, clever, and very dangerous. Previously associated with the French Communist Party, and indoctrinated by the Soviets in Hong Kong...Incidentally this much of the information I had obtained from the Consul had been transmitted to our" Baise "Headquarters for Major Thomas and to SI-OSS at Kunming."

⁹⁴ Maurer, 34.

Son road and railroad line had been bombed frequently by the 14th Air Force and besides the Japanese were strong in that area, so Hò conveniently suggested another target, Colonial Route 3.⁹⁵ Thomas' team meeting with Hò had gone so well that he recommended withdrawing the French and Vietnamese *tirailleurs* from *Stew* Mission. Davis resisted at first, but gave in. He still wanted *Cat* Team to parachute into a predesignated target area, but Thomas advised against it. Again, Davis relented after Captain Holland and a French officer flew over that target area and agreed it was too risky.⁹⁶

Shortly thereafter, Davis ordered Défourneaux to tell the French commanding officer that the OSS wanted back all the equipment they had provided:

He did not tell me the reason why this was done, but apparently the French already knew it.

When I arrived at the French compound, I instructed the French commanding officer to collect all the equipment we had given his troops and return it to the U.S. Army. When a circle of armed French officers slowly closed around me and pushed me against a wall, I knew that I was in a very precarious situation. I tried to tell them that I had nothing to do with the decisions, but they were upset by the fact that I had ratted on them earlier. They really believed that only I could have told the U.S. Command that their primary aim was the securing of their colony...To them I was a Frenchman and I was a traitor. One of the junior officers suggested that I be shot on the spot. However Lt. McCarthy, the senior officer...interceded and told them that this was not the way to handle the problem. He advised me to get out of their compound and not to return, and he promised that some day they would get me.⁹⁷

It appears that the *Deer* Team's advance party meeting with Hò was the decisive event for ending the collaboration with the French on *Stew* Mission, but the decision to have the advance team parachute into the Việt Minh camp had made this inevitable. Was this all

⁹⁵ Ibid, 33-34; *Report on Deer Mission*; and Patti, 211-12.

⁹⁶ *Report on Deer Mission*; Défourneaux, 158.

⁹⁷ Défourneaux, 157.

the result of Patti's Machiavellian maneuvering to overcome Helliwell's resistance to the idea of working with the Việt Minh, or just the result of poor planning and reaction to events as they unfolded?

Thomas went on a couple of reconaissance trips to Thái Nguyên, Tuyên Quang, Colonial Route 3, and a fort occupied by the Japanese at Chợ Chu with Prunier and Việt Minh guards in the latter part of the month. The rest of *Deer Team* and *Cat Team* parachuted into Tân Trào on July 29 before Thomas and Prunier had returned. Défourneaux describes his first impression of Võ Nguyên Giáp, known by his pseudonym "Van," as he approached to welcome the Americans:

I thought I was imagining things. The man, an oriental approximately five feet six, wore a white suit, black tie, black shoes and a black homburg. We were in the deep jungle of Tonkin and there he was, dressed as if he'd come form an embassy reception or the board meeting of a bank.⁹⁸

Soon after they arrived, *Cat Team* left with thirty Việt Minh to set up an advance base somewhere south of Phú Bình. Montfort, Logos, and Phac left Tân Trào, taking Red Cross supplies Phelan had managed to obtain to join a French refugee camp set up by the Việt Minh. The day before Thomas had arrived at Kim Lũng, the Việt Minh had attacked the Japanese at the resort village of Tam Đảo. During the two-hour firefight, in which the Việt Minh suffered casualties, the French civilians at the resort fled into the surrounding jungle. Afterwards, the Việt Minh offered the French protection and 20 men, women and

⁹⁸ Défourneaux, 138, 163. Incapable of passing up an opportunity to chastise his commander who he could not respect, Défourneaux tells how upon their return the reconnoitering the fort at Chợ Chu, Prunier told the others, out of earshot from the Major, that when Thomas had seen a Japanese soldier through his binoculars "He jumped up and down laughing and saying: 'I saw a Jap, I saw a Jap, I saw a Jap!'" This criticism of Thomas, who from Défourneaux's descriptions does not seem to have ever faced a combat situation, is consistent with Thomas' own account: "Made personal reconaissance of Jap held fort at Cho Chu, where I had the *pleasure* of seeing 10 Japs at the fort-through the telescope." (italics added)

children accepted. The timing of the attack on Tam Đảo may have been a coincidence, or it may have been orchestrated to influence the Americans, impress the French or both. Though Hồ had told Montfort and his accomplices that they had to return to China, he made attempts through Thomas and Phelan to arrange a meeting with high French officials either in Kunming or at Kim Lũng. Montfort would lead the Frenchmen out to China by foot, while the women and children were flown out.⁹⁹

Hồ, who had been sick when the OSS teams arrived, had gotten worse by early August. Défourneaux, the French emigrant who had a condescending view of China, the Chinese, and Vietnamese he encountered and no sympathy for the Việt Minh, could “not recognize a ruthless and dangerous individual in the man with his eyes closed, “his yellow skin stretched over his skeletal body” who lay close to death before him. Hoagland, suspected he had “multiple problems including malaria, dysentery and perhaps other tropical diseases.” The *Deer Team*’s medic gave him some aspirin and quinine, but these medicines did not improve his condition. “Now he lay on his cot for hours in a coma,” wrote Giáp. A Tay traditional medicine man “burned a root that he had just dug up in the forest, sprinkled the cinders in a bowl of rice soup and fed it” to Hồ. Within a couple of days Hồ’s condition vastly improved.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ David G. Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 233-34; *Report on Deer Mission*; Défourneaux, 163. Marr states that the attack occurred on July 26, but Thomas reported it occurred on the 25th. The offer of protection for the freed French at Tam Đảo, rather than simply abandon them, may have been part of a policy by the part the Việt Minh to encourage the French to come to the negotiating table. *History of the August Revolution*, 101. The Việt Minh claimed to have killed 10 Japanese at Tam Đảo.

¹⁰⁰ Défourneaux, 166; Maurer, 33; and William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life* (New York: Hyperion, 2000), 302. Défourneaux, 167-68, 199-200. Though he had grown up in France, experienced the U.S., Great Britain, and, to some extent, India, China, and Việt Nam, Défourneaux remained incredibly provincial. “Unlike the other students who were typically Mongoloids,” he remarked about Mr. Bach, a Vietnamese interpreter, “with his light hair and skin had very distinctive Caucasian features. French or European blood must have flown in his veins.” He associated a few Vietnamese “girls” he came across on

The *Deer* Team began training the Việt Minh for their operation on August 9. They selected forty from a group of 110. Although the training period only lasted five days due to the Japanese surrender, members of the *Deer* Team probably learned as much from their pupils as the Việt Minh learned. Crates were dropped in with small arms, carbines, M-1 rifles, Bren and Thompson submachine guns, one or two light machine-guns, hand-grenades, 60mm mortars, and a few bazookas. The *Deer* Team taught the Việt Minh to clean and shoot the machine-guns, throw hand-grenades, fire mortars, shoot bazookas, and triangulate (for stationary rifle-firing). The three parachute drops of weapons would only supply one infantry company with mostly small arms and, given the short time period involved, the training provided was insubstantial. Instructions were translated from the English into French by Défourneaux and Vietnamese by a Việt Minh translator. The mostly very young students had seen weapons captured from the Japanese, some “stems,” French machine-guns, Russian rifles, and Brens that had been dropped into Tonkin for Alessandri’s troops by the British, but were more familiar with antique weapons, such as single-shot powder type shot guns and the “Musqueton,” or pre-modern ones such as bows and arrows.¹⁰¹

Phelan had brought in a copy of the U.S. Constitution, and the OSS team had brought a book entitled *A Short History of American Democracy*. Similar books aimed at

a trail with civilization because unlike the local peasants who wore “dark clothing and blackened their teeth with lacquer or betel juice for beauty or to kill the pain,” the girls were wearing the *áo dài*, “the traditional Indochinese long pants and flowing slit skirts,” and had white teeth. His “encounter” with a Vietnamese prostitute he presumed Hồ had sent him, “was a disaster.” “In some way she seemed older than her looks; she may have been 25. Yet her breasts were rather small and her public area was almost bare. She smiled invitingly, but for some reason this ivory-colored body did not sexually arouse me. There was something strange about the girl. Unlike Caucasian girls that I had know[n] she had no hips. She was absolutely straight from her shoulders to her thighs.”

¹⁰¹ *Report on Deer Mission*; Défourneaux, 168-69, 172, and 178-79; and Maurer, 35. Thomas reported the last cargo drop consisted of “22 chutes.”

promoting the U.S.'s political culture may also have been brought in. Such books were unlikely to have influenced the Marxist-Leninist Việt Minh. However, Hồ consistently used his knowledge of American political ideals to win favor with American representatives and these books provided him additional material. Thomas and Défourneaux had also noticed that there was a political school at the training site, and discovered young Vietnamese learned songs here before going about the country in small propaganda groups to spread the message of the Việt Minh to a largely illiterate society.¹⁰²

Unlike his second in command, Défourneaux, who was born and raised in France, Thomas had quickly developed an affinity for the Việt Minh. He received a message that Ebaugh's team, which was working with Chinese troops along the China-Indochina border area, had captured two pro-Japanese villages. Thomas characterized this information as "disheartening news" and a "lamentable state of affairs," believing that Ebaugh failed to realize that the Vietnamese could never be pro-Japanese, but "were only trying to keep out the Chinese who in the past had acted as bandits and robbers" in Indochina. Acting as Hồ Chí Minh's advocate, he sent a wire to Ebaugh telling him that "Vietminh party chief here says he has no objections to Chinese fighting in FIC under American control if they don't act like bandits. Chief here sent message by courier to Party Chief Caobang area to contact Ebaugh and enter into amicable relations."¹⁰³

The *Deer* Team and the Việt Minh learned of the Japanese surrender on the 15th, and the leaders of the Việt Minh convened a meeting in which Thomas participated.

¹⁰² Défourneaux 167, 174; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 364; and *Report on Deer Mission*.

¹⁰³ *Report on Deer Mission*.

They decided to end the training, begin packing and headed the following day towards the provincial capital Thái Nguyên to “see what could be done in the way of ‘action.’” Before setting out the next day, Thomas sent a message to the base at Baise expressing his desire to obtain the surrender of Japanese troops in the area. The reply was emphatic, “the war was over and under no circumstances were we to accept any Japanese surrender.” After three days of marching through the mountains, Thomas received additional order “to cease all operations. Do not. Rpt not. Accept surrender of any Jap units. You will prepare to move to Hanoi...Don’t dispose of any equipment until I get Kunming direction.” Thomas had already ordered that the weapons dropped at the base near Tân Trào be distributed to the Việt Minh. He did, however, tell the rest of the *Deer* Team that they did not have to follow him, and he continued marching alongside Giáp. He had become increasingly close with the man he knew as Van, who began to open up to the American and confided that the French had killed his wife and sister-in-law.¹⁰⁴

The leaders of the Việt Minh reconvened on the 19th to plan their action against Thái Nguyên. They sent agents reconnoiter the town. When they returned, these agents reported that at nighttime thirty to forty Japanese were garrisoned outside the town in an old, concrete French fort, but none were inside it. Giáp and the other leaders decided (according to Thomas’ version), or Thomas and Giáp (Défourneaux’s version) decided to demand the Governor surrender with his *garde indigène*, and issue a separate surrender ultimatum to the Japanese. The Việt Minh initiated their operation between 3-4 a.m. The

¹⁰⁴ *Report on Deer Mission*; Défourneaux, 183; and Maurer, 36.

Governor and his 160 *garde indigène* surrendered by 6:30 a.m. without a shot being fired.¹⁰⁵

The Japanese, however, would not surrender. Défourneaux provides more details on this matter than Thomas reveals in his report. Défourneaux did not want to participate, but Squires had gone with Thomas and the Việt Minh leaders to demand the Japanese surrender. They would not surrender to Thomas because they thought he was French:

To prove his American nationality the Major offered his identity card, a 38-caliber round, and a small American flag to the Japanese garrison commander. But the Japanese officer still refused to believe him. Disgusted he went outside and, waving his small American flag, walked toward the Japanese emplacement. Their reply was still “No”. The Major admitted then that perhaps he should not have been there!...

It seemed to us that more and more the Major was behaving peculiarly. At times he stared into the distance, talking to himself. As he spoke he often started to laugh for reasons known only to him. His laugh was more a cackle than a laugh. When seeing a Japanese soldier his strange behavior and laughing increased.¹⁰⁶

Défourneaux heard Thomas issuing orders during the attack to Việt Minh platoons over the “hand-talkies” that had been distributed to them along with the weapons. The reconnaissance team had been wrong, there were small Japanese detachments in four different buildings within the city, and intermittent firefights continued into the 25th before the Japanese agreed to a ceasefire.¹⁰⁷

Thomas’ account of engagements the Việt Minh troops had with the Japanese, intentional or not, suggests these attacks were prompted by the desire to gain booty rather than to vanquish an enemy. On July 10th, for example, they captured thirty-six rifles from Lục An Châu, forty rifles at Yên Bình four days later, nine single-shot rifles,

¹⁰⁵ *Report on Deer Mission.*

¹⁰⁶ Défourneaux, 186.

¹⁰⁷ *Report on Deer Mission*; Défourneaux, 184.

eighteen horses, and five tons of rice from Chợ Mới on Colonial Route 3 on the 23rd. Though Thái Nguyên, had additional symbolic importance, booty was a major prize of the attack as 593 rifles (thirty-three Russian and 560 French), two machine guns, ninety-three cases of various munitions (Russian and French ammunition, aviation bombs belonging to the *sûreté*, mortar shells and bombs), 250 pairs of Japanese shoes, seventy-two blankets, eight horses, four automobiles, over 3,000 tons of rice, and various other items were captured. There were six Japanese, five civilians, and three Việt Minh killed in the fighting, and more than twice this many injured from amongst these three groups.¹⁰⁸

THE AUGUST REVOLUTION

On August 19, Emperor Bảo Đại broadcast a public message to Charles de Gaulle on Radio Sài Gòn, stating in part:

Even if you should reconquer the rule of this country no one will obey you, every village will be a resisting force, each people will be your enemy, you will have to withdraw, because you will not be able to live in that atmosphere. We wish you know that in this time there is only one way for you to keep your property in our country: you officially recognize the independence of our country and never dream of coming back to our country in any way.¹⁰⁹

Bảo Đại expressed the sentiments of most Vietnamese, but he himself was tainted by his collaboration with the Japanese. The August Revolution was well under way. The term is really a misnomer. While it happened in August and the political changes it initiated were revolutionary, the Vietnamese assumption of power merely filled a void left by the

¹⁰⁸ *Report on Deer Mission.*

¹⁰⁹ Director William J. Donovan, Memorandum for the President and Secretary of State, 21 August 1945, Reel 31, M1642, NARA.

Japanese surrender and reflected the latter's willingness to hand over power to the "natives." Bảo Đại would willingly abdicate, and Trần Trọng Kim was finally able to join his cabinet in resigning. The Allies would not begin to arrive in force for nearly a month. The revolution was led by insurrections in the four largest and most commercially important cities: Hà Nội, Tourane, Sài Gòn, and the Vietnamese imperial city of Huế. The rural areas followed suit. The most significant feature of the August Revolution is perhaps the way in which the populace, with few exceptions, rallied around the Việt Minh.

Hà Nội was the first of the cities to fall. The drama began in the afternoon of August 17 during an outdoor meeting of the General Association of Government Employees attended by as many as 20,000 people in a square in front of the Opera House. Shortly after the imperial Vietnamese flag had been raised and the second speaker stood up to speak, people in the crowd raised small Việt Minh flags and began cheering, "Hooray for the Việt Minh flag!" A team of armed Việt Minh took to the podium, seized it and cut down the imperial flag. Then another team unfurled an enormous Việt Minh flag over the face of the Opera House. A Việt Minh representative then addressed the crowd and urged them to participate in a general insurrection. The next day, Việt Minh spread throughout the city handing out flyers, addressing the people from megaphones, and pasting up bills agitating the residents to rise up. On the 19th a massive crowd surged

through the city led by the Việt Minh taking over various symbols of government authority without bloodshed.¹¹⁰

The Việt Minh controlled Tourane and most of Huế by August 23. Trần Trọng Kim refused an offer by the Japanese to defend the imperial palace, and advised Bảo Đại to abdicate before it was too late for him to avoid the fate of Louis XVI and Czar Nicholas II.¹¹¹ Bảo Đại abdicated on the 25th, and presented his royal sword and seal to the Việt Minh representative, Trần Huy Liệu, on the 30th. Thenceforth, he was to be an ordinary citizen, Nguyễn Vĩnh Thụy. The next day, he was invited to become the Provisional Government's Supreme Advisor.¹¹²

Isaac Sacks has observed that the Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo “movements represented the first successful efforts of non-Communist Vietnamese nationalists to establish political bases within the masses of the peasantry.”¹¹³ Supported by the Japanese, it is widely recognized that they could have taken control of Cochinchina had they taken the initiative. Why then didn't they? Tran My-Van speculates that the taint of their collaboration with the Japanese and the unwillingness of Tsuchihashi to permit Cường

¹¹⁰ Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 385-86; and 397-98; Huỳnh Kim Khánh, *Vietnamese Communism, 1925-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 324.

¹¹¹ Huỳnh Kim Khánh, *Vietnamese Communism, 1925-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 324.; Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945*, 389.

¹¹² Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 449, 451-53; Bernard Fall, *The Viet-Minh Regime; Government and Administration of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1956), 4. Bảo Đại verified much later that he had abdicated freely, fearing civil war if he attempted to defy the Việt Minh.

¹¹³ Isaac Milton Sacks, “Communism and Nationalism in Viet Nam 1918-1946” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1960), 175; Bernard B. Fall, “The Political-Religious Sects of Viet-Nam,” *Pacific Affairs* 28, 3 (Sept., 1955): 246. According to Bernard Fall, the Hòa Hảo were reported to have had military control of most of the territory south and west of Saigon by the time of the Japanese surrender in August 1945.” Followers of the Hòa Hảo numbering 15,000, armed with pikes and knives layed siege to a Việt Minh garrison in Cần Thơ shortly after the August Revolution, but were decimated.

Đề to return as emperor had a severe demoralizing effect.¹¹⁴ The more accurate answer, however, is that they were isolated in Cochinchina while the people of Tonkin and Annam were rallying around the leadership of the Việt Minh, and Trần Văn Giàu, strengthened by the Vanguard Youth at his compatriot, Phạm Ngọc Thạch's command took the initiative. The Cao Đài, Hòa Hảo, Trotskyists and Việt Minh had banded together in the Mặt Trận Quốc Gia Thống Nhất (United National Front) on August 16, but they were plagued by differences of opinion which paralyzed them from taking united action. During the evening of the 24th, Trần Văn Giàu declared an insurrection underway. Phạm Ngọc Thạch deployed units of the Vanguard Youth in Sài Gòn to occupy the Governor's Palace, the Treasury, the power plant, the main PTT building, local police stations, and important bridges. The next morning, Trần Văn Giàu gave a speech to hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese, followed by Thạch's announcement of the Ủy Ban Hành Chánh Lâm Thời Nam Bộ (Southern Provisional Administrative Committee), which was dominated by members of the ICP.¹¹⁵

CONCLUSION

The principal theme of this chapter was American operations in Indochina and their relationship to the Việt Minh. Aside from the effective bombing missions launched

¹¹⁴ Tran My-Van, "Japan and Vietnam's Caodaists: a wartime relationship (1939-45)," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27, 1 (March, 1996): 50. To the extent that the Cao Đài remained a threat to the return of the French in the South, they were severely repressed on October 15-16, and lacking any base to sustain itself in north of the 16th parallel, they were eliminated as a potential resurgent threat to either the French or the Việt Minh.

¹¹⁵ Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945*, 374-75, 385, and 387-88; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 135 note 260, 458-61. Six of the nine members, including Phạm Ngọc Thạch, were members of the ICP, though he was at this time a clandestine member. The remaining three represented the General Labor Group, the Independent Nationalist Party, and the Democratic Party. The latter was also a member of the Vanguard Youth leadership committee.

by General Chennault's 14th Air Force aimed at the Japanese supply lines, U.S. operations in Indochina were directed by the OSS. Throughout the war, the OSS had hoped and planned to become directly involved in operations within Indochina, but politics always interfered with their plans. The GBT offered reasonable intelligence support for Chennault, and U.S. military personnel dedicated to the fight in the Pacific War were focused overwhelmingly in island operations in the Pacific Ocean. After the Japanese coup of March 9, 1945, the GBT intelligence network, which relied on French soldiers and civilians, was incapacitated. As a result the OSS was temporarily able to overcome political impediments to their plans for operations in Indochina and this became permanent following President Roosevelt's death and the end of his restrictions on U.S. activities there.

Project *Quail* provided the outline for U.S. intelligence and espionage activities in Indochina, but was modified by a secret diversionary plan codenamed *Carbonado*. Due to this diversionary plan which sought to make the Japanese believe that there was an imminent threat of an Allied invasion in southern China, OSS operations in Indochina were directed at Tonkin. Despite difficult political issues, the OSS negotiated with various French representatives in southern China for joint operations in Indochina. Based on a history of tense relations between the French and Americans in SEAC and the China Theater over Indochina, the relationship was difficult throughout. However, the French needed the resources the relatively well-financed OSS had, and the OSS needed the personnel the French Indochina Army offered. Units typically employed three

Americans and a contingent of Vietnamese *tirailleurs* led by a handful of French officers. For the most part, these units were just beginning to be deployed when the war ended.

Chow Mission was the exception. It built in part on contacts GBT had developed with the Việt Minh, and the relationship the OSS's new intelligence chief for Indochina, Captain Patti, had developed in a meeting or two with Hồ Chí Minh. The *Deer* Team trained forty men over a five day period and distributed weapons and ammunition for approximately a company amongst the Việt Minh at Tân Trào. This support from the OSS was certainly helpful, but relatively insignificant to either the success of the August Revolution or the strength the Việt Minh built up during the roughly 15 and a half months of peace which preceded the subsequent war. It did, however, offer a relationship between the U.S. and the Việt Minh which could have been built upon. The Russians needed time to rebuild, the Communist Chinese had their own fight to wage against the Guomindang. The U.S. had the resources which could have helped the Vietnamese rebuild their country, but the rising anti-communist fervor in the U.S. government prevented even a consideration of this option.

The August Revolution was not a violent revolution, but a filling of the void left by the Japanese after their surrender and decision to hand over the public administration to the "natives." Following decades of suppression, the Việt Minh simply came out on top as the best organized, most broad-based, and most aggressive of the nationalist movements. Had they waited to take power, they might not have been able to do so, for within three weeks the Allied occupation armies began to arrive in the divided Vietnamese occupation zone.

Sài Gòn *The native Annamites, having tasted a puppet independence, thirsted for more. In the forlorn hope of escaping renewed colonial rule, they went on a rousing rampage.*

Time, 8 October 1945¹

The French have launched a war to reconquer our country. If they want war, we will make war. They will fight by their means. We will fight by our means. They will advance along the roads and railways, the rivers and canals, razing our villages, killing our people. We will make war our way. We will be everywhere. We will destroy everything the French own. We will destroy their factories, their plantations, their railroads. We will blow up their bridges and tear up the rails. We will make Indo-China uninhabitable for the French. We certainly do not want this war but if we have to have it we'll destroy everything there is in order to build a new life for ourselves, even if the French force us to start from the veriest beginning.

Trần Văn Giàu²

Chapter 12

South of the 16th Parallel: General Gracey and French Colonial Rule

The final four chapters examine what occurred in Việt Nam after the August Revolution through the end of 1946 when war broke out between the French and Việt Minh. Although Việt Nam had been divided for wartime purposes, no significant number of Allied troops had infiltrated the region, and consequently no major actions against the Japanese had taken place. The division was maintained for purposes of Allied occupation by the Chinese in the North and the British in the South. The U.S. maintained an interest in repatriating its prisoners of war (POWs), and teams were sent to Sài Gòn and Hà Nội both for this purpose, and to gather intelligence on the Japanese, the local situation, and even the Allies represented there. One aim of these four chapters is to investigate the

¹ "Fever in Saigon," *Time* 46:14 (8 October 1945): 38.

² Quoted in Harold R. Isaacs, "The Patterns of Revolt in Asia," *Harper's* 192: 1151 (April, 1946): 347-48.

activities of the Americans in these two areas, particularly the OSS, the Strategic Services Unit (SSU), and eventually the consuls as America's role shifted from wartime to peacetime representation in Việt Nam. The bulk of these chapters, however, is devoted to chronicling the major events which occurred in the transition from Japanese occupation to the French attempt to resume colonial rule, which provided the basis for conflict. This and the subsequent two chapters will examine the return of French colonialism to Việt Nam, with special focus on OSS activities during this period. The final chapter will chart the events which led to the Franco-Vietnamese War beginning at the end of 1946, with attention paid to the awareness of the U.S. of these events, and its lack of action.

The decision of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to hand over military authority over Indochina south of the 16th parallel to the South East Asia Command opened the door for the British-led reimposition of French colonialism in at least the southern portion of Việt Nam. Although the division had been premised on the assumption that American lives would be spared fighting the Japanese, the division was not rescinded despite the fact that no British forces had arrived in Indochina prior to the end of the war. The Truman Administration's recognition of French sovereignty over Indochina, together with increasing tensions between the Communist Soviet Union and the U.S. signaled a tacit renunciation of the Atlantic Charter's principles in Indochina. This chapter begins with a look at American involvement south of the 16th parallel, and charts the return of French colonialism there.

THE OSS IN THE SOUTH

In Rangoon, Burma on August 30th, First Lieutenant Emile R. Counasse assumed command of the OSS's Operation *Embankment* to negotiate with the Japanese command at Sài Gòn for the release and evacuation of the American POWs and civilian internees in French Indochina south of the 16th parallel. In addition to Counasse, the members of the mission were Sergeant Nardella, Sergeant Hejna, Captain Woolington, the medical officer, and "Paul Eugene," the mission's radio operator, a member of the Free Thai Movement whose real name was Piya Chakkaphak. They stopped in Bangkok for fuel, and unexpectedly picked up Captain Fitzsimmons, an ex-POW who knew a large number of the POWs in Indochina. They also agreed to fly in a British officer, Major Pierce, who was on a similar mission. Several members of the mission assumed "Mexican ranks" (military parlance for unauthorized, self-appointed rank) to increase their status in the eyes of the Japanese who were believed to place a lot of importance on rank. Counasse was "promoted" to major, Nardella, and Hejna became captains, and radio operator Piya assumed the rank of second lieutenant. They landed near Sài Gòn on the afternoon of September 1, and were met by a Japanese colonel and his staff, who drove them to the Hôtel Continental in the city.³

³ "Embankment Operation—Saigon," by 1st Lt. Emile R. Counasse, 1-6 September 1945, File 284, Box 25; "Report on Operation Embankment by Sgt. Nardella," Folder 284, Box 25, Entry 110; "Saigon Mission," Emile R. Counasse, File 2151, Box 124, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA; Piya Chakkaphak, unpublished paper, "My Role in the Free Thai Movement," courtesy of E. Bruce Reynolds. Piya Chakkaphak wrote about training he received with Counasse, and later Peter Dewey (see below) at "Camp Y," an OSS site 60-70 kilometers north of the British naval base and airport in Trincomalee, on the northeast coast of Sri Lanka. The training sounds similar to the weapons and jungle training René Défourneaux received in India, except the trainers were all American personnel. There is a discrepancy about when the mission landed in

After having assured his transport to Sài Gòn, the British Major attempted to take control of the American mission before the arrival of British forces since they were operating in the British zone, but Counasse made it clear that they would not recognize his command, and he parted company from the Americans. After their arrival, Counasse observed Major Pierce, who spoke French quite well, giving a “speech to the glory of the British Empire in English,” to an assembled crowd of French *colons*.⁴

In his report, Nardella stated succinctly:

There was or is, a drugstore revolution going on by the Annamites against the French colonial government. About eight or nine days ago they took over control of the government and all important civil functions and offices. Their control at present is complete and it seems very incongruous that they should continue to loot and molest the French population after they have actually gained what they wanted in the first place. Our relations with the Annamites as well as those with the Japs are splendid.⁵

He believed the government was run by the “Social Democrat Party,” and said “from the French point of view,” the “Kowdist” (Cao Đài) group was “by and large the most aggressive of all” Vietnamese “groups and have furnished most of the armed demonstrations and the organized beating and looting of French civilians.” “The Communist party,” according to Nardella, was a “pro-French group.”⁶ This phase of Operation *Embankment* was clearly focused more on POWs than gaining accurate intelligence.

Indochina. Nardella states that it was September 2, while Counasse states it was the first of the month. “Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War,” *Hearings before the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 92nd Congress* (Washington: United States GPO, 1973), 282. Bluechel’s report on the chronology of Operation Embankment states that Counasse arrived on September 2.

⁴ “Embankment Operation—Saigon.”

⁵ “Report on Operation Embankment by Sgt. Nardella.”

⁶ *Ibid.*

After returning to Sài Gòn from a visit to a POW camp on his second day in Indochina, Counasse ran into a well organized demonstration he estimated at 30,000-40,000 Vietnamese. The leaders carried Japanese swords and pistols, and “a few others were armed with old flintlock shotguns, some Japanese rifles, and a miscellaneous collection of old weapons,” though the majority had long bamboo spears. They had put up banners in Vietnamese, French, and English, the latter clearly aimed at the few Americans. Counasse reported seeing French and English phrases denouncing the French such as: “Down with French Communism; Down with French Fascism; and Down with French Nazism.” He also saw appeals for American support: “Give me Liberty or Death; Independence or Death; Welcome to the Allied Legation; and Welcome to the Deliverers.”⁷

In the midst of the demonstrations, a Vietnamese guard armed with a rifle stopped Counasse even though his car was draped with three American flags. More irritated than scared, Counasse drew his .32 pistol, and the guard reportedly dropped his rifle and ran. When Counasse met four other Vietnamese guards, apparently with his pistol still drawn, they also dropped their guns and ran. Then he met “one leader” with whom he had to “argue” for ten minutes to explain that Americans were neutral before he was permitted to proceed. The demonstrations, which began in the morning after the Americans arrived, reached a fever pitch by late afternoon, and the Americans heard gunfire throughout the city.⁸

⁷ “Saigon Mission”; “Report on Operation Embankment by Sgt. Nardella.”

⁸ “Saigon Mission.”

When Counasse returned to the hotel, he found an estimated 1,000 *colons* in the halls and lobby seeking refuge from the Vietnamese mobs. He demanded that the Japanese protect the hotel, but the Japanese command told him they would only post guards in front of the rooms occupied by the Americans. Counasse then arranged with the manager to buy the hotel and two annexes to force the Japanese to protect these buildings, and, indirectly, the *colons* seeking protection in them from any Vietnamese marauders. The demonstrations finally dissipated by 11:00 p.m. After being shot at from a nearby building as he stepped outside of the hotel, Counasse decided to grant refuge to the *colons* for the night, who slept twenty to thirty to a room. The following day, he was able to get the Japanese to increase their guard to one hundred soldiers with three light machine guns, which he arranged strategically around the outside of the building.⁹

Apparently encouraged by Counasse's efforts, more French sought the help of the small American group:

The French were constantly coming to us with all sorts of pleas to get back their lost babies and wives their husbands after having been separated. No sooner would we get into our rooms and in bed when the guard would come with somebody else. Most of the stories were tragic, and, I believe, were genuine, causing us great concern. Were sorry that [w]e were not able to do anything to help them.¹⁰

They told the Americans there were two either British or American POWs being held in a certain jail as a ruse to get them to intercede on their families' and friends behalf.¹¹ The jailer told Dr. Woolington, who was accompanied by two officers, that there were no Americans interned there, but the doctor demanded to see. He did not find

⁹ Ibid; "Report on Operation Embankment by Sgt. Nardella"; and "Embankment Operation—Saigon."

¹⁰ "Saigon Mission."

¹¹ Counasse wrote "two British POWs" in one report and "at least two Americans" in another.

any jailed Americans, but he did see “hundreds of men, women and children,” apparently *colons*, “who had been beaten and tied up and otherwise abused. Most of them could not stand and needed immediate medical attention.” Incensed at the conditions, Dr. Woolington had a long discussion with the jailer about the inhumane conditions, and threatened to inform the Allied governments of the treatment of these prisoners. The argument convinced the jailer to release the women and children prisoners at once; and the men were released the following morning.¹²

The Italian consul in Sài Gòn informed Counasse’s group that in addition to POWs already accounted for at a camp and a civilian hospital, there were also Americans interned at Mỹ Tho, north of Sài Gòn. Counasse set out for Mỹ Tho accompanied by an interpreter, the Italian consul, and two French women who had been interned there. About ten kilometers outside of Sài Gòn, they ran into a barricade in the road surrounded by 100-150 Vietnamese armed with old flintlocks, shotguns, and sharpened bamboo spears. Counasse described this group of Vietnamese as “savage barbarians, screaming at the top of their lungs.” The members of Counasse’s party were disarmed, bound and handled roughly over two hours, during which time he was stabbed in the leg with one of the bamboo spears, before they were able to convince the Vietnamese of their identity. When releasing them, the Vietnamese explained that it was their patriotic duty to stop everyone, and kill all Frenchmen. A further two kilometers in the direction of Mỹ Tho, they were detained at a village another twenty minutes until the headman arrived. Since it was the middle of the afternoon by then, and they learned that there were additional

¹² “Saigon Mission.”

villages spread about two kilometers apart before Mỹ Tho, they decided to turn back, and try again later.¹³

On another occasion, Counasse was told that the Vietnamese were planning on taking over the hotel, and massacring the French. This threat subsided after Japanese reinforcements and weapons were brought to the hotel. Counasse reported that he was told the Vietnamese were putting guns in caskets, and burying them in marked graves “to be dug up at the appropriate time.” Consequently, while Nardella stated that members of the mission had good relations with the Vietnamese, the leader of the mission had daily conflicts with them, which could not have encouraged empathy for their patriotic struggle.¹⁴

Nardella blamed their lack of more active support for the French on a lack of policy directive: “our mission was purely military and in no way could we take care of committing the State Department’s yet unknown policy in the matter” of defending the *colons* against the Vietnamese. He also set aside the incidents enumerated above involving Counasse, and said, “on the whole the Annamites too are extremely anxious to cultivate good will with the United States and hence they were very courteous and not at all inimical to us.”¹⁵ Despite their professed ignorance of State Department policy, the actions of this brief OSS mission, operating less than a week in Indochina, were more consistent with that policy than either of the two later OSS missions which were involved in divided Indochina.

¹³ Ibid; “Report on Operation Embankment by Sgt. Nardella.”

¹⁴ “Saigon Mission.”

¹⁵ “Report on Operation Embankment by Sgt. Nardella.”

Major A. Peter Dewey arrived in Sài Gòn on the 4th with four other OSS officers, Captain Herbert J. Bluechel, Captain Leslie S. Frost, Lieutenant Konrad Bekker, and Lieutenant George Wickes. They were followed the next day by three additional OSS officers, Captains Frank White, Joseph Coolidge, and Herber Varner. All were members of the second detachment of Project *Embankment* which would stay in Indochina after Counasse's group left with the POWs. Dewey was educated in Switzerland before obtaining his degree with a double major in French language and history from Yale University, and later worked for a brief time in Paris for the *Chicago Daily News*. He joined the Army in July 1942, and performed intelligence work in North Africa. In mid-1943, Dewey joined the OSS, and participated in a covert operation into southern France which worked with local resistance forces in August 1944 in netting 400 Nazi prisoners and destroying three tanks. After arriving in Sài Gòn, Dewey assumed the self-appointed rank of lieutenant colonel, though he subordinated himself and his men to Counasse while the remained. Nardella left with twenty-four POWs on the 5th, and the rest of Counasse's group and 214 American POWs were evacuated to India on seven Tenth Combat Cargo planes the following day. Dewey's cover mission was to investigate war crimes, prisoners of war, and the condition of U.S. properties. Dewey, the highest ranking U.S. officer in Indochina south of the 16th parallel, remained behind with his OSS team despite the fact that all POWs had flown out.¹⁶

¹⁶ "Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War," 281-82; "Embankment Operation—Saigon"; Archimedes L.A. Patti, *Why Viet Nam? Prelude to America's Albatross* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 560; and Dixie R. Bartholomew-Feis, "The Men on the Ground," Ph.D. Dissertation (Ohio State University, 2001), 337-39. Bartholomew-Feis quotes Dewey as having said, "My personal feeling with respect to the French have always been that Americans can and must understand them. Our national security depends on an alliance resulting from an awareness of the facts."

Joseph P. McCarthy, Chief of X-2 (counterespionage) for OSS in IBT, had provided Dewey with additional orders on August 14. Dewey was to gather detailed information on the Japanese, their collaborators of any prominence; the existence, structure, and operations of all foreign intelligence agencies, especially the French intelligence service; “to gather detailed and accurate information concerning the political, economic, industrial and social structure of the areas in which he would be involved”; and to “inquire into and report upon the progress of Communism in French Indo-China.” He was also to find out if Vietnamese Communists were “locally inspired or dictated by Russia.”¹⁷ These instructions were, as Archimedes Patti describes them, quasi-consular roles specific OSS officers had been ordered to fulfill in Southeast Asia prior to the establishment of actual consular offices.¹⁸ On August 24th Major John D. Maharg

¹⁷ Joseph P. McCarthy, Chief, X-2, OSS, IBT, to Major Peter Dewey, 14 August, Folder 63, Box 8, Entry 110A; Doering to Heppner, and Coughlin to 109, 19 August 1945, Folder 25, Box 2, Entry 90, RG 226, NARA. Coughlin, head of OSS SEAC, notified OSS China Theater on August 19 that he was planning on sending Major Dewey at the head of a mission to Sài Gòn as soon as he gained clearance.

¹⁸ Patti, 271. Patti states that OSS Director “Donovan had instructed OSS-SEAC and Heppner in China to quietly follow the British example and set up OSS teams in Southeast Asia to accompany the British occupation forces to Thailand, Indochina, Netherlands East Indies, Malaya, and Borneo,” though he cites no source document. “Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War,” 46. Patti’s story is corroborated by Major Frank White, another OSS agent who served under Dewey in the South and later replaced Patti in the North (see next chapter), who told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that “After the bomb exploded [August 6, 1945]—we had moved forward to Rangoon which had been cleared of Japanese forces—and OSS wanted then to send what we called at the time ‘city teams’ into all those capitals of Japanese occupied Southeast Asia” to obtain intelligence. Peter M. Dunn, *The First Vietnam War* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1985), 155-56. Peter Dunn argues that under the arrangement for OSS to work with the British “control commission” in Indochina, one of their tasks was actually to “assist British Counter-Intelligence Staff.” Although Dunn acknowledges that Dewey told British officers he was performing consular services, he ignores Patti’s claim that it was an OSS policy, arguing that it was a convenient way to cover his tracks because there was no agreement permitting the OSS to perform counter-intelligence independently. Memorandum for the President [from Cordell Hull], “Southeast Asia: British Attitudes,” 8 September 1944, Folder State-Cordell Hull, Box 166, Map Room, FDRL; Kenneth Landon for the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee: *American Participation in SEAC After Cessation of Japanese Resistance*, 17 August 1945, RG 59, NARA. It turns out that it was both a ruse and the truth. In response to reports “that the military operations of the SEAC are aimed primarily at the resurgence of British political and economic ascendancy in Southeastern Asia and the restoration of British prestige,” Secretary of State Cordell Hull had earlier initiated a policy that “no American civil affairs officers were to serve in

informed McCarthy that as the result of a meeting with Lieutenant Colonel Cass, head of British intelligence activities in Sài Gòn for SEAC, Dewey's X-2 activities were to be "controlled and coordinated" by Cass, but suggested that Dewey would still be engaging in activities outside the "purview of the British operating procedure." Dewey's mission was also coordinated with the China Theater's mission to Hà Nội.¹⁹ McCarthy had told Dewey that he expected this would result in tensions between the Americans and British based on prior experiences in Yangon (Rangoon).²⁰

THE FRENCH RETURN ON THE BACKS OF THE BRITISH

On September 1, OSS Director Donovan had sent a memorandum to President Truman stating the "Provisional Annamese Government" in Indochina was "in full control and so well organized that several attempts by French from Calcutta to parachute into the country have been frustrated."²¹ Colonel Jean-Henri Cédile, Commissaire (Commissioner or Governor) of the Republic of Cochinchina, parachuted out of an RAF C-47 (American-made, and obtained through Lend-Lease) late in the evening of August 22 with three comrades, and landed in a rice field near Biên Hòa, about fifty miles

any area in the SEAC theater unless under independent American command." In August 1945 the State Department's recommendation to SWNCC was "That there should continue to be American participation in SEAC after the cessation of Japanese resistance lasting at least until United States Foreign Service officers are established at regular posts in Thailand and other areas."

¹⁹ Major John D. Maharg to Mr. Joseph P. McCarthy, 25 August 1945, Folder 63, Box 8, Entry 110A; Heppner to Doering, 20 August 1945, Folder 25, Box 2, Entry 90, RG 226, NARA.

²⁰ Joseph P. McCarthy, Chief, X-2, OSS, IBT, to Major Peter Dewey, 14 August, Folder 63, Box 8, Entry 110A, RG 226, NARA.

²¹ William J. Donovan, Memorandum for the the President and Secretary of State, 5 September 1945, Reel 1, M1642, NARA.

northwest of Sài Gòn. His instructions were to reestablish French authority as quickly as possible. The four Frenchmen were held by Vietnamese farmers until Japanese soldiers arrived, who stripped them naked, bound their hands, and drove them to Sài Gòn, leaving them visible to the villagers they passed. At some point Cédile was subject to a mock execution when he was forced to kneel before a Japanese soldier who raised a sword above his head. Cédile was then detained at a school from which he was either released or escaped with two others on the 24th.²²

Despite the humiliation, Cédile was fortunate. The OSS reported that the Việt Minh government at Phan Thiết had established watch posts in the forests, and ordered that all “white” parachutists be killed. Eight European parachutists (they were not identified more specifically) were killed in the general area of Phan Thiết, and one was killed in the Long Thành forest. Eight “white parachutists” were reported to have landed at Láng B Ma and a “large number at Ca Na.” All of these locations were on or near the coast of Cochinchina. After either being released or gaining his release, depending on whose account one believes, Cédile immediately made contact with left-wing *colons* in Sài Gòn, who helped arrange a meeting with Trần Văn Giàu, but subsequent negotiations were stymied by both sides’ unwillingness to negotiate past the issue of sovereignty of

²² David G. Marr, *Vietnam 1945: the Quest for Power*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 481; Patti, 260, 275-76; and Peter M. Dunn, *The First Vietnam War* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1985), 45-46. Patti states that Cédile was released. In Cédile’s account, recorded by Dunn, there is no mention of the Vietnamese peasants holding on to him until the Japanese arrived, nor of his being stripped and the mock execution (these are from Marr who uses French and Vietnamese sources), instead he states “we” (all four of them) “were attacked and captured by a Japanese company.” He describes the time spent at a school in Sài Gòn, quoting Dunn, as “what amounted to house arrest.” Shipway, 189. Martin Shipway explains that Cédile had served in Cameroun before the war and supported de Gaulle in 1940. He was René Plevén’s Director of the Cabinet in Algiers (in 1943, Plevén became the National Commissioner of the Colonies and served as the President of the Brazzaville Conference) and helped Gouverneur Henri Laurentie organize the Brazzaville Conference.

Việt Nam.²³ Cédile could not hope to restore French colonialism in Indochina without British and American gear redirected to them from Lend-Lease equipment the British SEAC possessed. General Gracey, born to a British colonial servant in India and lifelong colonial soldier, would play the role of benefactor perfectly.

In 1942, Gracey had been assigned to build the 20th Indian Division as a component of the 14th Army. After the Japanese surrender in August 1945, Mountbatten, as Supreme Allied Commander Southeast Asia (SACSEA), ordered Gracey to take two battalions of the 20th Indian Division, estimated at 2500 soldiers, and consisting of an estimated “ten per cent British and the rest composed of Hyderabads, Punjabis, Rajputs, Gurkhas, and others,” to secure the Sài Gòn area, to disarm, and concentrate all Japanese surrendered personnel, apprehend war criminals, collect, and release Allied POWs and internees, to maintain law, and order and protect vital installations.²⁴ The agreed Allied policy that

²³ OSS Intelligence Summary Number 28, 10-17 September 1945, Folder ZM-139, Box 396, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA. The actual names and coordinates given in the OSS report are: Pan Thiet (10°55' N, 108°06' E), Long Tan (10°47' N, 106°50' E), Lagi (10°40' N, 107°46' E), and Cana (11°20' N, 108°53' E).

²⁴ Dunn, 118, 140-42, 161 and 365; Harold R. Isaacs, *No Peace for Asia*, 160. The following account of General Gracey's occupation (typically referred to by its official title, the Allied Control Commission) is derived primarily from OSS records and the two of the “best” published narratives of the British-assisted French return to Cochinchina, Archimedes Patti's book and a work authored by British scholar, Peter Dunn. Patti's account is pieced together “from spot reports received in Hanoi and Kunming from OSS-Saigon and OSS-Kandy” (Ceylon, now Sri Lanka), “from information made available to me in Hanoi by the Viet Minh, and from newspaper accounts released in China,” and consequently can be described as the Patti-OSS viewpoint. Dunn's work is largely a refutation of the earlier established American view provided by Ellen J. Hammer and Joseph Buttinger as well as Patti. It is difficult to come to a synthesis of Patti and Dunn's work because they give different dates and factual information without adequate citations (though Dunn is much better in this regard). Their chronological organization of the events is also extremely disjointed and hard to decipher. Patti's perspective is necessarily prejudiced by his participation in related events north of the 16th parallel, but his prejudice does not necessarily skew his telling of events beyond the limits placed on his sources. Dunn provides a counterbalance to Patti's OSS “man in the field” account. He is critical of the OSS for “playing at policy-making.” “If the French were to be opposed, why did not the OSS, with their considerable resources,” asks Dunn, “build up the nationalist, as opposed to Communist, groups? It is not enough to say that the Communists were well organized; so is the Mafia.” Dunn,

General Douglas Gracey²⁵

was supposed to guide the conduct of Gracey's mission declared that "the eventual reoccupation of FIC is a matter for the French." Gracey would later argue that this was contradicted by Allied Land Forces Southeast Asia (ALFSEA) Operational Directive Number 8 directing him to "set up the appropriate civil administration," and Directive Number 12 instructing him to "maintain law and order and ensure internal security." Most importantly, the latter directive ordered Gracey to "give such directions to the French Indo China Government as are required to effect these tasks," and to consult the

however, whose account is largely based on British military documents and interviews with key French participants such as Jean Cédile, British participants such as Gracey's Chief of Staff, M.S.K. Maunsell, and other less important persons involved in the period of Gracey's occupation, has obviously fallen uncritically under the influence of his sources and reflects unbridled British chauvinism. Unfortunately neither Patti nor Dunn present the Vietnamese perspective and though Marr provides some additional details, they are sparse. The OSS records include a brief summary of events from a translated report prepared by Vietnamese participant and member of the Ủy Ban Hành Chánh Lâm Thời Nam Bộ (Southern Provisional Administrative Committee), Phạm Ngọc Thạch.

²⁵ Composite image: (left) <http://ww2photo.mimerswell.com/person/gb/army/gracey.htm>, and (right) Wikipedia, Douglas David Gracey, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gen_Sir_Douglas_David_Gracey (accessed April 24, 2005).

“French Land Forces Commander” on such matters.²⁶ Whether or not these conflicting orders were designed specifically to assist the French while providing a diplomatic excuse or just a result of confusion within SEAC is not clear, but Gracey chose to aid the French.

Peter Dunn argues that in his capacity as occupation commander, Gracey took appropriate action in assisting the French reoccupation. He believes that Gracey’s directives to maintain order and to set up the appropriate civil administration made it necessary to contravene Allied policy. In any event, OSS officers foresaw what this policy could mean, and the impact it would have on Vietnamese history. The Acting Director of OSS advised the Secretary of State on September 10:

SEAC plans for French Indo-China endorse aggressive French military action against the Annamese as a part of overall SEAC pacifying operations in Southeast Asia. These plans are based on the claim that the Annamese, having been supplied with arms by the Japanese, are subject to suppression just as roaming Japanese would be. This policy is set forth as approved by the Allied Command, implying American acceptance. The French will undoubtedly resume their pre-war suppression methods against the Annamese under the guise of restoring order for SEAC.²⁷

This memorandum, undoubtedly originating from the OSS officers working within SEAC, is peculiar in the way that it presages events, but also because the opinions expressed in it

²⁶ Dunn, 141-43. Dunn notes that contrary to Hammer’s assertion (quoting from Philippe Devillers) that Gracey was told “Sole mission: disarm the Japanese. Do not get involved in keeping order,” Directive Number 12 of August 28 included the provision “maintain law and order and ensure internal security,” reiterated in SEAC Joint Planning Staff Plan 1, dated August 31. The debate surrounding Gracey’s actions is larger than this and includes the ancillary discussion that a last minute amendment to his orders confining his authority to maintain law and order only in the Sài Gòn-Chợ Lớn area, but the controversy surrounding Gracey’s actions in late September were not confined to the geographic range of his activities but the nature of them. In any event, Gracey claims to have never received this amendment.

²⁷ Acting Director Charles S. Cheston, Memorandum for the Secretary of State, 10 September 1945, Reel 31, M1642, NARA.

appears unique in declassified OSS documents before the events of September actually unfolded.

The first British soldiers and a small unit of the 5^{ème} Régiment d'Infanterie Colonial (RIC, formerly Blaizot's the Corps Leger d'Intervention) arrived in Indochina on September 11, and Gracey arrived with his Chief of Staff, M.S.K. Maunsell two days later. About eight senior Japanese officers of Field Marshal Terauchi Hisaichi's 寺内寿一 Southern Expeditionary Group, and several Vietnamese were waiting for Gracey and Maunsell upon their arrival at Tân Sơn Nhứt airfield outside of Sài Gòn. Though the airfield was completely surrounded by the Japanese soldiers, and so it must have been apparent that the Vietnamese delegation was there for some purpose other than to observe, Gracey and Maunsell ignored them.²⁸

Whether this snub was intentional or not, the colonial soldier Gracey and Maunsell were not well prepared for the political aspects of their mission. Gracey's briefing on the situation in Indochina south of the 16th parallel was apparently limited to a one-page summary prepared by the French.²⁹ Maunsell, who referred to a group of Vietnamese he later encountered at the Hôtel de Ville (City Hall) in Sài Gòn, according to Dunn's paraphrasing, as "half-naked urchins," later explained why he and Gracey had snubbed the Vietnamese: "We didn't know who they were—they were just a little group

²⁸ Dunn, 152; Patti, 298. Terauchi was the son of a former Japanese prime minister, Terauchi Masatake 寺内正毅.

²⁹ Patti, 307.

which turned out to be the Viet Minh.” “Suddenly the war was over,” Maunsell added, and “all talk was about the Japanese—no one had ever heard of the Viet Minh.”³⁰

The road to Sài Gòn, according to a British officer of the occupying force, was lined with Union Jacks and cheering crowds of French and mostly Vietnamese—apparently unaware of the cold shoulder their own representatives had received at the airfield.³¹ More generally, an OSS report informs us, “signs welcoming the Allies appeared daily in the streets. American, British, Russian, and Chinese flags are displayed, but no French flags.”³² A couple days after their arrival, Maunsell used Terauchi’s Chrysler convertible to survey the situation in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, and found the former a “completely and utterly quiescent city” and “if there was underlying dissent,” according to Dunn’s paraphrasing of his interview with Maunsell, “it was extremely difficult to recognize.” Lacking any comment to the contrary, we might safely assume that the situation in Chợ Lớn was similar. OSS reports from the 12th and 13th also stated that there had been no demonstrations since the arrival of the Allies, but on the 14th stated that there were “peaceful demonstrations, and marching observed in evenings in small villages.”³³

On September 11, Gracey’s command advised Dr. Phạm Ngọc Thạch, whom the OSS referred to as the foreign secretary of the Vietnamese Government, that they

³⁰ Dunn, 197. It is likely that the reason Maunsell consistently used the term Việt Minh rather than some variant of the Southern Provisional Administrative Committee is that his interview with Dunn was conducted in 1977 and his retelling of events was colored by his later historical events and understanding of the broader picture.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 152-53.

³² Reg Doc NR 751, 14 September 1945, Folder 3426, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226; William J. Donovan, Memorandum for the President and Secretary of State, 17 September 1945, Reel 31, M1642, NARA.

³³ Dunn, 154; Reg Doc NR 751, 14 September 1945, Folder 3426, Box 202, Entry 154; OSS Intelligence Summary Number 28, 10-17 September 1945, Folder ZM-139, Box 396, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA.

intended to requisition the Government General Palace which the Southern Provisional Administrative Committee had been occupying. The committee was forced out of the palace, and British Indian troops placed around public utilities on the 15th, the day before the OSS would also report that the Committee was in “nominal control of all municipal and government agencies.” Dr. Thạch informed the OSS that the Committee had considered staging a sit-down strike in protest over being kicked out of the Palace, but had decided instead to move to the Hôtel de Ville (City Hall).³⁴

Gracey was indeed annoyed that Dewey was maintaining a headquarters in a villa outside of the immediate British area of control, in Sài Gòn, and was reported to have had dealings with the Việt Minh. He warned Dewey, on September 15, to stop subverting his Allies, and to confine himself to his assigned tasks (i.e., investigation of war crimes, and condition of U.S. properties now that the American POWs had been evacuated). Dewey admitted to Gracey that he was fulfilling consular duties, but Gracey had not been informed of this role by SEAC.³⁵

Mountbatten’s political adviser from the Foreign Office, Maberly Esler Dening, had earlier informed Secretary of the American Commission at New Delhi Max Bishop that British diplomatic and consular officers assigned throughout Southeast Asia would look after Allied interests in the region. The British were incensed that Dewey, who was not under their control, would talk with members of the Southern Provisional

³⁴ OSS Intelligence Summary Number 28.

³⁵ Dunn, 155; Piya Chakkaphak. In his account written 52 years after the events, Piya Chakkaphak explains that the decision to move was not the OSS team’s, but “the Japanese asked us to move to another location [from the hotel], which was a house in the suburbs. The house had previously quartered high-ranking Japanese officers. It was a big European house, and it was peaceful and quiet.”

Administrative Committee, in particular Phạm Văn Bạch and Dr. Phạm Ngọc Thạch.³⁶ In his unpublished memoirs, Wickes claims that because Dewey was so carefully watched, he was sent to meet with the Vietnamese:

The streets were dark, there were still many former prisoners of war about, and I would dress as they did in order to escape notice. I would go to a house on a quiet street and there meet for perhaps two hours with three or four men who were obviously deeply committed to the liberation of their country.... They were leaders in the independence movement and wanted us to let Washington know that the people of Vietnam were determined to gain their independence from France. During the war they had listened to the Voice of America broadcasts which spoke of democracy and liberty, and they regarded the United States not only as a model but as the champion of self-government that would support their cause.³⁷



Peter Dewey, George Wickes and their radio operator in Sài Gòn³⁸

Dewey (or Wickes) acted as a liaison between French representatives and the Committee. Fulfilling McCarthy's prophecy, Denning sent a message to the Foreign Office, almost certainly encouraged by French representatives after Franco-Vietnamese talks broke down, critical of OSS activities in

³⁶ Ibid, 155-56; Patti, 271, 310, and 314.

³⁷ Bartholomew-Feis, 360.

³⁸ R. Harris, *OSS: The Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 339.

the Sài Gòn area and of Gracey's displeasure with the group.³⁹

A strike called for by the Southern Provisional Administrative Committee choked the city's commerce, however, and effectively closed down the port beginning on September 17. As a consequence, Maunsell and the British naval commander were forced to negotiate with the Provisional Administrative Committee just to reopen the port. The Committee agreed to restore port facilities on the condition that the British would form a port sub-committee, which would exclude the French but include two Committee representatives. Meanwhile, according to Patti, the Vietnamese police began harassing and arresting the French, and kidnapping Vietnamese Francophiles.⁴⁰

Violence in the city led Gracey to distribute leaflets in the Sài Gòn-Chợ Lớn metropolitan area stating that "in certain areas Europeans [*colons*] have been attacked, killed, and wounded, by extremist elements of the population," promising to punish those committing such crimes, and advising the general populace to maintain order. Such violence would spread as it became apparent that the British were not merely imposing their temporary occupational administration over the Vietnamese to carry out the Japanese surrender, but were maneuvering for the return of French colonial rule. The OSS mission learned from a member of Cédile's staff that 2,100 French ex-POWs (1,500

³⁹ Dunn, 155-56. Smith, 342. Smith, relying upon interviews with Joseph Coolidge, Herbert Bleuchel, Frank White, and Dr. George Wickes, states that "With the encouragement of the newly arrived French commander, General Leclerc (the 'liberator' of Paris), Gracey soon declared the OSS colonel [Dewey] *persona non grata*. Dewey was ordered to leave Saigon as soon as possible." The reference to Leclerc is mistaken because Dewey was killed on Tuesday, September 25, and Leclerc did not arrive in port until Wednesday, October 3, and delayed landing until two days later. The "encouragement" is more likely to have come from Colonel Cédile.

⁴⁰ Dunn 159-60; Patti, 311-12. While criticism of Vietnamese excesses are from Patti, who is usually much more sympathetic to the Vietnamese than Dunn, we can assume that such incidents were limited in nature since they were not commonly noted in reports of the events in Sài Gòn for this period (no mention is made, for example in the OSS Intelligence Summaries and other documents cited here of these particular incidents).

Army and 600 Navy) were expected to be armed with French weapons returned by the Japanese the following week.⁴¹ Gracey's Indian soldiers had taken over two Japanese arms storage areas by the 17th, according to Dunn, and then handed over control of these areas to the French, who began rearming their ex-POWs.⁴² On the 18th a reported 500,000 Vietnamese demonstrated against the British in the Sài Gòn-Chợ Lớn area.⁴³

Using the excuse that they were concerned the Japanese might not think they were in control, Gracey, Brigadier General Hirst, who commanded elements of the 20th Indian Division in Indochina on Gracey's behalf, and Maunsell drafted a proclamation on the following day to exert the British occupation's influence. Gracey referred to the Việt Minh as "childish," considered the Southern Provisional Administrative Committee a "puppet government" of the Japanese, and felt that they "constituted a direct threat to law and order through its Armed Police Gendarmerie and Armed Garde Civile." Gracey also felt that the Vietnamese press and propaganda was directed at subverting British Indian troops against the French, though Dunn's characterization of the propaganda hardly seems sufficiently inflammatory to warrant the heavy-handed policies which were initiated with the proclamation. Dunn provides examples of two different leaflets, one which informed Indian soldiers that the Vietnamese were fighting for their freedom, while another referred to them as "heroic sons of Gandhi." Marr, however, cites a leaflet that was addressed to the French population of Sài Gòn, and seems to have been distributed in late August in which Trần Văn Giàu warned that any attempt to dominate

⁴¹ OSS Intelligence Summary, Number 28.

⁴² Dunn, 154, 158.

⁴³ Interim Report of Political and Propaganda Developments within Indo-China, 8 October 1945, Folder 2475, Box 186, Entry 139, RG 226, NARA.

even “the smallest part of our Vietnam” would result in “annihilation to the last enemy.” Maunsell went on another tour, but this time found the area, quoting from Dunn, “half controlled by the Japanese ‘who only acted when they felt like it,’ and he also felt that the Viet Minh claim to control the city was ‘a laugh’—they had no control, and the one or two traffic policemen on duty were French.”⁴⁴

The proclamation began with the statement that the Supreme Allied Commander of all Allied Forces in Southeast Asia Command, Admiral Louis Mountbatten had delegated to Gracey “the command of all British, French, and Japanese forces and all police forces and armed bodies in French Indo-China south of the 16th parallel with orders to ensure law and order in this area.” It then proceeded to explain terms of the martial law Gracey was imposing on the metropolitan area including a ban on public meetings, demonstrations, and processions, continuation of a curfew from 9:30 p.m. through 5:30 a.m. he had already instituted, and a ban on “arms of any description, including sticks, staves, bamboo spears, etc.” carried by anyone other than “British and Allied troops and such forces and police which have been specially authorized by me.” The proclamation gave notice that “all wrongdoers, especially looters and saboteurs of public and private property and those also carrying out similar criminal activities, that they will be summarily shot.”⁴⁵

Trần Văn Giàu was given a copy of the proclamation on September 19^h, but it was not officially posted throughout the metropolitan area until two days later, and the

⁴⁴ Dunn, 153-54, 168-70, and 188; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 522.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 169-70; *Documents Relating to British Involvement in the Indo-China Conflict 1945-1965* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1965), 52-53, contain the entire text of Gracey’s proclamation.

Southern Provisional Administrative Committee was ordered “to stop requisitioning buildings, return appropriated property, hold his forces in place, and furnish a list of Viet Minh armed police and militia.” On the night of the 21st, Maunsell sent a small reconnaissance party to survey the metropolitan area, and report back to him how well the curfew was being observed. The reconnaissance team reported that the curfew was being ignored, particularly by the Japanese. Dance halls and night establishments were conducting brisk business, especially with Japanese patrons, and an intoxicated Japanese soldier had hit a French officer. Dunn suggests that the report blamed the Vietnamese police, in part, for doing nothing to enforce the curfew, though the proclamation seemed to have emasculated them since they were presumably not “authorized” by Gracey.⁴⁶

The proclamation did not specify that it was directed at the Vietnamese, but the direction Gracey’s actions had taken upon his arrival, particularly events from September nineteen to twenty-two, made this painfully obvious. Gracey’s troops began taking over jails on the 19th to free French prisoners, jailed by the Japanese, and had reportedly freed 1,000 French by the 21st. The British Indian troops also released fifteen Vietnamese political prisoners of the Southern Provisional Administrative Committee when they took over the main jail, the Maison Centrale. They occupied the Treasury and refused to permit Vietnamese employees to enter the building. They took over the Sài Gòn Post and Telegraph Office. Vietnamese radio and newspapers were either suppressed or heavily censored, but French-operated Radio Saigon and the French press remained untouched.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Dunn, 169, 172.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 184; Patti, 315; Acting Director Charles S. Cheston to the Secretary of State, 25 September 1945, Reel 21, and Director William J. Donovan, Memorandum for the President, 25 September 1945, and William J. Donovan, Memorandum to the President and Secretary of State, 27 September 1945, Reel 31,

On the September 22, Cédile and Lieutenant Colonel Rivière of the 5^{ème} RIC convinced Gracey to stage a coup d'état—or to at least complete the one already in progress—against the Vietnamese administration.⁴⁸ Although Cédile had shown that he was willing to negotiate with the Vietnamese only days earlier, Patti states that he bowed to pressure from a few wealthy Chinese and Vietnamese, but to mostly ultraconservative *colons*: bankers, plantation owners, shipping agents, mine operators former public officials, and politicians headed by Mario Bocquet a rubber planter, member of the French resistance, and former agent of GBT.⁴⁹ Though there may be some truth to this, we cannot forget that Cédile was named “Commissioner of the Republic of Cochinchina” with express orders to reestablish French colonial rule before he even arrived in Indochina.

On the evening of the 22nd, Dr. Thạch met with members of Dewey’s OSS Mission to inform them that the Việt Minh planned to stage a mass demonstration of several thousand Vietnamese the following day. The plan was for the Vietnamese to march through the city armed only with party emblems, placards, and banners. The OSS agents cautioned Dr. Thạch that such demonstrations were entirely forbidden under Gracey’s Proclamation Number 1, and under martial law he “ran great risk of bloodshed.” To this Dr. Thạch replied that this was exactly the Việt Minh’s intent, to

M1642; and SSU NR A-63773, (Translation of report by Phạm Ngọc Thạch), 19 November 1945, Folder ZM 2310, Box 401, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA.

⁴⁸ Dunn, 193. This comes from Dunn’s interviews with Maunsell and Cédile on the same day in April 1977.

⁴⁹ Patti 310, 356; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 520, OSS Intelligence Summary Number 28, 10-17 September 1945, Folder ZM-139, Box 396, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA.

provoke French and British reprisals “causing many casualties, bringing the attention of the world to these ‘peaceful freedom-loving martyrs.’”⁵⁰

Cédile had attempted to gain the release of the French POWs, but was unable to without Gracey’s assistance. The French ex-POWs had been put into houses where there were women and children to disguise their identity as French soldiers, and it was not until “just days before 23 September that we rebuilt and rearmed these units,” according to Cédile. During the night of the 22nd and 23rd, the 11^{ème} RIC (released POWs) gathered with the small unit of the 5^{ème} RIC and armed *colons* to carry out the *coup d’état*.⁵¹

At 6:00 a.m. the British handed over the Sài Gòn Post and Telegraph Office to the French, and a half hour later the British took over the Banque de l’Indochine. The Yokohama Specie Bank and the *sûreté* were also seized, and the French drove the Southern Provisional Administrative Committee from the Hôtel de Ville. British and French forces replaced all remaining Vietnamese police and guards, took over the rest of the jails, forced the Committee to vacate all municipal buildings, and removed all Vietnamese flags and signs from Sài Gòn, replacing them with the French tri-color. When the Vietnamese heard the coup was in progress, a group of them tried to enter Sài Gòn proper at 8:00 a.m. from the northern suburbs via two bridges crossing the Arroyo de l’Avanche, but armed French ex-POWs had been posted to guard these and three other

⁵⁰ Patti, 316.

⁵¹ Ibid, 316-17; Dunn, 194-95. It is more than a little surprising that Cédile was able to gain the cooperation of the Việt Minh for the release of French POWs. Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 521, based on an interview with Trần Văn Giàu in 1990, states that the Southern Provisional Administrative Committee was unable to gain any concessions in negotiations with Cédile (Patti, 189, argues that the impasse in negotiations was caused by unwillingness of either side to relent on the question of sovereignty). It seems likely, and more consistent with this period of events, that the French POWs were only able to gain their freedom with the assistance of the British forces.

bridges. The French used machine gun fire effectively to repulse the Vietnamese. Other Vietnamese reacted to the coup by burning piles of rubber and rice on the docks.⁵²

At 11:30, the British Indian soldiers handed over the Maison Centrale to the French causing a riot at the jail when Vietnamese warden escaped along with a number of prisoners. The riot was contained only when British Indian soldiers retook the jail in the early afternoon. Small gangs of male and female *colons* entered the fray beginning in the morning hours. They roamed the streets and, according to a senior British officer, beat and tied up “every miserable little Annamite they could find.” The French arrested armed and unarmed Vietnamese; seized quantities of knives and daggers; and Vietnamese women and children were rounded up, and made to sit for hours with their hands above their heads. Dunn quotes from Christopher Buckley, whom he states “gave perhaps the most balanced report of the day’s events,” in an article published in the *London Daily Telegraph* on September 24:

The total number of casualties in the course of the night’s and morning’s shootings are trifling—two French killed and four wounded, one Annamese killed, and an unspecified number, perhaps some dozens, more or less roughly handled.⁵³

Gracey, who was ultimately responsible for releasing official casualty figures, however, did not admit that the casualties had been considerable until the day Buckley’s article was published.⁵⁴ He also singled out the French ex-POWs for causing the

⁵² OSS Intelligence Report Number 29, 17-24 September, Folder ZM-139, Box 396; OSS NR A-61377, 24 September 1945, Folder ZM-2000, Box 400, Entry 108, RG 226; William J. Donovan, Memorandum to the President and Secretary of State, 27 September 1945, Reel 31, M1642, NARA; Dunn, 194, 196; and Patti, 316-17.

⁵³ Dunn, 194-96.

⁵⁴ William J. Donovan, Memorandum for the President, 28 September 1945, Reel 31, M1642, NARA. Buckley presumably distinguished between “Annamese,” as pro-French Vietnamese and “Vietnamese” as supporters of the Provisional Government of Việt Nam.

violence, and ordered that they be disarmed and returned to their barracks. Many French, fearing reprisals, fled to the Hôtel Continental, where many non-French Europeans stayed. The Southern Provisional Administrative Committee eventually moved to Châu Đốc, and Vietnamese armed with guns, mortars, and grenades had cutoff water and electricity to Sài Gòn.⁵⁵

Reprisals began on September 24. Patti tells us that:

Frenchmen began to “disappear” and a number of factories and warehouse in the port area were sacked and set afire. Electricity and water, which during the strike had been intermittently available, were cut off completely. The Viet Minh self-defense units [Tự Vệ] and workers’ assault groups attacked the Tan Son Nhut airport, burned a French ship at the dock, assaulted the prison, and liberated several hundred recently jailed Vietnamese.⁵⁶

The French-built central market was set on fire by midday, destroying the goods in most of the stalls before the merchants were able to finally subdue it.⁵⁷ The most violent reprisal occurred late in the night-early morning of the 24th-25th when a group of Vietnamese attacked 300 French and Eurasian civilians, including women and children in the northern Sài Gòn district of Cité Hérault. Japanese soldiers sat by while a group of Vietnamese entered several houses, killed roughly half of the victims, and took the rest hostage. They were released in the early morning hours of the 25th after being tortured and mutilated. The Japanese commander later told Gracey his troops were afraid of Vietnamese reprisals if they interfered. Historians continue the debate started by contemporary observers over who was responsible for the incident. Most believe the

⁵⁵ OSS NR A-61377, 24 September 1945, Folder ZM 2000, Box 400, entry 108, RG 226, NARA; William J. Donovan, Memorandum for the President, 27, William J. Donovan, Memorandum for the President, 28 September 1945, Reel 31, M1642, NARA.

⁵⁶ Patti, 318.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Vietnamese attackers were the Bình Xuyên, an organized crime syndicate in the Sài Gòn-Chợ Lớn area, but some argue that they had been recruited by the Việt Minh. Others state it was not the Bình Xuyên at all but a group of Trotskyists.⁵⁸

Three days after the violence marking the reestablishment of French colonial rule in southern Vietnam began, Major Dewey of the OSS mission in the Sài Gòn area was killed. His murder has garnered more attention than is warranted, but in order to quiet the wild speculation surrounding this incident, a brief examination of the facts will be presented here as an addendum to the more significant events already discussed. Speculation about Major Dewey's murder stems, no doubt, from the belief that were he to live, he might have been able to influence a change in the U.S. "let the matter drift" Indochina policy. The evidence suggests that aside from the fact that the OSS officer was the son of a former Congressman from Illinois, the broader political ramifications of his murder were negligible.⁵⁹

According to Lieutenant Colonel Austin O. Glass, the State Department received a message on September 25 from the British that Dewey must be removed.⁶⁰ Dewey was planning on leaving Sài Gòn that morning, and would have safely done so if his plane

⁵⁸ Ibid, 319; Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), 181; Dunn, 203; and Dommen, 127.

⁵⁹ Charles Schuveltd Dewey, no immediate relation to Republican presidential candidate Thomas E. Dewey, was a Republican representative for two Congresses from 1941-1945, but had failed to win reelection in 1944 and as a consequence left office on January 3. *Arlington National Cemetery Website*, <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/csdewey.htm> (accessed July 10, 2003).

⁶⁰ Interim Report of Political and Propaganda Developments within Indo-China, 8 October 1945, Folder 2475, Box 186, Entry 139, RG 226, NARA. A.M. Scaife to Chief, Personnel Procurement Branch, 16 May 1945; A.M. Scaife to OSS Board of Officers, 17 August 1945; Turner McBaine to Chief, SI, 17 September 1945, Folder 391, Box 26, RG 226, NARA. Glass (see Chapter 4) was transferred from the China Theater to OSS headquarters in Washington, D.C. in May, 1945, was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel on August 17 and released from active duty on October 1 upon the request of Standard Oil so that he could "take charge of their French Indo-China reconstruction work."

had not been delayed. It may be natural for conspiracy theories to pop up when a killing happens in a politically charged context, but the explanation of Dewey's murder appears to be rather straightforward.⁶¹ OSS officers had been sniped at while driving on the roads around Sài Gòn since violence broke out on the 23rd, but no one had been killed until Dewey was shot.⁶² He was driving a jeep, accompanied by Captain Herbert Bluechel on their way from the airfield to OSS headquarters for lunch when, 500 yards from their destination, they were attacked. They had slowed to about eight miles per hour to drive around a roadblock made of tree limbs and brush, one they had passed earlier that same day without incident, when at approximately 12:30 p.m., according to Bluechel:

A hidden light machine gun opened fire at point blank range. The gun was mounted in the ditch on the East side of the road and had been camouflaged with brush. At the time the burst was fired, I was looking at Major Dewey to better hear what he was saying, and saw out of the corner of my eye the position of the machine gun as revealed by the firing. The bullets struck Major Dewey on the left side of the head slightly to the rear near the left ear. I think one bullet shot off a portion of his lower jaw, although I'm not certain of this. Blood gushed in all directions, and I am certain Major Dewey met instant death.⁶³

⁶¹ Thinly veiled conspiracy theories seem to point to everyone but the Americans and British Indian soldiers. "Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War," 151. In his testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1972, former Captain Frank White, who was in the headquarters at the time of the gunfight subsequent to Dewey's murder, stated, "I personally saw the assassination happen," a slight stretch of the truth, "because it happened very close to where we were staying and I could actually see the people shooting guns at him, so it could be determined whether it was a native Annamite, non-Caucasian, if you will, but who ordered the assassination was never clear; but it was clear that the French were very pleased to have Dewey recalled." Patti, 322. Patti lists several theories, one of which was that the British counterpart to the OSS was suspected of "plotting the elimination of their competition in Southeast Asia." Memorandum of Conversation between Lt. J.R. Withrow, OSS and Abbot Low Moffat, and Lauriston Sharp, both of State Department, SEA, December 19, 1945, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center. Lieutenant Withrow stated that Colonel Dewey had a plan to get Dr. Phạm Ngọc Thạch to Washington, D.C. incognito and suggested that this plan may have been related to Dewey's death. Dommen, 128-29. Dommen who cites the same source documents related here, makes no reference to the leader of the Vietnamese attacker's admission that they were Việt Minh in arguing that it was a radical faction of Cao Đài, in part because only British and Americans were driving jeeps in Sài Gòn, and because "a British officer had passed through the same roadblock without incident half an hour beforehand."

⁶² William J. Donovan, Memorandum for the President, 28 September 1945, Reel 25, M1642, NARA.

⁶³ "Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War," 286-87. Dunn, 214-15, 219. Peter Dunn, who cites the same source (and no other American sources for the incident, though he comments generally on the relevant portion of works by Patti and R. Harris Smith to discredit them for relying on "immediately

The jeep went out of control, ran into a ditch, and rolled on its side. Bluechel's carbine jammed while he was fighting off the attackers, numbering approximately ten though he had made "three hits on the annamese" as they approached him. Relying on his pistol, he left Dewey's body after checking for life several times, and successfully made it to the OSS house, using a 100 yard-long hedge as partial cover and employing "fire and movement tactics." Once inside the house, Bluechel assisted in fighting off the attackers now estimated at approximately fifty Vietnamese.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, Captain Frank White, Jr. had invited three individuals to accompany him for a luncheon at OSS headquarters. They drove from Hôtel Continental in Sài Gòn, from the opposite direction which Dewey and Bluechel had come, when about a mile from OSS headquarters they "heard general firing in the vicinity and we noted several burning buildings. We were told by an officer of the British Army who approached our car that the trouble was not serious and that the Gurkha troops with him had the situation under control." When White approached the headquarters approximately twenty minutes to an hour after Bluechel and Dewey, he made it into the house amidst fire, went upstairs to where arms were stored, distributed them, and after a "manner of minutes passed" saw Bluechel

recognizable secondary sources"), makes several erroneous statements about events such as the remark that Dewey was ambushed while "en route for Tan Son Nhut airfield." Dunn also states that Dewey had "seen his attackers and was said to have shouted 'Je suis Americain' [I am American]" (from Ellen J. Hammer, 118, whom he fails to cite probably because he attempts to discredit her information on the broader Gracey occupation period) and "that it has been said, but not made part of the official record, that Dewey cursed the Vietnamese, who then killed him." According to Bluechel, who was the only non-Vietnamese eyewitness to Dewey's murder, they were having a conversation while driving when Dewey was hit and he seemed to have died almost instantly so it seems unlikely that he could have said these words Dunn attributes to him. Dunn also states that "a diagram of the immediate area suggests that" a house next to the OSS headquarters was occupied by the Việt Minh. The diagram clearly marks the house Dunn describes as a "Large house used by Annamites *during action.*" (italics added)

⁶⁴ "Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War," 286-87.

coming through the front gate. At 3:10 p.m., the Vietnamese raised a Red Cross flag to retrieve their casualties. The OSS had radioed for help, and Bluechel led a few others to parley with the Vietnamese for Dewey's body which they had discovered was missing along with the jeep.⁶⁵

They had someone summon the leader of the Vietnamese attackers who "was in a state of excitement verging on hysteria." The leader's demeanor and explanation to White are telling:

It was difficult all along to make much sense of this man, but in the course of the parley we had admissions that his men had shot Colonel Dewey and that they had fired on our house. However, throughout he stoutly maintained that had they known that the Colonel was an American, he would never have allowed the shots fired. He had attacked the house, he said, because he believed that both French and British officers lived there, even though only an American flag was flown, and because we had killed so many of his men.⁶⁶

In all likelihood, the Vietnamese leader's explanation is reliable. The French had disguised themselves as Americans when parachuting into Việt Nam in the past, and

⁶⁵ Ibid, 292-93. References to the British Indian soldiers typically referred to them all indiscriminately as Gurkhas.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 294. OSS NR A-61377, 24 September 1945, Folder ZM-2000, Box 400, Entry 108; Interim Report of Political and Propaganda Developments within Indo-China, 8 October 1945, Folder 2475, Box 186, Entry 139, RG 226, NARA. Apparently Dewey had driven with a U.S. flag on his car until sometime around September 24 when OSS Sài Gòn that stated: "Gracey's orders that no American flags will fly from cars renders Americans liable to the same treatment by the Annamese as the French and British. "Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War," 284, 297. Bluechel stated that "a flag was not being displayed [on the jeep] in accordance with with verbal instructions issued by General Gracey," and he was convinced that had they been flying an American flag they would not have been fired upon. The officer investigating Dewey's death concluded that it "that there is some question in my mind as to whether it would have made a great deal of difference had he been flying an American flag. The road block and the machine gun emplacement appear to have been arranged with the intention of shooting at the next white man that came by. It is possible that the object was to secure a jeep and such arms and ammunition as might be in the jeep." Dewey signed a document with rank of Major on August 25, was referred to as Major Dewey in headers of affidavits of the incident given by Bluechel and White, in the body of Bluechel's affidavit, in the earlier portions in the body of White's affidavit, as well as in the Investigation of his death written on October 25. He was, however, referred to as Lieutenant Colonel Dewey in a chronology of Mission Embankment authored by Bluechel on September 17, as Colonel Dewey in the latter parts of White's affidavit, and in a document authored by the Allied Control Commission (Gracey's group) on September 30. His death apparently led some to decide his fake rank deserved to become a recognized promotion.

continued to use American uniforms as a disguise when moving about areas not controlled by their forces with the intent of causing confusion. This Vietnamese group was identified when two of White's original companions, war correspondents, interfered by "plying the annamite leader with questions which provoked him [to] lengthy and impassioned speeches on the indignities suffered by the Viet Minh from the French. He also attacked the British at length, charging that the British, too, desired to 'dominate' the annamite people."⁶⁷ Upon hearing of the incident and Dewey's death, Hồ Chí Minh sent an apology and his condolences to President Truman.⁶⁸ Dewey's body was never recovered, but the political consequences for relations between the U.S and the Việt Minh, French or British were insignificant.

Meanwhile, Mountbatten told Gracey that his Proclamation was contrary to British policy, but only because it was addressed to the whole of Indochina south of the 16th parallel, and not restricted to Sài Gòn. When told of Gracey's specific plans, he

⁶⁷ "Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War," 294.

⁶⁸ Ho Chi Minh [sic], President of Provisional Govt of Republic of Viet-Nam, via U.S. Army to Secretary of State, October 18, 1945, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center. The text of Ho's letter follows:

Saigon radio September 27 reported killing of US Colonel Peter Dewey in course of French instigated clash between Viet-Nameese nationalists and French aggressors in Cochin China. As Saigon is in hands of Franco-British forces report cannot be investigated now but we hope sincerely it is not true. But if correct incident may have been due to confusion in darkness or other unfortunate circumstances or may have been provoked by French or British. No matter what the case news moves us deeply and we will do utmost to search out culprits and punish them severely. Measures are being taken to prevent further such incidents. We assure you we are as profoundly affected by death of any American resident in this country as by that of dearest relatives.

We ask only of your representatives in this country to give us advance notice of movements of your nationals and to be more cautious in "trespassing" fighting areas. This will avoid accidents and aid in welcoming demonstrations.

I convey to you Mr. President and to American people expression of our great respect and admiration.

[signed Ho Chi Minh]

approved them, and telegraphed the Chiefs of Staff on the 24th, as he later recalled in a report of the occupation:

I considered that Major-General Gracey, in issuing his proclamation, had acted with courage and determination in an extremely difficult situation; with as yet inadequate forces. In my opinion, if the riots he feared had developed, the safety of the small British/Indian force and of the French population might have been compromised, since the river and port were not yet open.⁶⁹

In effect, Mountbatten was concerned that Gracey had established a *fait accompli* for the his command which would require a much larger force than he was willing to commit, and Leclerc was unable to commit the requisite French force at that time.⁷⁰

On September 25, Gracey reversed his decision to disarm the French ex-POWs, and according to an OSS report, Gracey announced that “concerted action would be taken and Annamese would be shot on sight.” He also divided the metropolitan area into sections, assigning French soldiers to the eastern section, the Japanese to the northern and western sections while the British Indian soldiers were to patrol the central Sài Gòn-Chợ Lớn area.⁷¹ There were reports that the Vietnamese were evacuating the city by the thousands, there was no regular water or electricity, and fires had broken out.⁷² In a report to the Strategic Services Unit, Dr. Thạch explained that the British accomplished the coup with the assistance of martial law and that whenever Vietnamese resisted the coup, they were “killed to the last man.”⁷³ Official casualty totals in Sài Gòn as of September 29 (it is not clear that these include Chợ Lớn, but presumably they would)

⁶⁹ *Documents Relating to British Involvement in the Indo-China Conflict 1945-1965*, 49

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁷¹ “II Interim Report of Political and Propaganda Developments within Indo-China,” 15 October, Folder 2476, Box 186, Entry 139, RG 226, NARA.

⁷² William J. Donovan, Memorandum for the President, 28 September 1945, Reel 25, M1642, NARA.

⁷³ SSU NR A-63773.

seemed to support Dr. Thạch assertion. There were nine American and British individuals killed and 26 wounded; eight French soldiers were killed and three wounded; six Dutch soldiers were wounded; and the Vietnamese population suffered 204 killed and 200 wounded (there were no figures for ethnic Chinese casualties provided). An OSS report had stated that French casualties were probably undercounted due to the fact that the Vietnamese dismembered and disposed of bodies in the river.⁷⁴ It is unclear why the victims of the Bình Xuyên massacre were not included in these totals, but if we do preclude them and those presumed unaccounted for, the official totals mark the beginning of the typically lopsided casualty rates weighted against the Vietnamese for years to come.⁷⁵

The Vietnamese damaged four British vessels on September 29. Two engagements between Vietnamese forces and British Indian troops guarding two bridges over the Arroyo de l'Avanche took place on the 30th. In the first engagement the 25 Vietnamese were killed, and three British soldiers were killed and eleven wounded. In the second engagement which centered on the bridge, Rue d'Espagne, sixty-five Vietnamese were killed and three British were wounded.⁷⁶ General Gracey and Dr. Thạch met on October 1, and agreed to a ceasefire to begin the following day. Dr. Thạch agreed to announce the ceasefire through the posting of placards throughout Sài Gòn, and

⁷⁴ William J. Donovan, Memorandum for the President, 28 September 1945, Reel 25, M1642, NARA.

⁷⁵ SSU NR A-61580, 29 September 1945, Folder ZM 2000, Box 400, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA. *Documents Relating to British Involvement in the Indo-China Conflict 1945-1965*, 54. An example of the lopsided casualty figures was provided in the House of Commons on January 28, 1946 when the official British figures were presented that from mid-October 1945 to January 13, 1946, 3 British, and 37 Indians were amongst the 126 "Allies" killed, while an estimated 2,700 Vietnamese had been killed. Stated another way, an estimated 95 percent of those killed as the result of the conflict south of the 16th parallel were Vietnamese.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* No distinction is made in this report between British and British Indian soldiers, but the overwhelming casualties on the British side were Indian.

arrangements were made between the two parties for subsequent meetings. The Việt Minh, however, admitted that they were unable to control extremist elements within their party, a fact that was proven in a placard posted on the 3rd which called on Vietnamese to strike, to kill Vietnamese traitors, and to struggle against the *colons*, before ending with “The General Order is to resist until victory.”⁷⁷

The brutal process the British and French would employ in reestablishing French colonial control over Việt Nam (and their disregard for pledges) was foreshadowed by the French on two earlier occasions in 1943 and 1945. The British Government, concerned that the Vichy-controlled French mandates of Lebanon and Syria would pose a threat to their possessions in the Middle East, plotted with the Free French to stage a coup, but recognized that they needed the support of the indigenous populations. As a result, on June 8, 1941, former Governor General of Indochina Catroux, with de Gaulle’s authorization, issued a proclamation that Lebanon and Syria would be “sovereign and independent peoples, free either to constitute separate States or to join together in a single State.”⁷⁸ In response to Lebanese and Syrian demands for independence in November 1943, however, de Gaulle suspended their constitution, dismissed parliament, and imprisoned ministers. On the day Germany surrendered, the French army massacred between 6,000 and 15,000 Algerians who had revolted.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ OSS Summary Number 30, 24 September-1 October, and OSS Summary Number 31, 1-7 October 1945, Folder ZM-136, Box 396, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA.

⁷⁸ Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1962), 108.

⁷⁹ Mario Rossi, *Roosevelt and the French* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1993), 126-27, 145; Edward Rice-Maximin, *Accommodation and Resistance* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 16. Rice-Maximin offers the figure: “as many as 40,000 Algerians died.”

On August 16, 1945, de Gaulle appointed Major General Philippe de Hauteclocque, known simply as Leclerc, commander of French Forces in the Far East. François de Langlade had suggested the Leclerc appointment, believing that he would be the most acceptable to the Americans because he had led the Free French Division into Paris. De Gaulle also named Admiral Georges Thierry d'Argenlieu, an aristocrat and former monk, as Haut Commissaire (High Commissioner, i.e. Governor General) of Indochina, with the instructions "that French domination had to be reestablished, perhaps under a new appearance." The ships the *Triomphant* and the *Richelieu*, and two small transports carrying 1025 troops of the 5^{ème} RIC, the first detachments of the Corps Expéditionnaire Français en Extrême Orient (CEFEO, or French Expeditionary Corps to the Far East) commanded by Major General Leclerc arrived in Sài Gòn on October 3. General Leclerc arrived the same day, but delayed his entrance into the city for two days because he wanted troop strength to be increased first.⁸⁰

The OSS reported that Leclerc's arrival had created a question of jurisdictional authority, and within a few days General Gracey complained that the captain of the *Richelieu* had twice disobeyed his orders. Leclerc was said to have intimated in an interview that had he been present immediately after the Japanese surrender that the troubles beginning on September 23 would never have transpired. He went on to say that France had no intention of relinquishing French Indochina after "100 years" [sic] of

⁸⁰ Rossi, 118; Peter Dennis, *Troubled Days of Peace: Mountbatten and Southeast Asia Command, 1945-46* (Oxford: Manchester University Press, 1987), 31-32; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 541-42; and Alain-Gérard Marsot, "The Crucial Year: Indochina 1946," *Journal of Contemporary History* 19, 2 (April, 1987): 338, 344. Leclerc's division which participated in the liberation of Paris and Strasbourg, which was composed mostly of ex-Vichyites (Rossi), was, contrary to Langlade's suggestion, not highly regarded by other French officers or General Dwight D. Eisenhower (Dennis).

colonization, but that it would take considerable time to subdue the Vietnamese, and restore law and order because France lacked adequate transportation facilities to bring supplies and necessary troop protection. By the end of the month, High Commissioner Admiral d'Argenlieu was established at Norodom Palace (at present site of Thống Nhất, or Unity, Palace) in the same city.⁸¹

In spite of the truce negotiated on October 1 and continuing talks between the British and the Việt Minh, violence continued throughout the area under the British command south of the 16th parallel. At the same time, Mountbatten received a change in his instructions from the Chiefs of Staff, as he later recalled, to "use British/Indian troops to give assistance to the French throughout the interior of Southern French Indo-China, so long as this did not prejudice my primary responsibility for Saigon."⁸² On the 8th, 1,300 French troops were being besieged by a Vietnamese force at Nha Trang (about 140 miles north of Sài Gòn). In Sài Gòn, the combined troop strength of the British, French, and Japanese had reached 12,000, but Gracey was not willing to extend his resources that far from Sài Gòn, where the situation was still unstable. By the 15th the *Triumphant* and a British LCI (Landing Craft Infantry), were sent to Nha Trang. The Vietnamese were eventually forced out of the city, but fierce fighting persisted through early December.⁸³

⁸¹ SSU NR A-61723, 6 October, and SSU NR A-61831, 8 October 1945, Folder ZM 2000, Box 400, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA; Shipway, 152; "Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War," 191. In his testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Major Frank White states that Leclerc arrived on the vessel *Pasteur* "and he had a regiment of French troops but, of course, they were French Legionnaires and I doubt if there were half a dozen French in the entire group. They were mainly Germans from POW camps."

⁸² *Documents Relating to British Involvement in the Indo-China Conflict 1945-1965*, 51.

⁸³ SSU NR A-61891, 8 October 1945, and SSU NR A-62000, 12 October 1945, Folder ZM-2000, Box 400; SSU NR A-62002, 13 October 1945, Folder ZM 2100, Box 400; ;and SSU Intelligence Summary Number 32, 8-15 October, SSU Intelligence Summary Number 32, 16-22 October, and SSU Intelligence Summary Number 36, 7-13 November 1945, Folder ZM-139, Box 396, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA.

On December 10, British officers and three enlisted men were killed within 200 yards of the former OSS headquarters near where Dewey had been killed on September 26. Instability in the region and the prohibitive costs of security led many “planters” to make plans to return to France. There was little surprise when Anglo-Vietnamese negotiations for an extended armistice broke down on October 13. They had relied on the fantasy that the two parties could resolve the conflict that began on September 23 by themselves, exclusive of the French.⁸⁴

After the truce ended, the Vietnamese would lose large engagements to the British, French, and Japanese forces, but would fight on using guerilla and terrorist tactics. The British and French forces would sweep through areas, leaving behind a garrison which would be continuously harassed by the Vietnamese using light machine guns and mortars in hit-and-run attacks. The French had occupied Ban Mê Thuột, about seventy-five miles northwest of Nha Trang, without opposition, but abandoned it due to miscommunication of orders. When the French returned on December 6, they faced strong opposition. Two companies which had been cut off from the larger French force were surrounded by a strong, well-equipped Việt Minh force. The French had to request help from the British, who sent in three planes to bomb and strafe the Vietnamese force.

In the cities, the Việt Minh's favored tools of terrorist-warfare were hand grenades, snipers, and arson. Between October and December, the Vietnamese destroyed the power plant, water works, and numerous French buildings in Cần Thơ, 40,000 gallons of aviation fuel at the airfield outside of Sài Gòn, and another large petrol dump at Biên

⁸⁴ SSU Intelligence Summary Number 40, 6-12 December 1945, Folder IS Oct-Dec., Box 48, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA.

Hòa. In Nha Trang, they dynamited a hospital. There was even a report that the beer from a Sài Gòn brewery had been poisoned, a tactic apparently copied from a similar incident that occurred in Singapore. The Vietnamese were so effective at destroying roads and bridges that the French suspected they were using engineers who had deserted from the colonial army. They also rebuilt anti-tank defenses the Japanese had originally built for defense against an Allied invasion. The Việt Minh spread propaganda leaflets warning Vietnamese residents of towns that they would burn down the houses of those caught selling food to either the Japanese or the Europeans, and also distributed propaganda leaflets aimed at British Indian troops.⁸⁵

Newsweek correspondent, Harold Isaacs, described Sài Gòn as he saw it in October and November:

A general strike of the Annamites had stripped the shops, hotels, and homes of all their helpers, clerks, servants. No trams were running nor any other kind of public transportation. The Annamite population had almost entirely melted away. This city, built by Frenchmen for Frenchmen, had been abandoned by its hewers of wood and drawers of water, and nothing in the world is emptier than a city in the Orient where only Europeans are to be seen. Downtown, evenings, the streets would fill with French soldiers, a few British tommies, a scattering of Chinese. French or *métisse* girls would pair off with the troops, walking arm in arm, or sitting across tables at the few open bars and cafés. Armed French civilians walked self-consciously on patrol. Housewives, carrying their children with them, would comb the few open markets where fruit and vegetables could be had from Chinese vendors. When the occasional straggling lines of manacled prisoners would pass, French men and women would stop to glare. When newly arrived French troops marched up Rue Catinat from the river, the civilians would

⁸⁵ SSU Number 35, 29 October–6 November 1945, Folder ZM-139, Box 396; SSU NR A-62913, 9 November 1945, Folder ZM 2200, Box 401; SSU Intelligence Summary Number 35, 29 October-6 November 1945, and SSU Intelligence Summary Number 36, 7-13 November 1945, Folder ZM-139, Box 396; SSU Intelligence Summary Number 38, 21-28 November 1945, Folder ZM41-2, Box 401; and SSU Intelligence Summary Number 40, 6-12 December 1945, Folder IS Oct.-Dec., Box 408, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA. The tactic of sweeping through an area and leaving a garrison behind was a tactic known as the “oil-spot approach” used by French Colonel Joseph Gallieni in the 1890s against Đê Thám in Tonkin. This tactic appears to have been adopted by the British during the Malay Emergency, probably after learning it from the French during their occupation of South Việt Nam, and “reintroduced” to the Americans during their war with the Vietnamese (see also Chapter 1).

gather at the curb and applaud and cheer. This was power returning. This would restore the golden yesteryear. "It is really nothing," said a Frenchman watching. "Some agitators bought by the Japanese. We'll kill them off." He nodded at the marching singing soldiers. "It won't take long. Then the rest of the people will come back."⁸⁶

British and French soldiers engaged in sweeps, starting with Sài Gòn, where all the males aged 15-45 years in a district were rounded up for questioning. Of the 1,300 Vietnamese questioned, 1,200 were later released, but the trials for the accused were swift and justice was rare.⁸⁷ One day, Isaacs spied Vietnamese prisoners from down an alley through the gate of the *sûreté*. They were filing out for a meal, and an anxious French guard who had initially attempted to get the American to leave became his informant. Isaacs counted thirty rows of twelve prisoners per row, all of whom were men except for the last two rows consisting of twenty-two female Vietnamese prisoners. The guard presumed the men had been taken prisoners in armed fighting, while the women were caught carrying hand grenades in their rice baskets. Isaacs later watched as similar Vietnamese prisoners were tried at that Palais de Justice before five French army officers with the help of a *métis* interpreter. "No trial took long," Isaacs observed, "For by the rules of this court no witnesses were heard, no testimony taken, no cross-examination made." He mentioned the case of a man charged with participating in a group which had attacked and looted a French patrol. This man was given five years' hard labor. Three Vietnamese men were charged with distributing inflammatory leaflets. Two of the three received five years' hard labor and the third received seven years. The defense lawyer

⁸⁶ Harold Isaacs, "Saigon: French Island in a Sea of Rebellion," *Newsweek* 26:54 (November 26, 1945): 54; *No Peace for Asia*, 136.

⁸⁷ SSU Intelligence Summary Number 36, 7-13 November, Folder ZM-139, Box 396, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA.

told Isaacs these sentences were lenient, “Out of ninety-three previous cases, there had been four death sentences and sixty-nine sentences ranging from ten to thirty years of hard labor and imprisonment.”⁸⁸

Three sweeps had been made against the Vietnamese north of Arroyo de l’Avanche in October by combined British and French forces resulting in seventy Vietnamese deaths, while only four French were killed, seventeen injured, and British forces suffered no casualties. Vietnamese villages were often burned down during these sweeps in rural areas. The French used the ethnic minorities who traditionally resided in the highlands (the French used the derogatory term *Moï*, connoting uncivilized) in their campaigns. These highland peoples had been used by the *sûreté*, were trained as riflemen, and accounted for 300 of the 700-man strong French force in Ban Mê Thuôt. Finally, to carry out their attacks on the Vietnamese, the British and French used American-made Lend-Lease equipment, including light tanks, half-tracks, jeeps, trucks—many of which still bore the white star insignia, and various small arms—French officers preferred the American Colt .45 pistol—and automatic weapons.⁸⁹

By November, the British declared that they would be reducing their troop strength in Indochina. In December, they were characterizing the Việt Minh as a band of thieves and thugs who had no organization, no strategy, and no principles. French troops, by comparison, were brave and reasonably competent (though the police had much to

⁸⁸ Harold Isaacs, “Peace Comes to Saigon,” *Harper’s* 192:1150 (March 1946): 285-88; *No Peace for Asia*, 138-40.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*; SSU NR A-62002, 13 October 1945, Folder ZM 2100, Box 400; SSU Intelligence Summary Number 32, 8-15 October 1945, and SSU Intelligence Summary Number 36, 7-13 November 1945, Folder ZM-139, Box 396; SSU Intelligence Summary Number 46, 17-23 January 1946, Folder Intelligence Summary 1/46, Box 407, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA; and Isaacs, “Saigon: French Island in a Sea of Rebellion.”

learn), according to a British General. He was optimistic about French ability to capture objectives and control lines of communication, but felt it would take a long time to pacify the entire country. Perhaps the most hopeful sign of British and French success in their campaign against the Vietnamese was a November report that “planters” were planning on returning to their plantations in December and another mid-January 1946 report suggesting that the only reason the big plantations of Cochinchina were not producing was lack of labor, not security. More tangible evidence, however, seemed to contradict these reports. A French representative of Standard Oil explained that “old timers such as myself who understand conditions in F.I.C.” that French planters who were expected to return had not returned by December 10 (date of the report) except in Cambodia. Guerilla warfare persisted, and even by the third week of January there had only been “slight movement of French planters” back to the plantations.⁹⁰

On January 28, 1946 Gracey formally completed his mission, and was rewarded for his assistance in reestablishing French colonial rule in Việt Nam south of the 16th parallel by being named *citoyen d'honneur* of the city of Sài Gòn, and the following year when he was made a Commandant of the Légion d'Honneur.⁹¹ The French were careful to wait until he was leaving to honor him. Maunsell remained behind, and continued to have problems with Leclerc, who resisted SEAC's command. Maunsell notified

⁹⁰ SSU NR A-62002; SSU Intelligence Summary, Number 32; SSU NR A-62913, 9 November 1945, Folder ZM 2200, Box 401; SSU Intelligence Summary Number 37, 14-20 November 1945, Folder ZM-139, Box 396; SSU NR 41, 13-19 December 1945, Folder IS Oct.-Dec., Box 408; and SSU Intelligence Summary Number 46, 17-23 January 1946, Folder Intelligence Summary 1/46, Box 407, Entry 108; SSU Registry ZM 2467, 10 December 1945, Folder 5, Box 217, Entry 210, RG 226, NARA.

⁹¹ Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 542; Duncanson, 296-97. Joint Secretariat, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, volume 1, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam: History of the Indochina Incident 1940-1954* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1982), 48-49. Although American participation in SEAC had been replaced with a liaison section on November 1, 1945, American withdrawal from SEAC was not formally announced until January 1946 at the request of the British.

Mountbatten in late February that Leclerc had cancelled three appointments, and was not cooperating by informing SEAC of his plans. American participation in SEAC had officially ended on November 1, 1945, but was not announced until January in deference to a British request. By March, even the British were concerned about French plans north of the 16th parallel, and after an agreement was worked out between Washington and London to avoid responsibility for French operations in Tonkin, Maunsell negotiated with Leclerc and d'Argenlieu for the official transfer of command south of the 16th parallel which took place on March 5.⁹²

Gracey and Maunsell clearly lacked proper preparatory intelligence when they landed, a fact which, despite French and British propaganda to the contrary, suggests the Free French efforts at establishing an intelligence and resistance organization in Indochina prior to the March coup were an utter failure. This lack of preparatory intelligence, Gracey's prejudiced view that the natives were inferior, and a widespread British belief that the French deserved to be placed back into control of their colony, shared by Mountbatten and the British Chiefs of Staff, led the British to instigate the violence that consumed their area of responsibility south of the 16th parallel beginning with the Sài Gòn-Chợ Lớn metropolitan area. In Maunsell's own words, this metropolitan area was "utterly quiescent" before the British Command trio took action, but Gracey's decisions had created, in the word of the OSS, "A violent anti-white situation amongst the Vietnamese that grew beyond the capabilities of the Viet Minh to

⁹² SSU Intelligence Summary Number 51, 21-27 February, and SSU Intelligence Summary Number 53, 7-13 March, Folder Intelligence Summary 1/46, Box 407, Entry 108, RG 226; and [unsigned document], 12 March 1946, Strategic Services Unit, War Department (hereafter SSU), Roll 1, M1656, NARA.

control.”⁹³ All indications suggest that though the violence was never desirable, both the French and British were satisfied with General Gracey’s results.

CONCLUSION

The initial OSS team under First Lieutenant Counasse had a narrowly defined mission to evacuate POWs from Indochina south of the 16th parallel. Before his death, Peter Dewey’s contacts with Vietnamese nationalists as a result of his counterespionage mission led him to become an advocate for the Vietnamese. There is little reason to suspect that he could have accomplished much had he not been killed, but like many Americans on the ground in Việt Nam he sided with the Vietnamese over the French. Yet there was no attempt by the U.S. to arrest the British aggression in Sài Gòn, even when it expanded throughout the South.

British forces under General Gracey successfully pursued the reestablishment of French colonial rule, beginning with the September *coup d’état* of the functioning Vietnamese government in Sài Gòn. It is unlikely the French forces who later arrived to supplement and then replace the British forces could have achieved relative control of Cochinchina and southern Annam in a few months without British support and American Lend-Lease equipment. As we shall see in the following chapters, the French subsequently took advantage of their position in the South to maneuver politically for a military presence in the North.

⁹³ William J. Donovan, Memorandum for the President, 28 September 1945, Reel 25, M1642, NARA.

Hà Nội. *Is the world "missing the boat" in this highly explosive corner of Southeast Asia? That is the question asked by observers here who have a unique inside view of new Far Eastern developments which approach revolutionary proportion.*

The failure of the rest of the world, including the United States, to take any cognizance of the Annamite Independence movement here may have, it is felt, a costly long-range effect.

The Annamites at present still are hoping against hope that the great powers will implement their pledges to the oppressed and subjugated peoples of the Orient. But if the United States, for instance, fails to intercede—and there is no indication so far that it will step into the turbulent Indo-China political arena—the Annamite Nationalists are expected to look elsewhere for a champion of their cause. And the only other nation which shows any signs of lending assistance to popular independence movements is Soviet Russia.

Most observers here see close similarity between the Annamite independence movement and the fight for political freedom which at present is going on in the Netherlands East Indies. In both cases, there is little doubt that Japanese co-prosperity sphere propaganda lent impetus to the movement though it by no means started the resistance.

Independence movements throughout the Orient spring up like mushrooms in a wet forest. Most of them show indications of having felt the impact of the Soviet Revolution. All of them are aimed at overthrowing or at least amending an anachronistic [sic] colonial system. Indo-China is no exception to this generality. For the French have done little to eradicate illiteracy and French manufacturers have not stimulated industrialization, with the result that Indo-China has remained little more than an agricultural province of France.

Gordon Walker, *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 2, 1946.¹

Chapter 13

North of the 16th Parallel (part 1):

Victors and Collaborationists in the Chinese Occupation

Comparison of the British occupation, which began with a mere 2,500 troops in the South, and the Chinese occupation with more than 50,000 troops crossing the border into the North is a study in contrasts. There was relative unity amongst the British and French in the South, while the Communists were comparatively weak. In the North, the Chinese, Vietnamese, Americans, and even the French, in some cases, were divided. The Việt Minh were strong in the North, despite Chinese support of non-Communist

¹ Gordon Walker, "Western Powers By-Pass Vibrant Indo-China Issue," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Atlantic Edition (1 March 1946): 1.

nationalist groups. American division over the return of the French was pronounced, but those most opposed were at low levels, so they had little impact on policy. Differences amongst the French were primarily over tactical issues of how to re-impose colonial authority in Việt Nam, but there were some exceptions to this rule.

The ambiguous American policy, adopted by Chiang Kai-shek's Guomintang Government and consequently the Chinese occupation, offered ample opportunity for various figures involved on the ground in Việt Nam to resist the French return to the zone north of the 16th parallel. Chiang's policy was only moderately different than that of the U.S. due to the fact Indochina was a contiguous territory, Chinese experience with the French Empire, and Chiang's ongoing battle with the Chinese Communists. While recognizing French sovereignty over their former colony, he announced on August 24th that the Chinese Government hoped "the Vietnamese people would gradually reach independence in accordance with the provisions of the Atlantic Charter."² According to King Chen, the Chinese Government was planning to relinquish control of Việt Nam to the French as soon as it secured agreement from the French on commercial protections for the Indochina Railway and port at Hải Phòng.³ Within this framework, however, the Guomintang Government never attempted to remove the Vietnamese Government in Hà Nội, and Chiang ordered all French fortifications on the border with China destroyed.⁴

It was the Guomintang then, rather than the French or Russian Communists who offered support, however ambiguous it appeared to be, to the Việt Minh. In early

² Quoted in King C. Chen, *Vietnam and China, 1938-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 115.

³ *Ibid.*, 119-20.

⁴ Peter Worthing, *Occupation and Revolution: China and the Vietnamese August Revolution of 1945* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, China Research Monograph 54, 2001), 58-59.

November 1945, an article in the Soviet publication, *New Times (Novoe Vremya)*, was discussed on the front page of the *New York Times*. The Soviet article criticized the British for using force to restore colonialism in the Netherlands East Indies and Indochina, implying that they were motivated by fear that the once dominant position British capital had held was under threat by American capital penetration of “the oil and rubber industries of those countries.” The United Nations was praised for inciting “the colonial nations to new activity” and inspiring “a firm conviction of the speedy achievement of political and economic equality.” “One of their spokesmen,” the Russian author reported, “expressed certainty of support by China and the United States.”⁵ Yet, the Russian Government, which had vocally supported Indonesian independence, failed to offer support for Vietnamese nationalism during the crucial period after the San Francisco Conference, in part, as former State Department official Lauriston Sharp commented, “to avoid embarrassing the French Communists.”⁶ Trần Văn Giàu told Harold Isaacs that the Russians were prone to “an excess of ideological compromise,” and that he expected no help from them. Another Communist Vietnamese informant told Isaacs that the “Russians are nationalists for Russia first and above all,” and the “French Communists are French and colonialists first and Communists after.”⁷ Such primary devotion to nationalism, it is important to note, was also found among the Vietnamese Communists.

This attitude of the French Communists was confirmed in a September 25 document drafted by a French Communist group in Sài Gòn consisting of nineteen

⁵ “Soviet Paper Hails Native Moves in Indonesia and French Indo-China,” *New York Times* (5 November 1945): 1.

⁶ Lauriston Sharp, “French Plan for Indochina,” *Far Eastern Survey* 15:13 (July 3, 1946): 196.

⁷ Harold R. Isaacs, *No Peace for Asia* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1967), 172-73.

French and one Vietnamese, which Isaacs was able to read but not copy, advising the Vietnamese to tread cautiously in Việt Nam and not embarrass the Soviet Union because “France was a firm ally.” In the October 21, 1945 French election for the Assemblée Nationale Constituante (National Constituent Assembly), the Parti Communiste Français (PCF, or Communist Party) received the largest proportion of the vote, twenty-eight percent or 148 seats, the Mouvement Républicain Populaire (MRP, or Christian Democratic Party) won twenty-seven percent of the vote for 141 seats, and the Section Française de l’Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO, or Socialist Party) won 25.7 percent for 134 seats, with the remainder going to minor parties. As a result of the close race, a tripartite coalition was formed in which cabinet positions were distributed amongst all three parties. De Gaulle, who like the PCF owed his popularity to his association with the Resistance, was unanimously elected to be President of the Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Française (GPRF, or Provisional Government of the Republic of France), but the government remained provisional until a new constitution could be drafted and accepted.⁸ Consequently, lack of Russian and French Communist support, mixed with a realization of the fact that the occupation of Indochina north of the 16th parallel would be carried out by the government of Chiang Kai-shek, whose career was marked by brutal confrontation with the Chinese Communists, led Hồ Chí Minh, the leader of the

⁸ B.D. Graham, *The French Socialist and Tripartisme, 1944-1947* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1965), 112, 119-20; Edward Rice-Maximin, *Accommodation and Resistance* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 12. Popularity for the PCF had declined since the spring election when they won 30 percent of the election, compared with 15 percent for the MRP and 11 percent for the SFIO (the Socialists had suffered for collaborating with Pétain, but were clearly rebuilding popular support). The rise in vote for de Gaulle’s MRP reflected confidence in him since he had not adjusted his Government’s posts to reflect the earlier PCF victory.

Provisional Government of Việt Nam, to downplay his communist background when dealing with the Americans.

The U.S. role in the North had the potential to be more important than in the South due to the advisory role the Americans played, as well as the greater relative wartime influence the Americans had over the Chinese. However, American policy towards the former European colonies in Southeast Asia obviated against applying pressure on France. At times, French authorities anxious to regain a foothold in the North, exaggerated the threat posed by the Americans on the ground. In the final analysis, division of Việt Nam at the 16th parallel by the U.S. and the disparate approaches taken by the Chinese in the North, and the British in the South had the greatest influence on the direction events would take in their respective areas of occupation, but postwar international considerations restricted their ambitions as well.

On August 14, OSS China Theater drew up a plan for a *Capitol City* Team headed by Captain Archimedes Patti to enter Hà Nội to gather “military, political and economic” intelligence in Indochina “for postwar operations” using POW work as cover.⁹ By the 16th, General Wedemeyer ordered American personnel not to enter Indochina with high-ranking French officials, though operations with French were permitted to continue. Head of the French Military Mission in Kunming, Jean Sainteny, had attempted to leave for Hà Nội on August 17, but Chinese and American military police were posted at the airfield around the plane to prevent him from leaving. Sainteny and four other members

⁹ [Capitol City Team Mission], 14 August 1945 and Peers to Davis, 16 August 1945, Folder 3431; INDIV to Spaulding and to Belleview, Folder 3426; and Heppner and Peers to Coughlin, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA. Maochun Yu, *OSS in China: Prelude to Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 232.

of the French Military Mission were permitted to fly out with Patti and his first team of twelve men on the 22nd. However, Sainteny's mission was flown in with the stipulation that "the French are under complete U.S. command" and the "French flag will not be used." The rest of Patti's team flew in a few days later. The Americans did not know that Sainteny was going to Tonkin with new credentials. The British had dropped Pierre Messmer, Cédile's counterpart for North Annam, Tonkin, and Laos, into Bắc Bộ (Tonkin) but he was captured by the Việt Minh. D'Argenlieu had appointed Sainteny to replace Messmer.¹⁰

About the 20th, Sainteny informed the OSS that he had been designated as the Hà Nội representative of a committee, established to negotiate with the Vietnamese, comprised of the Chief of DGER in Kunming, Minister of Colonies Paul Giacobbi and Administrator General of Colonies. The Committee was vested with powers to sign treaties in the name of France, though the Government in Paris reserved the right to make

¹⁰ Davis to INDIV, 1 September 1945, Folder 96, Box 7, Entry 148; Helliwell to 109, Davis and Coughlin, 20 August 1945, Folder 25, Box 2, Entry 90; RG 226, NARA; Archimedes L.A. Patti, *Why Viet Nam? Prelude to America's Albatross* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 152, 162, 173, 490, and 553; and Jean Sainteny, *Ho Chi Minh and His Vietnam: A Personal Memoir*, translated by Herman Briffault (Chicago: Cowles Book Company, Inc., 1972), 47, 49; and Archimedes Patti, *Why Viet Nam? Prelude to America's Albatross* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 154, 162, 173, 183, 198 and 552-54. Of the first 12 men in Patti's mission, he names 9: Operational Group leader, Lieutenant Ramon Grelecki, and his men, Lieutenants Louis Foucer-Magnan, and François Missoffe, Communications officer Lieutenant Casnat, and civilian agent Gerard A. Larivière; leader of the rest of the team, Lieutenant Russell Feedback, with his men, Sergeant Frederick Altman and radio operators Eides and Radzlewicz (Patti does not provide their first names or ranks). A second contingent, arriving later in the week, consisted of Captains Roger P. Bernique, and Aaron Bank, Sergeants Robert H. Knollin and Maisonpierre, T/5s William Chidekel and Frank I. Seigel, Corporal Otto Dobrovolny, and two X-2 agents, one of whom was Robert Knapp, civilian warfare specialist assigned to Morale Operations. In Sainteny's words, "The Americans grudgingly loaned us the plane, and we traveled under the guard of a group of Americans headed by Major Patti." Memorandum to the President, Secretary of State and Joint Chiefs of Staff from OSS Director, William J. Donovan, 22 August 1945 (from Kunming Cable #21897 dated 20 August 1945), Roll 31, M1642, NARA. Sainteny's anger had been provoked on August 17 when he arrived at an airfield in Kunming expecting to be flown to Hà Nội, but was not permitted on the plane by Chinese and American military police posted around it. Sainteny was reported to have said at the time that the Americans had betrayed the French.

“minor amendments” to a general agreement.¹¹ Though this suggests that Sainteny’s negotiations with the Việt Minh effectively bypassed High Commissioner d’Argenlieu, later events show that he was still responsible to the High Commissioner as well.

After landing near Hà Nội, a Japanese guard drove the American and French missions to the Hôtel Métropole. As did Sài Gòn at the time of Lieutenant Counasse’s arrival, Hà Nội had an appearance suggesting it was clearly under the control of the Vietnamese.¹² The Japanese were concerned that Sainteny’s French mission could provoke the Vietnamese to violence if they stayed at the hotel, so they suggested that the French stay at the Palais du Gouverneur-Général (Governor General’s Palace) instead. Sainteny was only too willing to oblige, since this offer meant that he would reside in the symbolic political center of French Indochina. A couple of days later, Patti decided the hotel was “totally inadequate and insecure” for his purposes as well and moved to the former official residence of the FIC’s Minister of Finance, the Maison Gautier, with its “attractive grounds and gardens near the Petit Lac.”¹³

During his first few days in Hà Nội, Patti toured the two locations where POWs were known to be held. Roughly 4,500 prisoners, mostly French Légion Étrangère (Foreign Legion) and high-ranking civilian officials were being held at the Citadelle. The POW camp at Gia Lâm held 287 British Indian soldiers who had surrendered at

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Patti, 161; David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 483. Citing a Vietnamese source, David Marr provides a sampling of the placards appearing “in English, Vietnamese, French, Chinese, and Russian: ‘Independence or death’; ‘Long live Vietnamese independence’; ‘Vietnam for the Vietnamese’; ‘Death to French imperialism’; ‘Welcome to the Allies’; ‘Allow countries to determine their own fate’; and even ‘Hurrah for the Allied countries arriving to liberate us.’”

¹³ Patti, 157, 171, and 261.

Singapore in 1942. Patti observed that most of the POWs suffered from malnutrition, and learned from the Japanese officer in charge that there were several suffering from tuberculosis, beriberi, malaria, and amoebic dysentery. In his defense, the Japanese officer explained that the minimal medical facilities at the camp required that care be rationed, while the French doctors at the city's hospitals and at the Citadel had refused to admit the Indians. Despite this, Patti considered their condition was generally better than the Legionnaires at the Citadelle.¹⁴

After learning from an AGAS agent that an American was being held at the Citadelle, Patti sent one of his team to investigate. A former GBT agent at the infirmary, Marcel Orthet, told him that there was an American airman who, had been posing as a Hungarian citizen in the French Foreign Legion, since being captured when his plane was shot down in 1943. The Japanese released him immediately and he was flown to the U.S. several days later. Patti also forwarded a message to the Soviet Embassy in Chongqing on behalf of "Stephan Solovief, Chief of Russians in Indochina," to assist in liberating nearly one hundred Russian volunteers in the Foreign Legion apparently interned at the Citadelle.¹⁵ This seems to be the extent of his POW work while in Hà Nội. Within a few days of his arrival in Hà Nội, Patti had obtained the release of the Indian POWs, and asked the Theater Command and AGAS to send someone better equipped to perform the task of assisting POWs so he could concentrate on other OSS tasks. As a result, Colonel

¹⁴ Ibid, 174-78; Worthing, 72.

¹⁵ Patti to INDIV, 25 August 2004, Folder 96, Box 7, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA; Patti, 178-79. Stephane Solosieff (not Stephan Solovief) presented himself to Patti, according to the account in the latter's memoirs, as Soviet consul to the Japanese in Việt Nam. Solosieff said Russia needed to spend time to rebuild herself after the war, so communists in Southeast Asia would have to go it alone for a while. He felt the French were in the best position to reconstruct Indochina and guide the people to eventual self-government.

Stephen Nordlinger arrived in Hà Nội on August, 28 heading a “humanitarian and welfare unit” (actually AGAS, though Patti never mentions this fact) to assist Allied POWs on the 28th.¹⁶

The relative impotence of the OSS mission to affect events in Việt Nam north of the 16th parallel can be evinced from a report Patti sent on September 1, about Japanese activities prior to the arrival of the Chinese occupation force:

Past 5 days Japs have been dumping rice into Red River destroying burning and selling to Annamites furniture stationery, medicine, piece goods, arms and ammo. Last two items at ridiculously low prices. I have listed 14 warehouses of which 6 still have considerable material and if immediate action taken much can be salvaged. Unfortunately there is no one here to act as police force therefore I will try to work it from diplomatic angle with provisional govt in advisory capacity to safeguard these warehouses. So far much has been accomplished to stem tide of revolt and unnecessary loss of life to both French and Annamese by these diplomatic conversations. Always maintaining ourselves neutral and flying banner of freedom for all.¹⁷

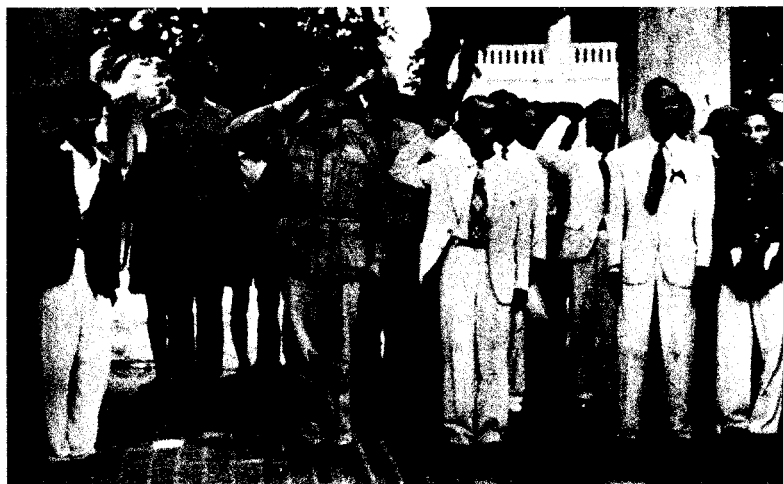
After moving out of the Hôtel Métropole, Patti was less accessible to those who viewed his team as the “center of Allied authority,” as he put it, but he received several solicitations from the Việt Minh, including Võ Nguyên Giáp and Hồ Chí Minh (whom he met at the Cung Bắc Bộ, or Bắc Bộ Palace, the former Résidence Supérieure, directly

¹⁶ Patti, 153, 173, 174-78, 239 and 253; Heppner & INDIV to 109, 23 August 1945, Folder 96, Box 7, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA. Patti tells us that Captain MacKay headed the AGAS team, but this was before Nordlinger arrived. It is unclear why AGAS activities remain so obscure, or why Patti did not make an attempt to be more clear about Nordlinger’s affiliation. Two reports in OSS files help clarify their role and Nordlinger’s association. John C. Bane to Commanding General, I Army Group Command, CCC (Prov), 15 September 1945, Folder 3373, Box 199, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA. This document includes a report on French prisoners at the Citadelle from “Col. Nordlinger, AGAS.” “Political and Economic Report on Northern French Indo-China, Based on Observance during October, 1945,” by Charles S. Millet, Foreign Service Officer, November 6, 1945, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center. This report provides another small piece of information on AGAS activities: “Also, during September and October certain American Army officers (notably those of the Air Ground Aid Service) were able by rather reluctant assistance of Ho Chih [sic] Minh to obtain the release from ‘house arrest’ and even from actual imprisonment of a number for French persons in the outlying towns of North Indo-China.”

¹⁷ Patti to INDIV, 1 September 1945, Folder 96, Box 7, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

across the street from the Hôtel Métropole), and Sainteny.¹⁸ On the 24th, Sainteny complained that “he was virtually a prisoner in the Palace” and Patti was doing nothing to help him (he was “freed” on the 31st). Sainteny also showed Patti a local Vietnamese paper with the headline, “Viet Minh Fighting with U.S. Troops in Tonkin Will Soon Be here to Oust the French Oppressors Who Last Year Starved 2 Million People.” The *Deer Team*’s Major Thomas was mentioned by name in the article. Patti states that he sent a radio message to Heppner later that day which precipitated the OSS China Theater Chief’s call several days later for an evacuation of all OSS teams in Indochina north of the 16th parallel, with the sole exception of Patti’s, to China.¹⁹

In response to Giáp’s concerns, expressed in a meeting on the 26th, Patti attempted to reassure him that the French who had accompanied his mission on the flight



Captain Patti (saluting, center) with Võ Nguyên Giáp²⁰

from China were not attached to him, nor did the Chinese or Americans intend to assist

¹⁸ Patti, 162-63. Some of Patti’s visitors during his first week in Hà Nội included Consular Agent for Switzerland, Robert Blattner, the President of the Banque de l’Indochine, and the Provisional Government’s Hà Nội City Committee representatives, Vũ Văn Minh and Khuất Duy Tiến.

¹⁹ Ibid, 171-72; Heppner to Congen China, Info Davis, 3 September 1945, Folder 96, Box 7, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA; and Giap, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 81. Patti to INDIV, 31 August 1945, Folder 337, Box 199, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA. On the 31st, Patti reported: “Political situation getting acute again. Jam. [sic] Sainteny and his gang have been set free by Japs and are hot on trail of dissension groups.”

²⁰ R. Harris Smith, *OSS: The Secret History of America’s First Central Intelligence Agency* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 355.

the French in reestablishing their hold over Indochina.²¹ The same day, based on instructions from the Ministry of Colonies, Sainteny appealed to Patti to help arrange a meeting with Hồ. Hồ initially refused before offering to send Giáp if Patti attended the meeting too, apparently as a symbol of tacit American support. This infuriated Sainteny. The next day, Patti attended the meeting between Sainteny and Giáp (another Vietnamese official attended but does not appear to have actively participated). In his report of the meeting, Patti states “It was apparent from the start that French had upper hand and that during course of negotiations Annamites lost considerable ground mainly due to their inferiority complex when confronted with a European.”²² The Việt Minh temporarily broke off negotiations with Sainteny sometime around the end of the month in response to the violent coup in Sài Gòn.²³

In the meantime, Sainteny was complaining to French officials in Chongqing and Calcutta about Patti’s lack of support: “I insist that in fact this very hour the Allied

²¹ Patti, 197.

²² Ibid, 206, 207-10; Stein Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945 : Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh, and De Gaulle in a world at war* (London: Sage Publications, 1991), 367; Heppner to 109, 29 August 1945, and Heppner to Congen China, Info Davis, 3 September 1945, Folder 96, Box 7, Entry 148; Director William J. Donovan, Memorandum for the President and Secretary of State, 6 September 1945, Reel 31, M1642; and Helliwell to 109, Davis and Coughlin, 20 August 1945, Folder 25, Box 2, Entry 90, RG 226, NARA. Minister of Colonies Paul Giacobbi issued instructions on July 30 for talks with the Việt Minh. In his published account, Patti states that Sainteny told him “that he had convinced his guests of their ‘infantile presumption’ of getting along without France.” Nevertheless, he ends his recounting of the meeting with a comment based on historical hindsight which gives the meeting a totally different character: “Little did [Sainteny] realize that he had just confronted the one man who would be credited in history with the ultimate dissolution of the French colonial empire in the Far East.” Of course, the same criticism of Sainteny’s patronizing attitude could be applied to Patti and yet readers of his memoirs might never know that at the time he had given an assessment similar to Sainteny’s. Sainteny, 48. Sainteny offers this description of Giáp, which may tell us as much about Sainteny as it does his subject: “I knew that Giap, the erstwhile guerilla, was one of the most brilliant products of our French schools, a distinguished graduate of our universities, a doctor of law, an accomplished pianist, and altogether a gifted man. He impressed me as being extraordinarily intelligent, steady, and strict.” Giap, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 81. Võ Nguyễn Giáp does not mention this meeting, but refers instead to one in which Sainteny came to Cung Bắc Bộ, and “Uncle [Hồ Chí Minh] and the brothers assigned me to receive him.” Giáp states this meeting took place after Sainteny had already met with Hoàng Minh Giám.

²³ Giap, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 81-82.

attitude is more harmful than that of the Viet Minh,” he exclaimed in one memo. After a short while, such exhortations as “only Leclerc or de Gaulle can and must act,” had their intended impact on the American China Theater Command. On Saturday, September 1, Colonel Heppner informed Patti that the Theater Command was upset over reports that he was “arranging conferences and mediating between French and Annamites” in apparent violation of “clear and explicit” instructions that all OSS activity in Indochina within the China Theater was to be restricted to assisting POWs or internees.²⁴ Although Patti performed some initial work connected to POWs, as has been mentioned, his team clearly spent the bulk of its time on intelligence gathering with the apparent approval of his superiors. He argues that although the Research and Analysis division of the OSS was unanimous in the belief “that the French were being unjustly deprived of their rightful claim to Indochina,” Helliwell and Heppner were on his side and “were forwarding my reports without substantive editing to OSS-Washington and to General Wedemeyer.”²⁵

There is ample evidence to support Patti’s claim, and all such reports were not favorable to the Việt Minh. On August 31, Patti had reported to OSS in Kunming that the Vietnamese Provisional Government did not include the Đồng Minh Hội, “In other

²⁴ Patti, 229; Heppner to Davis, 1 September 1945, Folder 3373, Box 199, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA.

²⁵ Patti, 330. Patti for Prov. Govt. to Heppner for Surly, 31 August 1945, Folder 96, Box 7, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA. This is not completely true. On August 31, for example, he forwarded as “priority” a message “President Hooche Min, by the Minister of the Interior,” for President Truman requesting that American delegates be made members of an inter-allied commission on the problems of Việt Nam. They also demanded that their government, “The only legar [sic] body in Vietnam and the only one which has fought the Japs (military operations conducted by the Vietnam Minh League and American officers) the right to have representatives in said commission.” Mark Philip Bradley in *Imagining Vietnam & America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 129, writes: “Ho Chi Minh sent a series of cables to Stalin, very much like those he sent to Truman (and in some cases identically worded), asking for Soviet recognition and technical support. None of them met with a response from Stalin. In fact, the comment made by a diplomat in the Soviet foreign ministry on one message read, ‘to be left unanswered.’”

words, the govt is composed strictly left wing element.” He said the Việt Minh knew the Chiang Kai-shek Government was planning on bringing a puppet government in with their occupation forces, and the Việt Minh were prepared to fight such a puppet government openly or subversively.²⁶ On the same day, Donovan, echoing a telegram from Patti to his superiors in China on the 29th, informed Truman that:

The OSS representative in Hanoi has talked to leader of the Annamese Provisional Government and is convinced that they are not politically mature and are being misled by Japanese agents-provocateurs [sic] and Communist elements. They seem to have no knowledge of the meaning of the terms they frequently use, such as nationalization, congressional assembly, liberalism, democracy, etc.²⁷

Heppner’s recrimination did not stop Patti from informing Helliwell on the September 2 that he had had a long conference with Hồ Chí Minh:

He impresses me as sensible, well balanced, politically minded individual. His demands are few and simple namely limited independence, liberation from French rule, right to live as free people in family of nations and lastly right to deal directly with outside world.

From what I have seen these people mean business and am afraid that French will have to deal with them. For that matter we will all have to deal with them. French are beginning to recognize this fact and are going to be big about it by offering Viet Minh terms for their independence. On other hand Viet Minh is smart enough to see through Machiavellian attitude French here especially Sainteny and have absolutely refused to deal with them.²⁸

Donovan transmitted much of Patti’s information in this message to Truman as well on September 6, adding, “Sainteny intends to organize an underground resistance group to work along subversive lines against the adamant Provisional Annamese Government.”

²⁶ Patti to INDIV 31 August 1945, Folder 3373, Box 199, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA.

²⁷ Director William J. Donovan, Memorandum for the President and Secretary of State, 31 August 1945, Reel 31, M1642; Patti to INDIV, 29 August 1945, Folder 3373, Box 199, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA. Patti had written: “Provisional Government groping in dark. After series of talks with leaders of Provisional Government I am convinced that they are not politically mature and being misled by Japanese agent-provocateur and Red elements. They have no knowledge of meaning of terms such as nationalization, congressional assembly, liberalism, democracy, etc.”

²⁸ Patti to INDIV, 2 September 1945, Folder 3373, Box B199, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA.

Donovan also reiterated that the Vietnamese Provisional Government “now clearly seems to be composed of strictly left-wing elements.”²⁹

One memo which does not seem to have reached Donovan, or if it did, was not passed on to Truman, was a summary of Patti’s thoughts on Hồ Chí Minh, based in particular on meetings around the second week of September. He wrote, “Mr. Ho continually affirmed that he is not a rabid revolutionary, but merely a man who desires autonomy for his people,” and concluded his message with this self-revelatory opinion of Hồ:

My personal opinion is that Mr. Ho Chi Minh is a brilliant and capable man, completely sincere in his opinions. I believe that when he speaks, he speaks for his people, for I have traveled throughout Tonkin province, and found that in that area people of all classes are imbued with the same spirit and determination as their leader.³⁰

Ambassador Hurley, according to Patti, was at least partially responsible for Theater-level criticisms of Patti’s activities in Hà Nội. Although Hurley was an ardent anti-imperialist, he reportedly viewed “Ho Chi Minh and his Viet Minh as an extension of Mao Tse-tung’s ‘red menace in the East’” and claimed Patti was “anti-French and a communist sympathizer.” There were two attempts to place OSS operations in Hà Nội under the command of the AGAS group, headed by Colonel Nordlinger, but since the first was as early as August 24, it is unlikely that they were aimed specifically at Patti’s

²⁹ Director William J. Donovan, Memorandum for the President and Secretary of State, 6 September 1945, Reel 31, M1642.

³⁰ “Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War,” *Hearings before the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 92nd Congress* (Washington: United States GPO, 1973), 306-07.

actions.³¹ Patti was also called to a conference in Chongqing with high level Theater officials.

He left Hà Nội for Kunming on September 4. Patti does not provide a date, but it appears that the conference took place about September 7, and the principal participants were Helliwell, Heppner, John Hall Paxton, second secretary at the American Embassy in Chongqing, and Brigadier General George Olmstead, who represented Wedemeyer's headquarters and chaired the meeting. In his defense, Patti emphasized that his actions were governed by his "special directive from the White House in April."³² The only such directive he discusses in his book, however, is an undated meeting, which took place sometime before he left for China in the first week of April, with OSS Director Donovan. It was during this meeting that Patti learned President Roosevelt "regarded the future status of Indochina a question for postwar determination." Donovan, according to Patti's account:

³¹ INDIV for Patti, 4 September 1945, Folder 3373, Box 199, Entry 154; INDIV & Fiser to Stevens, 24 August 1945, Folder 96, Box 7, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA; Patti, 238-39, 558. U.S. Ambassador to China "Hurley was furious with Heppner's reluctance to recall me to China and ship me back to the United States," wrote Patti. Davies, 328-35, 366-88, and 418-19. After Hurley resigned on November 27, 1945 he gave an interview to the press accusing "The professional foreign service men sided with the Chinese Communist armed party and the imperialist bloc of nations whose policy it was to keep China divided against herself." These foreign service-officers were identified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on December 5, 1946 as John Paton Davies, Jr., George Atcheson, John Stewart Service and two other China diplomats. Davies argues Hurley's accusation was made to name scapegoats for his own incompetence and failure to bring Chiang Kai-shek and the Communists together. Service further established that this was consistent with his attempt to cover up his failure to successfully gain support for Stilwell's attempt to take control of the Guomindang army by aiding Chiang and T.V. Soong's demands for Stilwell's recall from the China Theater. Hurley's condemnation of Patti would fit in with his recently arrived anti-communist zeal.

³² Patti, 266, 272. Patti states that there "several other Theater officers present," but does not otherwise provide a complete list of all in attendance. Helliwell to Davis, 21 September 1945, Folder 96, Box 7, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA. Helliwell's request for authorization, later in the month, to help as many as 10 members of the Mission Militaire Française with transport to Hà Nội to aid "French in outlying districts" is one example that suggests the OSS was not adverse to aiding the French in general, only their claims to reestablish colonialism.

Warned me to anticipate considerable pressure to depart from our neutral stance from other quarters, aside from the French. There were, he said, many procolonial supporters among American oil and rubber interests, there were ideological enthusiasts for a return of France to its colonial empire, and there was British and Dutch support for French colonialist policies in Southeast Asia.³³

When Patti suggested the possibility of using “Indochinese agents” for clandestine work, Donovan is reported to have said, “Use anyone who will work with us against the Japanese, but do not become involved in French-Indochinese politics.”³⁴

The September conference failed to resolve ambiguous policy governing the Theater’s actions in Indochina, according to Patti’s account. “As with most conferences at Theater or Embassy level, this one had been pleasant and noncommittal.” Everyone understood that the U.S. policy had changed after Roosevelt’s death (two days before Patti arrived in China) to accept, without question, French sovereignty, yet this position was muddled by the continued support, at least nominally, of self-determination for dependent peoples. Representatives of Wedemeyer, a known anti-colonialist, and Hurley, were anything but representative, and refused to take a strong stand. Paxton had nothing to offer, and Olmsted simply ended with the pronouncement to “carry on.”³⁵

As a consequence of the conference, the OSS in Kunming sent Nordlinger a message on September 7, “to clarify status OSS relations with you.” While acknowledging that the OSS primary mission was POWs and internees, and in this regard they would report to Nordinger, Helliwell notified him that “OSS however is also charged with other missions by higher authority and Nordlinger will not concern himself

³³ Ibid, 28-30.

³⁴ Ibid, 61. Patti arrived in Kunming after a flight which “took in those days about a week.”

³⁵ Ibid, 265-69; Acting Secretary of State (Joseph C.) Grew] to Ambassador, American Embassy, Chungking, June, 7, 1945, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center.

in any way with these activities unless same interfere with POW work in which case report will be rendered to SOS [Services of Supply, a logistics unit] and OSS of circumstances for decision at this hqtrs.” They also informed him that they were reducing their staff in Hà Nội to twelve persons, and only two of them would be dedicated fulltime to the POW matters.³⁶

The pilot of the plane carrying Patti back to Hà Nội from the conference on September 9 dropped lower to the ground so they could see the Chinese occupation army marching in the same direction more clearly. Patti described the view in this way:

It was a mixture of military vehicles, bicycles, and animal-drawn wagons, interspersed with scattered clusters of shuffling nondescript pedestrians. Many bore carrying poles or huge bundles slung over their backs and were leading or prodding livestock. We could make out flocks of chickens and geese, pigs and piglets, water buffalo, and other animals being herded along the route. Often the pedestrians would rush to the shoulders of the road to let vehicles pass, then as quickly as a wave closes they moved back to continue the flow southward.³⁷

The mass of Chinese troops intermingled with their inadequate supplies of animal stock—better to have such rations walk themselves and eat them fresh, than to have to carry dead, rotting carcasses—that Patti had seen were commanded by General Lu Han 卢汉. On August 20, Chiang Kai-shek had ordered Lu Han to take the First Front Army (Diyi Fangmian Jun 第一方面军) to occupy Việt Nam north of the 16th parallel and accept the surrender of the Japanese there. Lu Han’s combined occupying force was composed not only of the 93rd and 60th Armies of the First Front Army, but also the 52nd

³⁶ Mayer & Helliwell to Nordlinger & Bernique, 7 September 1945, Folder 3373, Box 199, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA. Indiv and Patti to Bernique, 7 September 1945, Folder 3431, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA. While in China, Helliwell and Patti told OSS Captain Roger Bernique in Hà Nội: “In line with instruction issued in joint message to you and Nordlinger only messages dealing with POW activities will be shown to Nordlinger.”

³⁷ Patti, 281.

Army from the Central Guomintang forces and the 62nd Army reassigned from Zhang Fakui's Fourth Front Army (Disi Fangmian Jun 第四方面军), and three temporary divisions, the 19th, 23rd, and 93rd. On paper, these included some 152,500 total troops, but the actual total may have been significantly smaller.³⁸ The 93rd Army, followed later by the 60th Army, originated in Yunnan Province, crossed the frontier at Lào Cai, occupying points from there, in the Red River Valley, Hà Nội, Vinh and Đà Nẵng. The 62nd Army forces commanded by General Xiao Wen, followed later by the 52rd Army, marched from Guangxi Province, crossed the frontier in two columns occupying Cao Bằng, Lạng Sơn, and key points along the coast to Hải Phòng.³⁹ Lu Han's armies began to arrive in Hà Nội on September 9, though Lu Han flew in on the 14th, and Xiao Wen arrived with his troops on the 16th.⁴⁰

³⁸ King C. Chen, *Vietnam and China, 1938-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 120; Vo Nguyen Giap, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, translated by Mai Van Elliott (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1976), 29-30; Patti, 557, 562; "Conditions in Northern Indochina," 30 January 1946, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center; and Kenneth Landon's Diary, Folder 10, Box I F1 Accounts, & Diaries (1928-1946), Margaret and Kenneth Landon Library and Papers, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois (Hereafter Landon Papers); Worthing, 57-58; Strategic Services Unit, War Department, formerly Office of Strategic Services, 9 March 1946, Reel 1, M1656, NARA. Chen's 152,500 figure is from the diary of a member of the Vietnamese Advisory Group (see below), but is disputed by Patti who identifies the figure as one claimed by the Chinese Government "to account for the cost of the occupation to be charged to the French." He argues that there were never more than 50,000 in garrison, but he may have been prejudiced by his limited view at Hà Nội. A report for the State Department estimated the 60th and 93rd Armies concentrated around Hà Nội, at 50,000 men. A State Department official used the same 50,000 figure for Hà Nội in his diary entry a month later though this may have been based on the earlier report or the same source. Peter Worthing believes the Chinese force in Indochina ranged from 50,000 to 100,000, but also notes that the 52nd, 60th and 93rd Armies consisted of 106,242 according to the "Order of Battle" statistics, which would seem to support Chen's original figure. A representative of the Chinese Foreign Office numbered the 53rd Army (2nd Division, 116th Division and the 130th Division), which was later brought in to replace the 60th and 93rd Armies, at 60,000 troops and "the bulk of Chinese troops." Ten days earlier, a Chinese Order of Battle in French Indochina report by the Strategic Services Unit listed three divisions for each of the 93rd, 60th and 53rd Armies. Though the strengths of these divisions could have varied drastically (Worthing states that the "normal strength of a Chinese division stood at 10,000"). This seems to further strengthen the number used by Chen.

³⁹ Patti, 330-331; Giap, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 29-30.

⁴⁰ Patti, 290; Sainteny 48; Giap, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 31; and Chen, 122-23. Patti makes a point to clarify the date of Lu Han's arrival which has been improperly set by other authors, according to

While Lu Han was the effectual head of the Chinese forces in Indochina, his superior, General He Yingqin 何應欽 (Ho Ying-chin), Chiang Kai-shek's Chief of Staff, served officially as commander-in-chief of all Chinese troops in Indochina for the occupation. His deputy was General Wedemeyer's Chief of Staff and Senior American Field Commander in China, Major General Robert McClure. Brigadier General Philip Gallagher of the USMAAG and Chinese Combat Command reported to General McClure and served as advisor to Lu Han on administrative and civil affairs. Gallagher's group consisted of liaison officers who advised each Chinese unit.⁴¹

Peter Worthing argues that "the primary goal of the Chinese troops was to maintain order in the occupation zone. In doing so, they helped sustain the Vietnamese nationalist movement by not dismantling Hồ Chí Minh's provisional government, and then by encouraging both the French and the Vietnamese to sign a preliminary political agreement in March 1946." Worthing also states that Chiang "had no real interest in the Vietnamese independence movement."⁴² Chiang's August 24 pronouncement, however, and the Guomindang's support of the occupation authorities' approach not to interfere with the Vietnamese Government imply much more than an occupational convenience for "maintaining order" within the international constraints that recognized French sovereignty over their former colony.

him, partially as the result of contemporary propaganda generated by contending factions in the Chinese occupation.

⁴¹ Davis, OSS China Theater to INDIV, 2 September 1945, Folder 107; Patti, 561; Worthing, 58; and "Occupation of Indo-China," 7 September 1945, Folder 96, Box 7, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA. Davis, OSS China Theater to INDIV, 2 September 1945, Folder 107; Patti, 561; and "Occupation of Indo-China," 7 September 1945, Folder 96, Box 7, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA. Chen, 95. General He Yingqin had begun organizing contingents of the First and Fourth Front Armies for action in Indochina as early as March.

⁴² Worthing, 4, 66.

Chiang Kai-shek and the occupation authorities must have realized that the short-term stability offered by the Vietnamese Provisional Government could not sustain itself once the French were allowed to return. With a sizeable occupation force, the Chinese were in a favorable position to suppress the nationalist aspirations of the Việt Minh, and extract valuable concessions from the French, while at the same time, assuring a more stable border over the long term. However, there is no doubt that, at the time, Chiang was more concerned with instability within China's borders, so Chongqing's inattention to events in Indochina during the occupation period, more than a clear determination from the Guomindang, together with Chiang's tacit support of nationalism, permitted the Chinese occupation authorities to support the Vietnamese.

The Executive Yuan (Xing Zheng Yuan 行政院), the highest governing body of the Chinese Government, created the Việt Nam Advisory Group (Yuenan Guwen Tuan 越南顾问团部) to represent it and drafted the Fourteen Principles to guide the occupation, based on Chiang's August 24 speech.⁴³ Peter Worthing quotes from Articles Seven and Thirteen of the Fourteen Principles to demonstrate the ambiguity of the instructions Lu Han had to operate under. Article Seven stipulated that "all communications installations and industrial enterprises should continue to operate until the completion of negotiations between occupation headquarters and the French," clearly implying that the French should be handed the administration at a suitable time. Article 13, however, directed that "except for actions that threaten to disrupt or harm communications, the financial

⁴³ Chen, 117-18. The Vietnam Advisory Group was composed of advisors representing six ministries: Finance, Foreign Affairs, Military Administration, Economy, Communications, Food, and the Guomindang. The advisor for Military Administration headed the group.

situation, or food supplies, take a strictly neutral position with regard to the Franco-Vietnamese question and do not get involved.”⁴⁴ In order to obtain some clarification, Lu Han dispatched two envoys to Chongqing on September 22.⁴⁵

There is no doubt the Lu Han and his deputy, Xiao Wen, though at odds with each other, used the ambiguity of these instructions to resist the return of the French to Việt Nam north of the 16th parallel and support Vietnamese nationalism. While Chiang Kai-shek’s position had changed due to international considerations, Lu Han’s view was influenced by his vantage point from Yunnan and the memory of French capitulation to the Japanese which resulted in severance of the supply line from Hải Phòng in 1940. He stated that the Fourteen Principles were unsuited to the occupation and favored trusteeship for Việt Nam with the ultimate goal of self-determination as Roosevelt and Chiang Kai-shek had discussed at the Cairo Conference.⁴⁶

In early August, He Yingqin had granted French Major General Marcel Alessandri permission to fly to Hà Nội, but Lu Han had prevented him from doing so. Alessandri, accompanied by Léon Pignon, arrived in Hà Nội on September 19 (Alessandri’s troops would not cross the frontier until the end of January, 1946). Lu Han entertained Alessandri’s request for a meeting, but after a short while left the French general with his Chief of Staff, General Ma Ying 馬瑛. Alessandri had asked Lu Han for various office supplies, but was refused “categorically.” Like Sainteny before him, Alessandri also requested that the Chinese recognize him as the French Government’s

⁴⁴ Worthing 61.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 79.

⁴⁶ Chen, 118-19.

representative in Hà Nội, but General Ma said the Chinese already recognized the French Ambassador in Chongqing. Both Sainteny and Alessandri asked Patti and General Gallagher to help convince the Chinese to relent and recognize them, but the Americans refused. In a message to the Helliwell, Patti wrote that Gallagher was “playing ball with us 100%. His arrival here is the best thing that could have happened to us.”⁴⁷ This was particularly important to Patti because Nordlinger was not “playing ball.”

Unlike Patti and Gallagher, AGAS’s Colonel Nordlinger favored the French over the Việt Minh, but did support Chinese concerns that the French, despite Alessandri’s assurance that they would only bring in medical supplies and food from China, regularly attempted to fly weapons into Hà Nội.⁴⁸ In a conference with a General Yi [perhaps General Yun Jixun 尹继勋 or Yi Jixun 伊继勋, Lu Han’s deputy chief of staff] on September 11, for example, Nordlinger expressed his belief that the Việt Minh should be disarmed. General Yi responded that he understood they were “Communitistic in origin” and that it might be necessary to disarm them, but he did not have the authority to do so. Also, as the British had done south of the 16th parallel, Nordlinger attempted to release French POWs, apparently hoping to help the local *colon* population.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Patti, 336, 343 and 345; Giap, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 81; and Patti to INDIV and McBaine, 23 September 1945, Folder 3427, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA..

⁴⁸ Worthing, 90-91.

⁴⁹ Patti, 239; Lieutenant Colonel John C. Bane to Commanding General, I Army Group Command, CCC (Prov), 15 September 1945, Folder 3373, Box 199, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA. Peter Worthing, who used both Zhu Xie’s *Yuenan Shouxiang Riji* and Yang Jiajie’s lengthy article, “Diyi fangmian jun kangzhan ji zai henei shouxiang jiaofang jishi,” (A record of the First Front Army in the War of Resistance and accepting the surrender of the Japanese and handing over the defenses to the French in northern Vietnam) uses the English Yi Jixun 伊继勋, but Zhu Xie uses Yun Jixun 尹继勋. It is only by supposition that Lt. Col. Bane reference to a General Yi may be considered General Yu or Yi Jixun. Thanks to Vinh Chi Quan for his explanation of the Chinese spellings in this matter.

In response to the mounting violence in the South, in part precipitated by the arming of French POWs there, Võ Nguyên Giáp, as Minister of the Interior, ordered posters to be put up on walls throughout the city warning the French “residing in Tonkin” that the Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam” would “not tolerate any act of provocation, any attempt to subvert the security and independence of the nation, and will not assume any responsibility for the future reaction of the Vietnamese people to acts of aggression on the part of the French in Tonkin.” Giáp’s notice appears to have reflected the general fear amongst the Vietnamese populace of Hà Nội who were concerned that the French POWs would take up arms against them as soon as they were freed from the Citadelle. There were, after all, reports that many French civilians had hidden arms in anticipation of the day when French forces would come to reoccupy Indochina north of the 16th parallel.⁵⁰

As if to validate these fears, French POWs on “one-day passes” reacted to Giáp’s notices by tearing them down in several areas and beating up Việt Minh workers who were distributing pamphlets with the same warning. In what threatened to be a repetition of the violence in the South, French civilians began joining in the foray. Gallagher met with Patti and Nordlinger, and separately with Lu Han. During their meeting, Gallagher and Patti learned for the first time that Nordlinger had been instructing the Japanese guards at the Citadelle to issue an estimated 200-300 passes per day. After being informed of the problem, Lu Han ordered his soldiers to round up the POWs and send

⁵⁰ OSS BID 3144, 22 September 1945, Folder YV-250, Box 390, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA.

them back to the Citadelle. He also asked Gallagher to make sure that all such passes were screened by someone he personally appointed for the task.⁵¹

It was common for French soldiers dropped into areas of Việt Nam they did not control to wear American uniforms for protection against the Vietnamese, but north of the 16th parallel the French wore American uniforms pervasively, sometimes simply to gain some advantage and other times while committing crimes.⁵² In his memoirs, Patti describes one such incident involving French POWs. Four French POWs had escaped the Citadelle after bribing the Japanese jailers, but were caught by Vietnamese police as they ransacked a Vietnamese jewelry store.⁵³ One of Patti's men, Corporal Otto Dobrovolny, reported a separate incident in which three French soldiers in American uniforms who had been released from the Citadelle tried to borrow 200 *piastres* from the manager of the Café de la Paix. Robert Knapp reported that a Frenchman claiming to be an American had been caught by the Vietnamese police after jumping out of the window of a house they were searching. When Knapp came on the scene, there was a large crowd of Vietnamese surrounding the Frenchman. On another occasion, Knapp reported six Frenchmen in American uniforms were arrested by Vietnamese police while carrying

⁵¹ Patti, 356-57; OSS BID 3144, 22 September 1945, Folder YV-250, Box 390, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA.

⁵² OSS BID 3144. Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 524. David Marr tells us that just prior to the OSS mission's arrival in Sài Gòn, the Japanese had let non-French POWs "walk around freely," and "on occasion," Allied POWs lent their clothes to the French "to enable them to move about without being insulted or menaced."

⁵³ Patti, 328. Patti also describes an episode in which two Vietnamese NCOs in the French Colonial Army who, dressed in "Chinese clothing," had escaped from the Citadelle only to be caught by the Chinese military police while stealing auto parts in the Chinese quarter.

arms. They claimed they were with the American mission. In both these instances, American officers helped the Frenchmen obtain their release.⁵⁴

The French were certainly not the only ones committing political or other crimes. Even the wives of French soldiers had been harassed. Robert Knapp reported that unofficial Việt Minh patrols waited for women to approach the Citadelle, took whatever they were bringing to the interned soldiers, and told them to go home. Some of these women were severely beaten. Reports of Vietnamese acts of political violence against French citizens in general were common, some more severe than others. Knapp reported that “annamite loafers” would nightly throw stones at Commandant Lagoutte’s house.⁵⁵ Reminiscent of the 1929 assassination of Hervé Bazin, Mr. Bleicher, a *colon* who had previously worked as a recruiting agent for Cochinchina rubber plantations, was stabbed in the lung at his residence on Rue Tuyên Quang in Hà Nội.⁵⁶ One morning in September, a French priest, Father Fournier, was bound and strangled to death in a room above the church library by two Vietnamese. Prior to the murder, French priests in general were suspected of acting as spies, and several priests of the Catholic mission in Hà Nội had received death threat notes warning them to cease their political intrigues or be killed.⁵⁷

Patti told Helliwell and Heppner that Sainteny was carrying out “a strong anti-American campaign” with “incidents of agents provocateurs [sic] dressing in American

⁵⁴ R.H. Knapp to Maj. Patti, 24 September 1945 and 29 September 1945, Folder YKB 2700, Box 388, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA. Patti to Heppner, 13 September 1945, Box 202, Folder 3431, Entry 154 RG 226, NARA. Lieutenant Ettinger, co-leader of the *Pakhoi* mission and the first OSS man to be sent on a mission into Indochina after the Japanese coup, was captured by the Việt Minh along with an unknown number of French colonial army soldiers onboard the *Crayssac*, which was flying the American flag and the French tri-color. He was held for seven days at Hòn Gai based on the belief that he was a French officer, and released only after his identity was confirmed. Fortunately he escaped the fate of Major Dewey.

⁵⁵ [signed Knapp], 18 September 1945, Folder 1271, Box 129, Entry 144, RG 226, NARA.

⁵⁶ [authorship not provided], 17 September 1945, Folder 1271, Box 129, Entry 144, RG 226, NARA.

⁵⁷ R.H. Knapp to Maj. Patti, 27 September 1945, Folder YKB 2700, Box 388, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA.

officers and noncom officers [sic] uniforms starting fist fights in front of hotels, behaving in unmilitary manner toward Japs, stealing gas from private property,” and other incidents already mentioned. Patti had complained to the French executive officer, since Sainteny had gone to China, without success. He pointed out that General Gallagher agreed with him, and had already sent a complaint to General Alessandri. Patti also urged Helliwell and Heppner to talk to Sainteny and initiate a counter propaganda campaign. In another message to the OSS China Theater in Kunming, sent on September 23, Patti mentioned that Gallagher had asked Patti if they should do something to keep Sainteny in Chongqing permanently. Patti reported that his reply was non-committal, and ended his message by recommending that “we try to stall Sainteny out of Indo China as long as possible. Without him his team here is useless.”⁵⁸

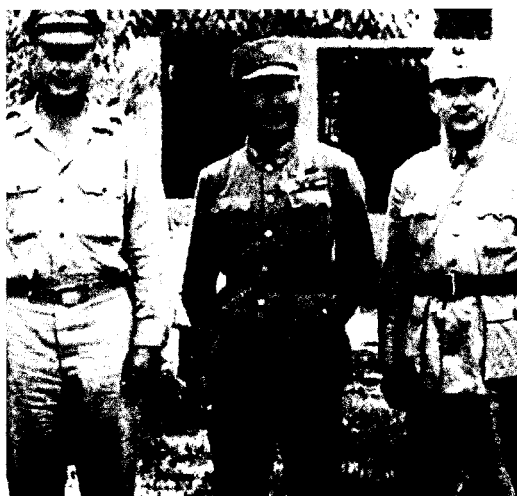
On the 23rd, Chiang Kai-shek was reported by the China Central News Agency to have approved the return of French troops to the Chinese occupation zone, but stated logistical problems had delayed them. The Chinese Combat Command instructed Gallagher, by the 24th, to assist the French establish an administration. Wedemeyer’s

⁵⁸ Patti to Helliwell & Heppner, [no date], and Patti to INDIV and McBaine, 23 September 1945, Folder 3427, Box 202, Entry 154; “Interim Report of Political and Propaganda Developments within Indo-China,” 8 October 1945, Folder 2475; and “II Interim Report of Political and Propaganda Developments within Indo-china,” 15 October 1945, Folder 2476, Box 186, Entry 139, RG 226. Interim Report of Political and Propaganda Developments within Indo-China, 8 October 1945, Folder 2745 Box 186, Entry 139, RG 226, NARA. Reports of French wearing American uniforms and committing inappropriate acts viewed by the Americans as an attempt to tarnish their image occurred even after Patti left Hà Nội, as seen from this excerpt of a report from October 8: “Eye-witness accounts report instance of Frenchmen dressing in Yank uniforms and starting fights, for the purpose of making the Americans appear in a bad light, and to give U.S. troops a bad name. One such imposter who was apprehended, claimed to be a member of OSS.” Altman, “Rumors and general public opinions,” 22 September 1945, Folder 1271, Box 129, Entry 144, RG 226, NARA. The divide between the French and Americans in Indochina could often be based on the smallest of matters. Sergeant Frederick Altman, another member of Patti’s group, reported that “certain group” reacted with a “wave of disgust” over the thought that Vietnamese children might benefit from the distribution of milk the American Red Cross had brought, and spread a rumor that the French Government had purchased the milk “for distribution to Europeans only.”

office reiterated this position on the 27th. However, on the 27th, Lu Han ordered that the French flag not be raised at the forthcoming Japanese surrender ceremony, ostensibly to avoid provoking a violent reaction by the Vietnamese population. Sometime during the day, Gallagher sent two men to intercede with Lu Han on Alessandri's behalf over the flag issue, but did not go himself. Lu Han was incredulous. He told Gallagher's men that he would have preferred not to have invited any Frenchmen because they had collaborated with the Japanese during the war, but he made an exception for Alessandri and four French civilians, as a diplomatic courtesy. Gallagher then sent a message to General McClure requesting that Chongqing be notified to instruct Lu Han to give in to Alessandri's request for the French flag to be raised. During the surrender ceremony the following day, Lu Han rebuffed General Alessandri's final request to raise the French flag nor would he let him sit in the official section. In a display of anger, Alessandri left the proceedings before they were finished.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Chen, 125; Worthing, 61 and 67; and Dixie R. Bartholomew-Feis, "The Men on the Ground" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2001), 315. Worthing tells us that General Gallagher "stated unequivocally that Lu Han hated the French. Worthing's juxtaposition of events is a little confusing because he states that "confronted with the reality of the situation in Vietnam, the occupation command would later send a telegram to the Foreign Ministry in Chongqing asking for a copy of the 'Fourteen Principles' and a clarification of the neutrality provisions of article 13 in particular," but references telegram from the occupation command dated November 1945. Several pages later, he reveals that Lu Han sent for clarification just eight days after his arrival. Obviously Chiang's order to destroy military fortifications across from China's border does not signify his long term intentions towards the French in Indochina, merely opportunism.

Generals He Yingqin and Robert McClure arrived in Hà Nội on Monday, October 1, ostensibly to resolve concerns over troop discipline. On Tuesday, the denouement of what is widely recognized to have been a well-hatched plan to remove Long Yun 龙云 (Lung Yün) as the semi-autonomous governor of Yunnan was set in



Generals McClure, He Yingchin and Zhang Fakui⁶⁰

motion. Chiang Kai-shek's decision to appoint Lu Han, Long Yun's relative and protégé (as mentioned in Chapter 4), as head of an occupation force for Indochina north of the 16th parallel had the fortuitous consequence of removing the bulk of Long Yun's force from Yunnan. On October 3, General Du Yuming's 杜聿明 (Tu Yü-ming) troops surrounded Long Yun's military compound in Kunming, declared martial law and posted the order for Long Yun's dismissal throughout the city. When fighting broke out between General Du's troops and Long Yun's supporters in the early morning hours, the Governor was awakened and fled to his military headquarters where he held out for two days. After waiting in vain for help from Lu Han's troops in Hà Nội, and being persuaded against fleeing there by his son, Long Yun surrendered. Chiang subsequently "promoted" Long Yun to the chairmanship of the Military Advisory Council (Junshi Canyiyuan 军事参议院), a sinecure post.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Patti, fifth unnumbered page after 236.

⁶¹ Worthing, 84-88.

On October 8, a response to Lu Han's queries to Chongqing for clarification of occupation policy arrived in Hà Nội. These instructions remained ambiguous, but the intent was clearer than the Fourteen Principles had been. The occupation authorities were not to intervene with the Vietnamese Government or the Banque de l'Indochine, but "firmly control the railway and seaports."⁶² However, Chiang appointed Lu Han to succeed Long Yun as governor later in the month. More concerned with governing Yunnan after his appointment, he spent little time in Hà Nội, leaving others such as his Chief of Staff, General Ma, Deputy Chief of Staff, General Yi Juxun, the Advisory Group, and individual Chinese commanders to manage various aspects of the occupation's daily affairs.⁶³

Meanwhile, Wedemeyer sent Gallagher a message on October 4, stating "The Generalissimo recognizes French sovereignty in French Indo-China, and he desires that his representatives in French Indo-China facilitate the resumption of French administration."⁶⁴ However Gallagher, who appeared to have become less willing to resist the French after his instruction of September 24 and 27, was shielded by his role as advisor to the Chinese, and continued to show sympathy for the Vietnamese.

In mid-October, when a naval task force sent to aid in the transport of Chinese troops from Indochina to Taiwan and Manchuria had arrived at Hải Phòng, they discovered that mines the Americans had laid in the harbor had not been removed. Both

⁶² Ibid, 127.

⁶³ Ibid, 95. Worthing argues that after the "Kunming Incident," resistance to the reestablishment of French control north of the 16th parallel was limited strictly to a negotiating tactic aimed at achieving the concessions Chiang pursued. Actually, Chinese support of Vietnamese nationalism never waned after the Kunming Incident, Lu Han was simply less active in the administration of the occupation.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 78.

Gallagher and Lu Han decided against removing the mines because it would open the harbor to the French and lead to war between them and the Vietnamese. They decided instead to clear the outer approaches of the harbor of mines using Japanese minesweepers, then use barges to convey the troops from shore to the ships.⁶⁵ This was clearly a violation of his orders to help the French reestablish administration, but since there was as yet no agreement to provide for French troops to relieve the Chinese he perhaps felt secure in supporting the Vietnamese in this way.

In contrast, Patti, who left on the 1st, remains a controversial figure because he was responsible for the *Deer* Team and his activities in Hà Nội before the Chinese occupation forces arrived were high profile. The activities of Nordlinger and subsequent official American representatives in Hà Nội contrasted most notably to Patti's. The significance of his mission, like Peter Dewey's death in the South, has thus been exaggerated. His mission to Hà Nội was relatively brief and although his position was highly symbolic to many, especially in the roughly three-week period between his arrival and that of Lu Han, his influence on events was small. His role has been exaggerated by the criticisms launched at him by the French and his published memoirs. The records he kept and later published of the events he witnessed, however, make him important to historians.

French concern about Patti's presence and activities in Hà Nội also led them to exaggerate his importance. It was during the pre-Lu Han period that Sainteny referred to

⁶⁵ Ronald Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years of the U.S. in Vietnam, 1941-1960* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1983), 68-69. Worthing, 70. This incident seems to refute Peter Worthing's argument that Lu Han's "attitude toward the occupation changed as he moved closer to the position taken by Jiang Jieshi and the Foreign Ministry.

Patti as “a rabid anticolonialist” who “regarded with a jaundiced eye anything that remotely resembled a return of French colonialism in Indochina,” and complained to French representatives outside of Indochina.⁶⁶ The OSS mission was even criticized in an article in *Le Monde*, a French newspaper, which characterized the OSS as the vanguard of a new imperialism. The Vietnamese press contributed to the problem of “distrust, misunderstanding and despair” amongst the *colons* by distorting comments made by the OSS.⁶⁷ The French spread a rumor around the middle of September that Patti was being recalled to Washington, D.C. on charges of insubordination for violating Allied orders to aid the French in Indochina. On September 14, six days before President Truman signed Executive Order 9621 terminating the OSS as of October 1, 1945, Sainteny approached Patti to ask him when the OSS was leaving. Patti was not notified of the Executive Order until the 25th.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Sainteny, 47. Bernard Fall, *The Viet-Minh Regime; Government and Administration of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1956), 5. Bernard Fall believes that such misperceptions, developed from “conversations” between the Vietnamese Provisional Government and Patti’s group, “stem from unofficial French sources and from sparse American news reports.” Fall adds, “the impression apparently developed among some of the hopeful Ho group and the few highly sensitive and vulnerable French officials in Hanoi, that American military personnel there were speaking for their government in Washington.” However, the record now shows that the Vietnamese had nothing more than hope to invest in the idea of American support whereas the French were only just short of paranoid of about perceived Chinese, British or American, threats to their empire.

⁶⁷ R.H. Knapp, 20 September 1945, Folder 1271, Box 129, Entry 144, RG 226, NARA; Hammer, 130.

⁶⁸ Patti, 328, 353; Michael Warner, *The Office of Strategic Services: America’s First Intelligence Agency* (Langley: Central Intelligence Agency, 2000), 42; Indo-China Desk to Chief, Intelligence Division, 20 September 1945, Folder 90, Box 7, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA. In spite of the order, Helliwell approved Operation *Cockatoo* on 20 September consisting of a five-man team headed by Lieutenant Irving to collect “all available documents and lists of persons among the local population” from Tourane (Đà Nẵng) to Hà Nội “to be rated as either safe or unsafe for possible future OSS use.” Peter M. Dunn, *The First Vietnam War*, (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1985), 44. Peter Dunn claims “the new American consul in Hanoi packed them off as quickly as he could, before they could further damage long-range American interests.” This cannot be true because neither the consul, who resided in Sài Gòn, nor the vice consul for Hà Nội arrived until after the end of the year.

Although the French denounced Patti for being too supportive of the Vietnamese, some Americans criticized him for the opposite reason. Lieutenant Colonel John Bane, for example, told General Gallagher in mid-September:

Captain Patti, it has been stated by several American officers, has handled his contacts with Japanese and Annamese rather badly. I have very incomplete information to the effect that he was overly patronizing toward the Japs and Annamese. Some of the American officers have stated that some statements by Captain Patti were ill-considered and not in accord with the understood policy. There alleged statements of Patti were not made in my hearing.⁶⁹

These critics may have included Major Thomas and René Défourneaux of the *Deer* Team, or the *Comore* Mission's Lucien Conein, all of whom met briefly with Patti before they were evacuated out of Hà Nội.⁷⁰ Also, Dai Li had complained to China Theater Army Military Intelligence (G-2) sometime in the latter half of September that Patti was "not

⁶⁹ Lieutenant Colonel John C. Bane to Commanding General, I Army Group Command, CCC (Prov), 15 September 1945, Folder 3373, Box 199, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA.

⁷⁰ René Défourneaux, *The Winking Fox: Twenty-Two Years in Military Intelligence* (Indianapolis: Indiana Creative Arts, 1997), 201; Maurer, 36. Cecil B. Currey, *Victory at Any Cost: The Genius of Viet Nam's General Vo Nguyen Giap* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's Inc., 1997), 97. Conein did not have a favorable impression of his superior whom he met on August 22 in Hanoi: "I didn't like Patti. He was an arrogant Guinea. You'd never get the truth out of him." *Report on Deer Mission*, Allison K. Thomas, 17 September 1945, Folder YKB 823, Box 387, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA. In the interview he gave for Harry Maurer decades later, Major Thomas said that he arrived in Hanoi on September 9 and leaving on the 16th, which would have placed him there in time for Bane's report and still remove him from any direct reprisal from Patti. Défourneaux does not elaborate but says he and Thomas "met Captain Archimedes Patti, an Italian-American who bore an uncanny resemblance to Mussolini...I was glad to get out of Patti's presence, but I did not know why." In the final report of his mission, which was completed on the 17th, he refers to Patti's comment that Ho Chi Minh was "an outright Communist." Thomas also recounts a private dinner he had with Hồ Chí Minh and Võ Nguyên Giáp just before he left when "I asked Ho point-blank if he was a Communist. He told me, 'Yes. But we can still be friends can't we?'" John L. Irving to Chief of Intelligence Division, OSS, 19 September 1945, Folder 371, Box 47, Entry 140; Patti to INDIV, 30 August 1945, Folder 3431, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA. Also upset with Patti, were Major Banks and Lieutenant John Irving* who had been interviewing French in Hà Nội as part of their investigating into to war crimes and atrocities for 13 days (beginning before Patti arrived). Patti ordered them to cease their activities and confined them to the Hôtel Métropole. Citing as an example of Banks's attitude as "unhealthy to discipline," Patti told the Helliwell of an incident in which "he approached a former member of the Decou 2 [Deuxième Bureau?] and stated that he had been doing Gestapo work and proceeded to ask indiscreet questions on war crimes in spite of my instructions to refrain from operating until orders came from Kunming." (* It is unclear if this is the same Lt. Irving later assigned to head Operation *Cockatoo*).

very cooperative with the Chinese authorities” and too friendly with the Việt Minh.⁷¹

Ironically, Gallagher expanded upon Bane’s criticism of Patti in his message to General McClure five days later, adding:

He loves to appear mysterious, and is an alarmist. He always gets me into the corner of a room and whispers into my ear. When I enter a room, I expect to see him come out from under a rug.... I don’t think much of him personally, believe he is trying to build an empire and appear important. Would just as soon he be relieved at an early date by someone a little less spectacular.⁷²

The OSS began to gradually evolve into a vastly scaled-down and no longer independent operation under a new title, the Strategic Services Unit (SSU), operating under the War Department beginning on October 1. Whether or not it was conceived as such, the SSU served as a temporary agency to provide intelligence and counterespionage until consulates could be established or reestablished in areas affected by the war. Many people simply changed hats. Donovan, for example, was replaced as director of the “new” organization by former OSS Deputy Directory, Brigadier General John Magruder. Major Frank White, veteran of Dewey’s Operation *Embankment* team in Sài Gòn, along with a radio operator and cryptographer arrived in Hà Nội on the plane that took Patti and *some* of his team to China.⁷³ White added to the confusion, which began with French

⁷¹ Patti, 238.

⁷² Quoted in Bradley, 141.

⁷³ “Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War,” 146, 148, 154-55 and 183; Director John Magruder, Memorandum for the Assistant Secretary of War, 2 November 1945, Reel 57, M1656. White also notes that he was never debriefed by Patti’s team. Although White asserts that he arrived in Hà Nội on the plane that carried Patti and his team out, he also states that he arrived in mid-November. His dates during his Foreign Services Committee testimony were often incorrect. For, example, he stated that he arrived in Sài Gòn “the day after the [atomic] bomb” was dropped on Hiroshima (the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9 respectively), “the second or third week in August sometime,” but a report from September 15, 1945, places his arrival on September 5. He also testified that French troops arrived at the port of Hải Phòng on December 19, but they did not arrive until March 6. He had recognized problems remembering such details a few years earlier as noted in a letter from 1968 which was submitted with his testimony, “I now relay without too much confidence on memories of 22 years ago,” he

rumors, when in 1973 he testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that “I was never told exactly why the OSS mission in Hanoi that I replaced had been withdrawn except I was advised that they had ‘exceeded authority.’” He never states where such information came from, but when he was asked to elaborate, he said, “I do know the British and French seriously resented OSS activity.”⁷⁴ Patti states in his memoirs that Captain Bernique and later Lieutenant Swift closed down the installation.⁷⁵ If Patti was recalled earlier than some of his team, it was clearly because he was high profile and the SSU was meant to be more discreet in its operations.

Robert Knapp continued to operate in Hà Nội at least into the second week of October and his activities would draw the wrath of General Magruder. The Hội Việt-Mỹ Thân Hữu (Vietnamese-American Friendship Association), according to Knapp, was the idea of an import-export merchant friend of Lê Xuân, who Patti was quite familiar with, as were the Japanese and presumably the French, because he had acted as Hồ Chí Minh’s courier and an interpreter on several occasions, including interpreting Hồ’s national independence declaration speech. Patti had endorsed the idea of the Association before

wrote. He did not have access to dispatches afterwards as Patti had, “But the overall scene remains as vivid as a flash of lightning against a towering storm.”

⁷⁴ “Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War,” 183. General A.C. Wedemeyer to Edward Drachman, 19 January 1967, Folder 6, Box 134 (Vietnam), Wedemeyer Papers, Hoover Institution. While conducting research for his dissertation, what was later published as *United States Policy Toward Vietnam, 1940-1945* (1970), Edward Drachman sent a letter to General Wedemeyer in 1967. General Gallagher had suggested Drachman ask Wedemeyer whether Patti operated independently from his command. Wedemeyer never directly answered the question. Instead he drew Drachman’s attention to his March meeting with Roosevelt and how he was against colonialism, and how “Mountbatten had penetrated the Indochina area with clandestine and cloak and dagger patrols.” What followed his comment about Mountbatten suggests that he gave at least tacit approval to Patti’s activities: “I had no control over them but I did exercise control with authority of the JCS over all OSS forces in the China Theater (with the exception, I repeat, some SEAC OSS and British SI personnel were penetrating without my authority into French Indochina in the closing months of the war). The British were doing everything possible to assist the French (another colonial power), so the situation depicted by General Gallagher involving Patti is indicative of the experience we had in the theater.”

⁷⁵ Patti, 364.

his departure, “and agreed to make available from two to three thousand *piastres* per month to finance modestly the activities of the group.”⁷⁶

Knapp, Sergeant Robert Knollin and several unnamed Vietnamese-speaking OSS members, in addition to General Gallagher and Bảo Đại, had attended the group’s first meeting on September 30 at Lê Xuân’s house. They tentatively established the Association’s activities, including bilingual Vietnamese-English education for its American and Vietnamese members, sponsorship of a series of lectures on American civilization and culture. Knapp adds that “I clearly emphasized that the association must avoid both in fact and appearance any political activities.”⁷⁷ About October 5, Knapp and Captain Bernique hosted the Association’s five newly elected officers who were all Vietnamese. Three days later, the formation of the Vietnamese-American Friendship Association was announced in the press. On the same day, Lê Xuân informed Knapp that the Association now had over 200 members and funds in excess of 200,000 *piastres* (no funds were ever received from Patti or the Americans). An article appearing in the Association’s organ, *Việt-Mỹ Tạp Chí (Vietnamese-American Friendship Association Review)*, appealed to American economic interests:

⁷⁶ Ibid, 178, 189-90, 195, 199, 206, 250 and 554; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 538; Bradley, 131; and R.H. Knapp to Lt. Swift, 9 October 1945, Folder 3426, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA. Mark Phillip Bradley identifies the Association’s president as the Director of the Provisional Government’s customs service.

⁷⁷ R.H. Knapp to Lt. Swift, 9 October 1945; Bradley, 131. Worthing, 73. Peter Worthing presents two letters from Gallagher to his superior, General McClure, which reveal a complete flip-flop in his attitude towards the Vietnamese from September 20, when he wished the Vietnamese could be given their independence, to October 26, when he suggested it would be best for quick departure of Chinese troops so the French could have “a free hand in settling the score with the Annamites.” Worthing demonstrates that Gallagher hid behind his role as “military” advisor in defense to French criticisms of his actions, arguing that Lu Han was responsible for politics and diplomacy not him. Gallagher’s actions here and on the issue of mines in harbor of Hải Phòng, suggest that his second letter was merely cover rather than a revelation of a profound change he had undergone.

We shall adopt an "open door" policy in the economic field. The American products are overflowing the world, the American plants have taken the place of those the whole world. So, there is no reason why we should not consume American-made goods as the British, the French and everybody in the world is doing now. Vietnam will be a new market for American manufactured goods, and what is more, we do not see any reason why the Americans should not build up a Ford plant in our own country. Moreover, Vietnam will also be a source of supply for the American industry. Our country is potentially rich. By insuring the Vietnam market, the Americans have nothing to lose, and everything to gain.⁷⁸

Knapp became concerned when the French in Hà Nội reacted angrily to the Association, expressing the fear that it represented "the first intrusion of American imperialistic capital," and to protect himself, sought the advice of Bernique and Lieutenant Swift on the 9th. They recommended minor changes in the organization, such as holding "no large mass meetings."⁷⁹ On October 10, Deputy Strategic Services Officer, OSS-China Theater, Colonel William Davis, ordered the "immediate withdrawal" of all OSS personnel except for seven in Savannakhet (Laos) and five in Hà Nội due to "unsettled conditions in Indo China and fact that any [sic] Americans in uniform are in the middle."⁸⁰ Knapp remained, but not for long.

Swift sent a message which reached Magruder on October 22 identifying the Vietnamese-American Friendship Association as having over two thousand members "drawn from top commercial and intellectual circles organized under OSS supervision

⁷⁸ Quoted in Bradley, 131-32.

⁷⁹ Ibid, R.H. Knapp to Captain Bernique, 8 October 1945, R.H. Knapp to Lt. Swift, 9 October 1945, Folder YKB 2700, Box 388, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA. See also R.H. Knapp to Lt. Swift, 11 October 1945, Folder 3426, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA, in which Knapp asserts, "I am somewhat troubled in my own mind as to whether our associates and in particular our chief in Kungming [sic] appreciate both the seriousness and the usefulness [sic] of the Anamite [sic] American Friendship Association." He then provides examples under three headings, commercial, espionage and cultural.

⁸⁰ Davis to Heppner and INDIV, 10 October 1945, Folder 3431, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA. Patti's OSS team's movements out of Hà Nội are not clear. Patti lists 22 members, 12 who flew in on August 22, and 9 who flew in a few days later. However, in a message sent to Nordlinger on September 7, Helliwell said there were only 12 OSS men in Hà Nội. White stated that their were 8 or 9 OSS men in Patti's group that left when he arrived in Hà Nội.

but operation with consent of leftist government.” He went on to suggest, “If you think advisable can organize large scale demonstrations in favor of US mediation.” Magruder was clearly furious in his reply, expressing astonishment that the Association was organized under OSS supervision in violation of “all Theater and Washington directives we have received.” “If Swift has submitted himself to such ill advised action you should recall him at once,” Magruder concluded, “and take the necessary steps to clear our people from any political action.”⁸¹ This put an end to OSS activity in Hà Nội. Helliwell returned to the U.S. shortly after Patti, and Heppner returned in mid-November.⁸² General Gallagher and his staff left Hà Nội on December 12.⁸³

White’s team set up their operation in two rooms on the top floor of the Hôtel Métropole.⁸⁴ In contrast to his predecessor, Major White summed up the Chinese occupation as an economic invasion.⁸⁵ “It was curious to see,” White later testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1973, the Chinese “were carrying everything off from out of Hanoi on their backs like ants leaving an anthill. It was an extraordinary scene.”⁸⁶ Early Chinese violence against the Vietnamese population

⁸¹ INDIV & Swift to 154 & Little, 22 October 1945, and Magruder and 154 to Heppner and INDIV, 24 October 1945, Folder 3426, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA. Bradley, 132. The Vietnamese-American Friendship Association acted as a host in 1946 to several American firms, including Caltex, which was represented once again by Gordon formerly of the Gordon-Bernard-Tan group, Standard Vacuum Oil Company, General Motors, Harley-Davidson, and others. *Yenan’s Attitude Towards America*, 22 December 1944, Folder 91, Box 7, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA. By comparison, as early as late 1944, Mao Zedong 毛澤东 (Mao Tse-tung) had stated, “America’s aid to China is not based” in the “spirit of rectitude but on the selfishness of capitalism. So, to co-operate with America is really very much detrimental to Yenan.”

⁸² Patti, 364.

⁸³ Memorandum of Conversation, “Conditions in Northern Indochina,” January 30, 1946, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center; *FRUS, 1946* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 16.

⁸⁴ “Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War,” 148.

⁸⁵ SSU NR A-65063, 22 January 1946, Folder Z-2, Box 3, Entry 108E, RG 226, NARA.

⁸⁶ “Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War,” 147-48.

reported by the OSS, even if isolated relative to the large number of the occupying force, may have induced the Vietnamese to accede more readily to this economic exploitation White describes.

Recalling the arrival of Lu Han's troops in Hà Nội, Võ Nguyên Giáp observed:

It was hard to believe they were a victorious army. The soldiers' faces were pale and haggard. Their yellowish uniforms were tattered and dirty. They carried shoulder poles with baskets of odds and ends; some were followed by their women and children. Many plodded heavily on legs swollen with beriberi. They were like dirty stains on the city from which the foul traces of colonialism had only just swept away. They looked even more wretched than when we had seen them in Kunming and Kweilin five years earlier.⁸⁷

Many, Patti wrote, "staked claims in private gardens and courtyards and settled down to brew tea, do household chores and start the laundry":⁸⁸

The disciplined [Vietnamese] troops in their trim blue uniforms marching to bands were no longer visible. They had disappeared into the confines of the Citadel, the grounds of the Governor's Palace, the former French and Vietnamese barracks. Only the tattered and mixed uniforms of irregular Chinese units could be seen, shod in rubber-soled sandals made from American jeep tires and carrying an assortment of American, French, British, and Japanese weapons. They were all part of the column we had seen from the air....

Storekeepers had changed their inventories overnight. Only inexpensive articles were left on display, and their shelves were largely empty. Doors and windows on the street level were kept securely locked. Neither Vietnamese nor European women ventured on the streets without male escorts, even in broad daylight.⁸⁹

In contrast to this impression, apparently based simply on the historically based fear of Vietnamese populace at the sight of a large Chinese army entering the city, Patti told State Department officials Abbot Low Moffat and Lauriston Sharp in December 1945

⁸⁷ Giáp, *Unforgettable Days*, 23; *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 50. Giáp also mentions that a cholera epidemic and, "with the influx of Chiang Kai-shek's army," a typhus epidemic broke out as well.

⁸⁸ Patti, 284.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 285. It is not clear if the soldiers in the blue uniforms were Vietnamese though presumably so. Some Chinese soldiers wore blue uniforms, and not all Vietnamese soldiers did.

that he “had a high opinion of the Chinese troops, saying that they were well-disciplined, that there was almost no looting or rape, and that they brought in some rice on mule-back for their own use.”⁹⁰

Patti’s assessment was contradicted by OSS reports from September, some of which reported isolated incidents, others of broader, unprovoked violence committed against the Vietnamese population by Chinese soldiers. In the first of three accounts of such incidents, a Chinese soldier shot a woman with his machine gun after she refused to give him a kettle in Đáp Cầu, Bắc Ninh, 34 kms from Hà Nội. The commanding Chinese officer ordered the soldier executed for his crime. In Hà Nội, a Chinese soldier killed a Vietnamese woman selling fruit. The soldier was subsequently killed by a “Vietnamese patriot.” The report’s author concluded, “It is believed that the Chinese troops have little or no discipline.”⁹¹ About the same time, a Chinese soldier was attempting to purchase cigarettes from a Vietnamese woman in front of a cinema with a Chinese twenty-dollar bill. The woman refused and a passing Vietnamese “loafer” snatched the bill and ran off. The soldier and woman began arguing, and the soldier asked a nearby Japanese sentry to lend him his gun, which he then used to kill the woman.⁹² In late September, OSS Director Donovan informed the President Truman and Secretary of State Byrnes that “Along certain stretches of the Kunming-Hanoi railway, people have deserted their

⁹⁰ Memorandum of Conversation between Major Achimedes Patti and Don Garden, both of OSS and Abbot Low Moffat and Lauriston Sharp, both of State Department, SEA, January 30, 1946, Reel 1, Indochina Center. Sharp, an anthropologist, was the Assistant Chief of the Division of Southeast Asian Affairs for a brief time before returning to Cornell University where he taught and later founded a Southeast Asia program.

⁹¹ [translation of French document by unnamed French informant for the OSS], 17 September 1945, Folder 1271, Box 129, Entry 144, RG 226, NARA.

⁹² [Authorship not provided], 17 September 1945, Folder 1271, Box 129, Entry 144, RG 226, NARA.

homes and lands because of plundering, first by Chinese troops, then by Chinese bandits.”⁹³

Chinese commercial exploitation of the occupation was top down. Lu Han wanted to request 210 million *piastres* from the French per month for costs of the occupation. The Việt Nam Advisory Group lowered his request, deciding to charge the French 95.9 million *piastres* monthly. While people were starving in the streets, high ranking Chinese officers were using their own networks to sell rice at ten times the current price in Sài Gòn. A Chinese general was reported to have received a 700,000-*piastre* bribe from an important French cotton concern for permission to continue to operate. A British intelligence officer in Hà Nội claimed that the Chinese were using this money to bring in new recruits and give them political orientation and training before shipping them off to the Manchurian Front to fight the Communist Chinese around January, 1946.⁹⁴

⁹³ Director William J. Donovan, Memorandum for the President and Secretary of State, 27 September 1945, Reel 31, M1642, NARA.

⁹⁴ Chen, 133-34; SSU NR A-62911, 5 November 1945, Folder ZM 2200; SSU NR A-64385, 28 December 1945, Folder ZM 2500, Box 401, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA. The SSU document states that the monthly charge to the French for the Chinese occupation was 45 million *piastres*, but this was based on a misunderstanding of how the cost was being settled. Worthing 4, 92-95. Peter Worthing’s thesis that the Chinese occupiers of northern Việt Nam “were not ‘warlords’ motivated simply by material gain by and the desire to plunder,” and profiteering by the Chinese “was not official policy, nor was it as widespread as many Western accounts would suggest,” rests largely on one piece of evidence that Lu Han radioed authorities in Chongqing requesting approval for one of two plans. One of the plans relied on a large purchase of *piastres* at a “realistic rate of exchange,” to be used to pay Chinese soldiers stationed in Indochina. The fact that Chinese sources, not just “Western accounts,” supply much of the evidence of Chinese exploitation and that Lu Han had asked for more than twice as much monthly compensation as the Chinese-manned Advisory Group was willing to propose to the French suggests, to the contrary, that such exploitation was rife and condoned if not “official policy.” Patti to INDIV for Heppner, 27 August 1945, Folder 3427, Box 202, Entry 154, RG 226, NARA. To put the amount of money the Chinese were requesting from the French in some kind of perspective, consider that Sainteny told Patti that the French Government was “prepared to extend a credit of 5 billion French francs to Americans only to invest in Indo-China.”

Hồ Chí Minh had hoped to peg exchange rates to the U.S. dollar, but Lu Han unilaterally imposed an exchange rate for the more than 1.2 billion units of Chinese currency (*fa bi* 法币 and *guan jin* 关金, or gold-unit) brought into Indochina at fourteen *fabi* to one *piastre* and one *guanjin*-to-1.5 *piastres* (one *guanjin* was equivalent to twenty *fabi*). One *guanjin* could be purchased in Chongqing for .25 *piastres*, and flown into Hà Nội where Vietnamese merchants were forced to pay one *piastre* fifty cents. The Vietnamese merchants then tried to sell the *guanjin* to Chinese merchants, who would only pay one *piastre* ten cents for them. More crucial than individual disputes with merchants over exchange rates, the Chinese occupiers and residents were purportedly encouraged by these favorable rates to buy up various goods, businesses and real estate.⁹⁵

King Chen remarks on the extent of the abuse:

Every flight of Chinese Airlines from Kunming to Hanoi brought in a great number of gold-units, once as high as 60,000,000. Small merchants acted independently or in cooperation with lower ranking military officers, and used

⁹⁵ Patti, 290-91, 338-39; SSU NR A-65063, 22 January 1946, Folder Z-2, Box 3; SSU NR A-64385, 28 December 1945, Folder ZM 2500, Box 401; Borrowes and Callahan, 11 October 1945, Folder YKB 2700, Box 388, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA; Chen, 134-35; Worthing, 91; Zhu Xie, *Yuenan Shouxiang Riji* 越南受降日记 (City, Publisher, Date), 5, 25; and Ci Hai/Quan, 346, 921 and 1078. This issue is made complicated by the primary and secondary sources. King Chen, utilizes the term *guanjin*, and Patti uses Chinese dollars which he abbreviates as CNs. Chen's principal Chinese source on the issue, Zhu Xie, gives the 1.2 billion units of *guanjin* and *fabi* figure, but Chen simply says "1,200,000,000 Chinese dollars," and the distinction between *guanjin* and *fabi* is very important. An OSS source confirms the *guanjin* exchange rate, but no sources explicitly provides a *fabi* : *piastre* exchange rate. Patti gives a 20 CNs : 1 *piastre* rate, and Zhu Xie states that the exchange rate for *guobi* was 20 *guobi* 国币 : 1.5 *piastres* which is roughly equivalent (to a few thousandths of a *piastre*) so we can safely assume they are the same currency. Peter Worthing, citing an American military source, states that the Chinese brought in three currencies. the oldest currency mentioned in these accounts is the *guobi* 国币 which was introduced in 1910 under the Qing Dynasty, and reintroduced under the Chinese republic in 1914. In 1935, the *guobi* was replaced with the *fabi*, but some people continued to refer to the *fabi* as the *guobi* and the *guobi* was still used at time, so this may explain two of the currencies. The third currency used was the *guanjin* (gold-unit, abbreviated from *haiguanjin damwei duihuanquan* 海关金单位兑换券). Zhu Xie learned before he arrived in Hà Nội that it was exchanged there on a 1:1 basis with the *piastre*. (My thanks to Vinh Chi Quan for translating the Chinese and assisting me on this issue).

cars and trucks to smuggle merchandise and gold-units overland to Vietnam from China with the Chinese national flag for protection. Lu Han's men bought up the big hotels, shops, and houses.⁹⁶

Negotiations between the French and Chinese over the exchange rate and charge for maintaining Chinese troops in Indochina north of the 16th parallel were held beginning in October. The Việt Minh took advantage of heightened tensions between the French and Chinese over the failure of negotiations to resolve differences between the two sides over another monetary issue. Before the end of the war, Japanese authorities had issued 500,000 500-piastre notes (or 250 million *piastres*) without an official French signature, and the Chinese held many of these notes for some reason. D'Argenlieu recalled all 500-*piastre* notes, offering only to recognize those with the official signature at thirty percent of their face value, and Sainteny announced that this would apply north of the 16th parallel as well. On November 26, the Việt Minh staged a protest in front of the Banque de l'Indochine, which turned violent and came to involve the Chinese as well as the French. It grew to more organized protests and a general strike when several Vietnamese were killed. After General Gallagher interceded at Sainteny's request, an agreement was brokered between the Chinese and French providing for fifty-five million *piastres* per month as an advance against final settlement of occupation costs by the French. While 500-*piastre* notes would still be honored north of the 16th parallel, Chinese soldiers would only be permitted to change them accompanied with an official

⁹⁶ Chen, 139.

request, while other Chinese, French, and Vietnamese would be limited to 15 million *piastres* total per month.⁹⁷

CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the first phase of the Chinese occupation north of the 16th parallel, and the personalities which dominated this period. For the Americans, Archimedes Patti and General Gallagher mirrored somewhat the anti-colonialism of Franklin Roosevelt and Sumner Welles. One may have been recalled for his “dissident” activities, but the other submitted to his superiors’ orders to comply with the Truman Administration’s more recent policy. While showing respect for the Chinese command in the North, Colonel Nordlinger also sympathized with the French POWs and did what he could to assist them, which led to more violence. On the French side, Jean Sainteny and General Alessandri began maneuvering to improve France’s position in the Chinese occupation area, with little success. The main impediment to French efforts of this kind, was General Lu Han, who generally resisted the return of the French, despite the Chinese government’s official acceptance of it. The violence and economic exploitation which also characterized aspects of the occupation were also explored. The next chapter will devote more attention to the Viet Minh and the government they established, their relationship with other Vietnamese nationalist groups, and moves to replace the Chinese forces north of the 16th parallel with French troops.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 134-38; SSU NR A-6385, 10 December 1945, Folder ZM 2400, Box 401, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA.



Chairman Hồ delivering the proclamation of independence,
2 September 1945¹

Chapter 14

North of the 16th Parallel (part 2): Occupiers, de Gaullists and Nationalists

In a discussion with members of the State Department in January, General Gallagher spoke highly of the Provisional Government, but felt it lacked the trained

¹ David G. Marr *Vietnam 1945: the Quest for Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 534; Vo Nguyen Giap, *Unforgettable Months and Years* (Translated by Mai Van Elliott. Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1975), 27. It is unclear why this photograph from a postcard printed in Việt Nam by Nhà Xuất Bản Văn Nghệ Giải Phóng, which seems to have been touched up with an airbrush, is so different from the one taken by OSS officer Allison Thomas and published in David Marr's *Vietnam 1945*. Giáp states that Hồ wore a hat, which is visible in the Thomas photo, but not here. He also appears to be holding this flag, though not in the Thomas photo. It may be that he took his hat off at some point during the ceremony and displayed the flag. The Thomas photo is taken from a vantage point too far away to compare the microphones.

personnel necessary for self-government. This low regard for the capabilities of the Vietnamese extended to the military sphere. Gallagher felt they were well organized and well armed with small arms, but since they had no navy, shore batteries and probably few pieces of artillery, they could not defend themselves against foreign aggressors. He initially estimated that it would take "one or two modern French divisions" to defeat them, but after questioning, suggested that even if the French captured the cities the Vietnamese would "take to the hills and continue guerilla warfare."² Gallagher's views, as expressed in this interview by the State Department, typified analysis of the Vietnamese Provisional Government's capabilities by contemporaries.

The Chinese helped the Vietnamese strengthen their position, but they did not simply leave the Provisional Government to administer Việt Nam as it saw fit; they attempted haphazardly to implement wartime preparations to reshape the government to reflect Chinese interests. The Việt Minh resisted these efforts from a position of relative strength, but it was widely recognized as a minor challenge compared with what was sure to come. Unofficial diplomatic maneuvering began to be replaced with government-to-government negotiations in earnest. The Chinese position shifted from attempts to manipulate the composition of the Vietnamese Provisional Government by Lu Han and Xiao Wen, to Guomindang-controlled negotiations concentrating on exacting the greatest concessions from the French. The Chinese also hoped their border would be stabilized by peaceful negotiations between the Vietnamese and the French over the territory they temporarily occupied. The French showed some willingness to negotiate some

² Memorandum of Conversation, "Conditions in Northern Indochina," January 30, 1946, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center; *FRUS, 1946* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 15-20.

concessions to the Vietnamese north of the 16th parallel, but it was not clear how much they would concede to the people they had ruled over for several decades.

On September 2, Hà Nội's business went dormant as hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese poured into Ba Đình Square from the city as well as the surrounding countryside. The legendary Nguyễn Ái Quốc, who had fought for Vietnamese independence since at least the time of the Versailles Conference after World War I, and had hidden behind many different names to avoid arrest by the French Empire, now freely and openly stood before his countrymen under the name he would use until his death, Hồ Chí Minh, without fear of immediate reprisal. It was a momentous occasion honoring the memory of Tụ Đức, the Cần Vương resistance, Phan Chu Trinh, Phan Bội Châu, the failed members of the Thái Nguyên Rebellion, nationalists of the Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo, the VNQDĐ of the 1920s and early 1930s and their leader Nguyễn Thái Học who defiantly yelled "Việt Nam! Việt Nam!" as the French executed him, the victims of the Nghệ-Tĩnh uprising, and countless others who had suffered directly and indirectly under French colonial rule. In making references to the American Declaration of Independence and the French Rights of Man and the Citizen in the Declaration of the Independence of Việt Nam Dân Chủ Cộng Hòa (Democratic Republic of Việt Nam or DRV), Hồ was appealing to foreign powers to respect and support his declaration of Việt Nam's independence from French colonial rule.³ During the ceremony, Trần Huy Liệu

³ Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 535; Giap, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 26. Ba Đình formerly Place Puginier.

Liệu presented Hồ Chí Minh the royal regalia he had received from Bảo Đại three days earlier to symbolize the Confucian transfer of the mandate of heaven.⁴

A crowd similar in size, composition and excitement gathered in Sài Gòn's Norodom Square (now Đại Lộ Lê Duẩn) in anticipation of hearing Hồ Chí Minh speak by radio over loudspeakers. David Marr has pieced together a sketch of the day's events based on contemporary and sometimes conflicting accounts. The day had started out with heightened tensions when "more than five hundred youths armed with hunting rifles, swords, and bamboo spears demonstrated in front of the military camps where French troops remained interned by the Japanese. Reacting to this 'provocation,' the French soldiers inside hoisted several tricolors, sang the 'Marseillaise' lustily, and traded insults across the fence." Later, in the afternoon, after waiting for twenty minutes past the appointed time for Hồ's speech to begin, the crowd became restless under the stares of the *colons* from the surrounding buildings. Trần Văn Giàu then delivered a provocative speech, which was followed by a parade leading from the Square in the direction of Notre Dame Cathedral. "Just as the group swung around the cathedral and started to march down Paris Commune Street, a series of shots rang out." Trần Văn Giàu dropped to the floor of the platform from where he had given his speech, then rose up and directed the people towards the garage of the Jean Compte building on Paris Commune Street (formerly Rue Catinat) from where he had seen someone fire at him. Others thought they saw shots come from the second floor of the building, while still others believed they came from upper floor of the Catholic presbytery adjacent to the Cathedral.

⁴ Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 536.

Pandemonium quickly broke out in the air of heightened expectation. “Father Tricoire, a bearded prison chaplain and quietly respected by many Vietnamese former political prisoners, was shot as he stood at the main floor of the presbytery.” A former French official “was grazed by a bullet and stabbed several times by bamboo spears” before being led away to the *sûreté*. Later in the day, bands of youths roamed the streets in search of *colons* to beat and deliver to the police, French and Chinese stores were looted and the city resounded with sporadic gunfire until evening.⁵

While the violence which broke out south of the 16th parallel reflected Vietnamese fear of the return of French colonialism on the backs of the British, the Provisional Government in Hà Nội began to pursue various administrative policies in a relatively stable environment. According to Giáp, the most pressing policy issues for Hồ the day after the establishment of the Provisional Government, were the famine, reducing illiteracy, redressing the colonial culture the Vietnamese had lived under, elimination of certain taxes, a declaration of religious freedom, and organizing a general election.⁶ These goals could all be seen rightfully as palliative measures for addressing colonial excesses, but they could also be seen as a vehicle for gaining broad support of the Vietnamese population for the nascent nationalist government.

The Provisional Government faced a financial crisis when it came to power. The state treasury only had 1.23-1.25 million *piastres* left in it, but the previous year’s budget had been 285-300 million *piastres*. Obviously concerned more with gaining popular

⁵ Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 524-27.

⁶ Giáp, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 33. That “Uncle,” as Giáp and the rest of the Vietnamese government later came to refer to Hồ, could pull a small paper out of his pocket with these ideas jotted down, address them in 30 minutes and be assured that they would be “happily approved” by the Ministers after they had discussed his points reveals much about the man.

support than building a financially-sound administration, the Provisional Government reduced its chances to rebuild revenues when it ended colonial government monopolies on opium, alcohol, and salt. The Provisional Government also abolished *corvée* labor, taxes on goods sold in public markets, professional and income taxes, and either reduced by 20 percent or eliminated (sources differ) the head tax. The only significant tax left standing appears to have been customs duties, but after the Chinese occupation forces arrived, the Provisional Government found these were substantially reduced because the Chinese, who were responsible for most exports, simply ignored the custom's authority.⁷

Clearly the most pressing budgetary concern for the Provisional Government, building up its forces for ongoing confrontations with the French in the South and impending conflict in the North, could not be solved by revenues gained through customs collections alone. So on September 4, the government formed the Quỹ Độc Lập (Independence Fund) under the chairmanship of the Minister of Finance Phạm Văn Đồng. Then the week of September 16-22 was proclaimed Tuần Lễ Vàng (Gold Week), a period

⁷ Bernard Fall, *The Viet-Minh Regime; Government and Administration of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1956), 6; King C. Chen, *Vietnam and China, 1938-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 133; R.B. Smith, "The Work of the Provisional Government of Vietnam, August-December 1945," *Modern Asian Studies* 12, 4 (1978): 588-89; Archimedes Patti, *Why Viet Nam? Prelude to America's Albatross* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 296; William J. Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), 113. Borrowes and Callahan, *Financial Information*, 7 October 1945, Folder YKB 2700, Box 388, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA; Giap, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 98. An OSS report based on a conversation with the staff of a Vietnamese newspaper reported that Lu Han still intended to collect taxes, as of 6 October 1945, on land, opium, alcohol, salt, and tobacco. This is corroborated, in part by Giáp, who stated that some people believed the Chinese had intended to extend their occupation until after the opium harvest. James L. O'Sullivan, "Platform of the Viet-Minh League," [no date given but information reveals late 1946], Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center. In 1946, an American foreign service officer cast doubt on the sustainability of some of these programs when he wrote "Strikingly lacking from the" from the Provisional Government's social "program is any statement against the use of opium nor is there any comment about the 'sing song' houses which are half way between the taxi dance halls and places of 'ill repute'. These are largely run for the benefit of wealthy Vietnamese and are fairly expensive. While the government has legislated against the sale of opium, it is still comparatively easy to obtain. I suspect, but have no proof, that the government is selling opium to raise money."

when all patriotic citizens, non-Vietnamese included, should donate to the fund for “national defense.” Although Hồ Chí Minh had explained that the appeal was directed at “well-to-do-families,” many people, according to Võ Nguyên Giáp, contributed their most cherished family mementos and heirlooms. Much of the 20 million *piastres* and 370 kilos of gold collected was used to purchase arms from the Chinese.⁸



Hồ Chí Minh and Võ Nguyên Giáp (photograph signed for Major Allison Thomas)⁹

Restricted by the Chinese as to how they could fight against the Vietnamese Provisional Government, the French relied on a propaganda campaign to discredit the Vietnamese leadership. They spread a rumor, for example, allegedly originating with a French informant working in the Provisional Government, claiming Hồ and Giáp had absconded with “a large quantity of gold.” French propaganda of this period included a Paris Radio reference to the Việt Minh

as a professional Japanese army, marching shoulder to shoulder with the Japanese. The French often predicted that once the Japanese surrender had been completed and the soldiers repatriated, the Việt Minh would simply fall apart. Propaganda directed at the

⁸ Giáp, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 51; Patti, 337; Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, Volume III (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), 26-27; and Chen, 127.

⁹ Marr *Vietnam 1945*, iv.

U.S. also effectively exaggerated the threat posed by the Soviet Union, and at least in one instance, attempted to turn anti-colonial sentiment against the Vietnamese by claiming their territorial ambitions extended to the whole of Indochina. In a broadcast made in October 1945, d'Argenlieu announced: "Our idea is to make Indo-China a free member of the French commonwealth. Her future position would be the same as that of Canada or Australia in the British Commonwealth." He also vowed to defend the "other races" of Indochina "such as the Laotians, Cambodians and Cochinese" against "Annamite imperialism."¹⁰

General Leclerc realized the potency of the famine as a propaganda tool as is made clear in this cablegram to Paris dated September 19, 1945:

Wide publicity should be given to the catastrophic situation in Tonkin during our absence, disastrous floods owing to the bursting of the dikes not maintained by the Annamese in the absence of French technicians, disorder and banditry owing to the deficiency of the security service, depletion of the coffers of the Treasury, absence of the health service, prospect of a new famine. Need to insist on the famine question: that of the first semester of 1945 has caused two million victims and the Annamese revolutionary propaganda is trying to make us shoulder the responsibility for it. To do this, underline that: 1—As good rice consumers, the Japanese have besides speculated in that foodstuff and squandered the stocks indispensable to fill the gap. 2—The Japanese have diminished the surface of the paddy fields by imposing instead cultivations necessary to their war effort, in particular castor-oil plant. 3—The harvest of the last months of 1944 was already 200,000 tons short. 4—Ousted, the French were never able to execute the projected relief programs, as they were replaced by incompetent Japanese or Annamese. Hence, the famine became tragic after the end of April. It is also necessary to say that the French government has taken measures to bring rice without delay to the populations of Tonkin that a new famine is endangering...*In short, it is worth to broadcast whatever may militate in favour of our return in this country and help put a check on the propaganda of our enemies.*¹¹

¹⁰ W.D. Borrowes to Chief of Intelligence Section, OSS, 29 September 1945, File YKB 2700, Box 388, Entry 108, RG 226; III Interim Report of Subversive Propaganda Pressures within Indo-China, [no date given, but information covered goes into third week of October, 1945], Folder 2477, Box 186, Entry 139, RG 226; Borrowes and Callahan, "Daily Rumors and Opinions," 11 October 1945, Folder YKB2700, Box 388, Entry 108, RG 226; SSU NR 40, 6-12 December 1945, Folder IS Oct.-Dec., Box 408, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA; and Hammer, 130. (italics added)

¹¹ Nguyễn Thế Anh, 222-23. (italics added)

In an attempt to promote these ideas and owing to the work of Colonel Nordlinger who acted as a mediator between the Vietnamese Provisional Government and the French, rice was loaded in Sài Gòn for shipment to Bắc Bộ in January 1946. The amount was still inadequate due to insufficient shipping, labor, and partly due to French “lack of interest”—as one American observer remarked. Despite Leclerc’s recognition of the propaganda value of responding to the famine in Bắc Bộ, the French attempted to delay rice shipments incessantly according to Chinese sources.¹²

An OSS report from early September 1945 told of recent floods having destroyed October’s crop. “The situation is aggravated by the fact that all farmers have eaten not only their reserve supplies but their seed rice.” The report continues, “In some regions people have already taken to eating roots and tree leaves.” In his study of this issue, Nguyễn Thế Anh concludes that French aid in amounting to an average of 20,000 tons of rice per month beginning in November 1945 (or about seventeen percent of the total rice produced in Bắc Kỳ in 1944 if averaged out monthly), together with improved weather conditions by the winter harvest of 1945, and “a clear-cut increase compared to the pre-war period” by the fifth month of 1946 signaled the end to famine in Bắc Kỳ. R.B. Smith, nevertheless, argues that a Việt Minh mobilization campaign to increase production of dry crops such as potatoes, maize, and beans from late 1945 through 1946 “did more for the prestige of the Provisional Government than any amount of revolutionary propaganda or political manipulation.”¹³

¹² R.B. Smith: 601-02; Chen, 133.

¹³ Nguyễn Thế Anh 223-24; INDIV to Parrot for Gallehger [sic] and Davis, 109, McBaine, 6 September 1945, Folder 96, Box 7, Entry 148, RG 226, NARA; and James L. O’Sullivan, “Platform of the Viet-Minh

Although written as part of a series of articles in the newspaper *Sự Thật (Truth)* in 1947, former Secretary General of the Indochina Communist Party, Trường Chinh, provides a helpful outline of the tasks for “resistance in the cultural field,” which were unlikely to have changed though they may have become more refined by that time. Chinh spoke of opening up a “cultural front” to “attack the cultural strongholds of the enemy.” He made clear that the enemy was not “the genuine and progressive culture of the French people,” but the “obscurantist culture, introduced by the French colonialists to strengthen domination.” He saw the necessity of utilizing all skills available in the general population, from doctors who could maintain the wounded soldiers and the masses, to engineers and architects who could construct defense works and other projects. He saw political figures, scientists, teachers, musicians, poets, journalists, and other writers mobilizing the masses through propaganda “to unite,” and “to equip them to go eagerly forward to fight the enemy, preferring death to surrender.” He recognized that propaganda had to be “simple, and well adapted to the level of the people, who, for the

League,” [no date given but information reveals late 1946], Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center. Roughly a year later, the American assessment of the Provisional Government’s attempts to ameliorate famine’s impact on the Vietnamese population was mixed: “It is impossible to state what portion of the land program has gone into effect: i.e. reduction of rent, fee exploitation of fallow land, and new division of communal land. On the slight evidence which is available, the program has been spotty, that is, effective in some places neglected in others. There are some 7,000 villages in the Delta alone and under present circumstances it is impossible to make a survey. It is apparent however that exploitation of fallow land has been undertaken almost everywhere, simply from the increase in production last winter and spring of secondary crops such as potatoes and corn.” McAlister (1969), 243. The figure of 20,000 tons of rice per month can be appreciated when considered next to the total estimated amount of rice the Chinese occupation force consumed of 14,000 tons. *Occupation of Indo-China, North of 16th N. Latitude*, 26 August 1945, Folder 96, Box 7, Entry 148 RG 226, NARA. A joint U.S.-China plan for the occupation had estimated that two of the four Chinese occupation Armies would require 1,400 tons of rice per month. If we double this amount for the remaining two armies, the 14,000 tons would have sustained all four armies for about five months.

most part, are illiterate, or have very little education.” He also saw the need to use the cultural field to “dishearten the enemy” and lower their morale.”¹⁴

Of course colonial practices limited the number of Vietnamese who could become doctors, scientists, engineers, architects, and other professionals, while Hồ Chí Minh and others recognized that the literacy rate, which he estimated at five percent, was the first step toward resolving this problem.¹⁵ In his speech at the proclamation of independence ceremony on September 2, Võ Nguyên Giáp set out several of the education policy goals of the Provisional Government, including compulsory education, a scholarship program, and a program to fight adult illiteracy. Throughout the month of September, the Provisional Government promulgated laws providing for free and compulsory education with literacy based on learning the French-refined *quốc ngữ* reading-writing system as its centerpiece.¹⁶

The Provisional Government’s challenges were not limited to the ominous threat of the returning French, the budgetary crisis exacerbated by the last attempts at plunder

¹⁴ Trường-Chinh, *Primer for Revolt; the Communist Take-over in Viet-Nam* (New York, Praeger, 1963), 133-38. It is important to distinguish between what Chinh meant by propaganda and the propaganda the colonial French generally used to impugn Vietnamese nationalists, not just the Việt Minh. Chinh was essentially talking about educating the masses about what he and the other leaders of the Việt Minh believed to be the right path for their people. While they may have deceived the Vietnamese population about the extent of their long term economic agenda, they did so believing that the independence issue was immediate, and all other concerns should be subordinated to it. The Việt Minh’s suppression of its opposition from other Vietnamese nationalists groups cannot be so easily defended. In contrast what is connoted by Chinh’s use of “propaganda,” French colonial authorities used “black propaganda” to deceive non-de Gaullists in particular, but non-French in general who might tacitly or otherwise support Vietnamese nationalists.

¹⁵ Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, Volume III, 43-44.

¹⁶ R.B. Smith: 584-85. “Platform of the Viet-Minh League.” An American assessment of the literacy program in 1946 was extremely favorable: “There are the usual day schools at which attendance for children is compulsory. But in addition there are night schools practically everywhere. Government figures are unreliable but the progress made has been enormous, particularly among the women. Conservatively the number of people who can read the Romanized script of the Vietnamese language has at least doubled in the last year.”

by the conquered Japanese, the Chinese occupation's exploitation, or the devastating famine. On the Chinese occupation force's coattails, came rival anti-Communist, Vietnamese nationalist factions nurtured by the Guomindang. Beneath Chiang Kai-shek and General He, the Chinese occupation force fell loosely into two factions. Lu Han sponsored the VNQDD headed by Nguyễn Tường Tam and Vũ Hồng Khan. General Xiao Wen, who in addition to serving as Lu Han's deputy commander was Commander of the 62nd Army and Director of Foreign Affairs, sponsored the Đồng Minh Hội, led by Nguyễn Hải Thân. Hồ Chí Minh told the OSS that Thân had participated in Phan Bội Châu's Đông Du (Exodus to the East) movement, but had been living in China where he earned a living as a teacher and fortune teller ever since he was expelled from Japan in 1907. Hồ also reported that Thân had worked at the Huangpu Academy sometime in the latter part of the 1920s. He and a few hundred men of the Đồng Minh Hội joined the Chinese troops, who already had a former mandarin of Lạng Sơn in tow, as they marched through Jingxi on their way to Indochina.¹⁷ Too much can be made of this and writers have been unduly influenced by interested parties in the events, through source documents, to draw hard lines of distinction. The OSS reported in October, for example,

¹⁷ Chen, 121-22; "Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War," *Hearings before the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 92nd Congress* (Washington: United States GPO, 1973), 318; Patti, 330-31; Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, 116; Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, 260; "Additional Rider-Agreement," Folder 427, Box 140, Entry 140, RG 226, NARA; and Borrowes and Callahan, Biographical Info. On Nguyen Hai Than, 9 October 1945, folder YKB2700, Box 388, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA. Isaac Milton Sacks, "Communism and Nationalism in Viet Nam 1918-1946," Ph.D. Dissertation (Yale University, 1960), 171. Nguyễn Tường Tam and Vũ Hồng Khan were both members of the original VNQDD. Tam led one faction that split off from the VNQDD which was renamed the Đại Việt Dân Chính Đảng (Đại Việt Democratic Party).

that Nguyễn Hải Thân “is seen entering Chinese headquarters almost daily, and there is direct telephone connection between his private office and that of General Lu Han.”¹⁸

Hồ Chí Minh, according to Archimedes Patti, said that Chiang Kai-shek’s appointment of Long Yun and Zhang Fakui’s representatives, Lu Han and Xiao Wen, as leaders of the occupation assured sponsorship of the VNQDD and Đồng Minh Hội “to frustrate France’s will to reestablish itself in Indochina and to prevent a coalition of Vietnamese and Chinese Communist forces in China’s sphere of interest.”¹⁹ While Xiao Wen was more aggressive in his support of the Đồng Minh Hội than Lu Han was of the VNQDD, there were limits to how far they worked to undermine the Việt Minh’s hold on power. The 62nd Army under Xiao Wen’s command had violent confrontations with Việt Minh in Lạng Sơn and Cao Bằng. The Việt Minh and Lu Han’s Army also fought at Lào Cai and Yên Bái, but all these skirmishes were relatively minor and isolated. Xiao Wen also pressured the Việt Minh to open their government to the pro-Chinese, non-Communist Vietnamese nationalist parties, but there was never a concerted Chinese effort to replace the Việt Minh, which had an effective administrative organization in place early on.²⁰

The VNQDD and Đồng Minh Hội were emboldened by the protection of the Chinese forces. The VNQDD “set up headquarters, assembled the local reactionaries, pestered the people, plundered, robbed and killed,” wrote Võ Nguyên Giáp. “Servants

¹⁸ “Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War,” 317.

¹⁹ Patti, 222; OSS Intelligence Summary Number 29, 17-24 September 1945, Folder ZM-139, Box 396, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA.

²⁰ Chen, 121-22, 128-31; Patti, 331. Patti states that on September 13, “I learned the same day that the entire Vietnamese population along the railroad from Lạng Sơn to Kep had left their homes and lands after several days of plundering and looting by troops of the 62d Army and, later, by Chinese ‘pirates.’ The pirates turned out to be Vu Kim Thanh’s ‘army.’”

taking after their masters, the rag tag troops of Lung Yun, the VNQDD behaved exactly like bandits.”²¹ Though Americans referred to a group of VNQDD at Móng Cái as “pirates,” Giáp’s criticism is no doubt colored by their opposition to the Việt Minh.²² The Đồng Minh Hội passed out handbills and broadcast from bullhorns denunciations that the Việt Minh “had established dictatorial rule.” After arriving in Hà Nội, the VNQDD employed a more effective tactic by setting up a print shop and establishing a party newspaper, *Việt Nam*, and other papers, such as *Liên Hiệp (Coalition)* and *Thiệt Thực (Realism)*. Through these organs and a loudspeaker they installed outside of the print shop, the VNQDD also denounced the Việt Minh.²³ Still, the Việt Minh continued to hold an edge over its rivals, due in part to its control of the Bạch Mai Hà Nội radio transmitter, newspapers of its own, such as *Cứu Quốc* and *Giải Phóng*, and superior organization. While the lack of active support from any outside group should have weakened the Việt Minh, they remained strong, perhaps due to the legitimacy they held relative to these other groups reliant on Chinese support.²⁴

Hồ Chí Minh began frequently to move his residence so that he would not be an easy target for his Vietnamese and French enemies, according to Võ Nguyên Giáp. In addition to staying at the former Résidence Supérieure, “he stayed in a house at No. 8 Bo Ho [near Hoàn Kiếm Lake]; other days he stayed in Bui village, or in a house near the

²¹ Giáp, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 30.

²² Charles S. Reed II to the Secretary of State, 19 September 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center; Patti, 331. Patti refers to the group as Đồng Minh Hội, but Reed refers to them as VNQDD.

²³ Giáp, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 42; *Unforgettable Days* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1975), 58. Fall (1956), 9. Bernard Fall refers to the *Liên Hiệp* as a paper of the Đồng Minh Hội, but Giáp says it was published by the VNQDD.

²⁴ Fall, *The Viet-Minh Regime; Government and Administration of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam*, 7.

Nga Tu So intersection.”²⁵ In his effort to combat the VNQDD and Đồng Minh Hội, Hồ cultivated relations with Lu Han and Xiao Wen. He had several informal meetings with Xiao Wen and arranged a pleasant villa for his residence while in Hà Nội.²⁶ Hồ tried to build support from two members of the Việt Nam Advisory Group, Shao Baichang 邵百昌, representing the Military Administration, and Xing Senzhou, representing the Guomindang, with assurances that he respected China, espoused Sun Yat-sen’s 孫逸仙 ideology, “Three Principles of the People” (*san min zhuyi* 三民主義; nationalism, democracy and state socialism) and was not a Communist. He changed the name of the Quân Đội Giải Phóng Nhân Dân (People’s Liberation Army or PLA) to Vệ Quốc Đoàn (Defense Guard) believing that the Chinese would be fooled into thinking the term “đoàn” (unit) referred to small local armed units. These were ordered to withdraw from areas where there might be confrontations with the Chinese occupying force, and to avoid open clashes when they could not avoid running into the Chinese. The Việt Minh also officially dissolved the Đông Dương Cộng Sản Đảng (Indochina Communist Party or ICP), though it continued to operate underground as a Marxist study group.²⁷

Aimed at persuading the U.S. to support Vietnamese self-determination, consistent with Hồ Chí Minh’s repeated attempts to downplay his record of association with the Comintern, Russian and Chinese Communists, Hồ’s government issued decrees

²⁵ Giap, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 23, 43; Memorandum of Conversation, “Conditions in Northern Indochina,” January 30, 1946, Reel 1, RG 59, NARA. Giáp, who mentions that a group of high Việt Minh officials stayed at a house on Hàng Ngang, one of Hà Nội’s “36 ancient streets” (*ba mươi sáu phố phường*), emphasizes the threat from other Vietnamese nationalists. General Gallagher, however, reports “that all French attempts to sponsor a ‘palace revolution’ to unseat Hồ Chí Minh were unsuccessful.”

²⁶ Patti, 287.

²⁷ Chen, 117, 127-29, and 145; 116; Giap, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 41; Patti, 292; and Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, 116.

beginning as early as September 8 establishing rules for a representative democracy.²⁸ The idea of elections was a clear attempt to show the U.S. and the other Allies that the Vietnamese fit their conception of what it meant to be politically mature, meaning willing to adopt a political system akin to the one the Americans had nurtured in the Philippines. This willingness to attempt to replicate a semblance of American political culture in Việt Nam can also be seen as a diplomatic effort at weakening French claims on the territory through compromise which would effectively exchange political subjugation under the French for the political institutions of another foreign hegemony for self-determination.

The Việt Minh called for the elections as early as possible because they feared the challenge their opponents could pose if given enough time and strong support of the Chinese occupying forces. They were justified to fear the Chinese influence on Vietnamese politics. According to Võ Nguyên Giáp, Xiao Wen had initially “proposed” to Hồ Chí Minh that the government be composed of all three parties, the VNQDD, the Đồng Minh Hội, and the Việt Minh.²⁹ Negotiations began in mid-November with the VNQDD and Đồng Minh Hội asking for the presidency and six ministerial seats in the new coalition government. Hồ counter-offered three ministerial seats and a political advisory group to be headed by Nguyễn Hải Thân.³⁰

Negotiations continued for a month, but deadlocked. The VNQDD began broadcasting from their loudspeaker non-stop calls for the resignation of the Provisional Government. “While continuing with their kidnappings, assassinations and extortions,

²⁸ See R.B. Smith: 571-609, for his discussion of these decrees and their provisions.

²⁹ Giáp *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 41; Chen, 129. Chen states that the VNQDD and Đồng Minh Hội “solicited pressure on” Hồ.

³⁰ Chen, 129.

they went one step further,” Giáp charged, “and began to organize demonstrations causing disturbances in the city.” In retaliation against their opponent’s activities, Giáp and Trần Quốc Hoan mobilized the Việt Minh’s *tự vệ* (self-defense corps) and members of the Cứu Quốc Quân (National Salvation Association) who disguised themselves by wearing civilian clothes and “pretending to be strollers” to strike back at the VNQDD, attempting to be careful not to incite Chinese soldiers while doing so.³¹

The Chinese occupation authorities stepped in to host meetings between the three Vietnamese groups beginning on December 19, and an agreement was reached seven days later. The Việt Minh and the VNQDD-Đồng Minh Hội agreed to release those they had captured and kidnapped by December 28. In terms of the makeup of the new coalition government, the agreement gave Nguyễn Hải Thân the vice-presidency, reserved 50 seats of the National Assembly for the VNQDD and 20 for the Đồng Minh Hội; divided the ministerial posts equally between the Việt Minh, VNQDD, Đồng Minh Hội, Việt Nam Dân Chủ Đảng (Democratic Party), and non-party representatives; and provided that the Defense and Interior (Giáp’s post) Ministries would be headed by non-party representatives.³²

An election was subsequently held on January 6, 1946 for the remaining seats, but its fairness is disputed even if, as R.B. Smith declares, “It was the first time ordinary

³¹ Giáp, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 62-64; Subsource: Stanley Swinton, AP Correspondent, [no date provided, after January 16, 1946], “Annamite Political Parties in the Northernmost Part of French Indochina,” Folder ZM 2727, Box 3, Entry 109D, RG 226.

³² R.B. Smith, 578.

people voted.”³³ The Việt Minh claim that Hồ Chí Minh, who ran as a representative for Hà Nội, won 98.4 percent of the vote, Võ Nguyên Giáp, who ran in Nghệ An province, received ninety-seven percent, and that their group as a whole won ninety-seven percent of the vote, giving it all 300 seats in the Assembly not set aside for the other parties. In one work, Giáp wrote both that there were 300 and 333 representatives to the first National Assembly.³⁴ Bernard Fall states that the Việt Minh only won eighty-two of 272 seats (“Nationalist Independents” had the highest plurality followed, after the Việt Minh, by the VNQDD with 26), but does not account for the remaining 84 of the 356 total seats he says were contested.³⁵ Writing twenty-two years later, and relying on some of the same Vietnamese documents, R.B. Smith says there were 329 representatives, the election results “undoubtedly were overwhelmingly in favour” of Việt Minh and should be seen as a referendum on them “rather than a means for popular choice of a government.”³⁶ Unfortunately, Smith did not address some of Fall’s most damning circumstantial evidence which suggests the elections were a sham:

The National Assembly with its “elected” members convened *six weeks before* the election results were officially known and confirmed. Indeed, the Assembly met for the first time on March 2, 1946, while the official election results were published in the *Official Journal* on April 13. In view of the distances involved, the delegates from South [Nam Kỳ or Cochinchina] and southern Central Vietnam [Trung Kỳ or Annam] who were present at the opening session of the National Assembly must have left their constituencies at the same time that the election ballots did. Furthermore, an even cursory inspection of the published election lists shows that the northern provinces which were under the nationalist domination and where no elections had taken place (such as Vinh Yen, Viet Tri, Yen Bay, Lang Son, Dap Cau, and others) were nonetheless

³³ Ibid. Smith points out in particular that “the fact that the voting was at village or basic level and that the vast majority of the population were illiterate meant that in effect the [Việt Minh] village administrative committee could influence the way people voted despite the secrecy of the ballot.”

³⁴ Giáp, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 69, 94; Chen 130.

³⁵ Fall, *The Viet-Minh Regime; Government and Administration of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam*, 10.

³⁶ R.B. Smith: 577-78.

represented in the National Assembly by member or affiliates of the Viet-Minh. And lastly, while the approximately 17 million people of the North and Central Vietnam were represented by 356 assembly members, the 5-1/2 million of South Vietnam were able to nominate only 18 delegates.³⁷

The Việt Minh's ability to rule effectively was also challenged by the French. Sainteny met with Chinese occupation authorities on January 8 to protest the lack of protection for French nationals in Hà Nội. The next day, the Hà Nội branch manager of the Banque de l'Indochine, Pierre Baylin, was assassinated at close range by unknown Vietnamese assailants as he walked home at the end of the business day. General Zhou Fucheng, commander of the 53rd Army, which had been sent to replace the 60th and 93rd Armies, proposed disarming the Việt Minh in the city. Ling Jihan 凌寄寒, the Foreign Ministry's representative on the Advisory Group, did not want to see the French POWs rearmed or the Việt Minh disarmed. General Ma agreed with Ling, believing that if the Chinese disarmed the Việt Minh, they would also have to take over the administrative functions of the Provisional Government was performing. They decided to seek instructions from Chongqing.³⁸

³⁷ Fall, *The Viet-Minh Regime; Government and Administration of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam*, 10. Words underlined in the original have been italicized. R.B. Smith: 571, 577. It is odd Smith does not address this and other points Fall makes because the same work quoted from here is cited along with three other works by "Western scholars" as providing, prior to his article, "the main outlines of the Vietnamese Revolution of 1945-46." Later, Smith states: "The election has been a subject of some controversy on the part of Western writers about Vietnamese affairs." Of course, Fall's assumptions about the extent of VNQDĐ and Đồng Minh Hội strength in certain parts of the North are questionable, but Smith's lack of attention to such points when arriving at such conflicting conclusions demands better attention to Fall's arguments.

³⁸ Worthing, 57, 124-26; SSU Intelligence Summary Number 46, 17-23 January 1946, Folder Intelligence Summary, January 1946, Box 407, Entry 108, RG 226; A-67520b, 26 March 1946, SSU, Roll 2, M1656, NARA; and "Conditions in Northern Indochina," 30 January 1946, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center. By December, the Chinese 53rd Army began coming across the border from Yunnan, according to the SSU. These sources also state that the 60th and 93rd Armies were to be sent to fight the Chinese Communists in Manchuria, it is not clear when they moved out of Việt Nam, but they were still in the process of doing so in early 1946. Spector, 69. Spector states that the 52nd Army began boarding Liberty ships by late October and continued to do so "through most of November." Worth, citing a Chinese work on the First Front

Meanwhile, the Việt Minh began to reassert itself with its new coalition partners. The Việt Minh gradually weakened the Defense Minister's powers in favor of the military commander-in-chief and transferred the police and security powers away from the Interior Ministry to a Security Services organization.³⁹ On election day, at least ten VNQDD were killed in northern Bắc Bộ, and the next month, there were reports of sporadic fighting between rival Vietnamese in Yên Bái, Phúc Thọ, Lạng Sơn, Phúc Yên, and Việt Trì.⁴⁰ By the time the National Assembly met on March 2 (shortly before Chinese occupation forces were to be replaced by French troops), Nguyễn Hải Thân had already fled Hà Nội, returning to China, and his vacated post was eventually abolished. VNQDD representative and Foreign Minister, Nguyễn Tường Tam, was regarded as "at best a figurehead," because Hồ Chí Minh dictated the Provisional Government's foreign policy. Former Emperor Bảo Đại had fled to Hong Kong where he contemplated forming an opposition government.⁴¹ By mid-July, the Việt Minh had eliminated all meaningful organized opposition, and Tam was believed to have left Hà Nội for Kunming. There were reportedly 37 members of opposition parties in the National Assembly as late as October 28, 1946, but after Việt Minh-orchestrated purges, there were only two left by November 8 when the Government adopted its Constitution.⁴²

Army and an American document from August, 1945, states the 53rd Army replaced the 52nd and 62nd Armies in November 1945.

³⁹ Ibid, 9.

⁴⁰ Chen, 131.

⁴¹ Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, 124.

⁴² James L. O'Sullivan to Secretary of State, 26 July and 13 November 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center; Chen, 131; Fall (1956), 12-13. Fall states: "Mass arrest had become commonplace enough to be openly admitted by even the quasi-official newspaper of the Republican Government. Thus, *Cu'u Quoc* ('National Salvation') of November 1, 1946, reported: 'On October 29, our Security Service have, in the course of a raid, arrested more than 300 persons. After screening, the majority has remained in custody to be transferred to concentration camps.'"

ANTICIPATING THE RETURN OF THE FRENCH

The State Department sent Kenneth Landon, Assistant to the Chief of the Division of Southeast Asian Affairs, on a four-month mission in late 1945 to report what was going on in the Southeast Asia. Landon was a former missionary evangelist who along with his wife had spent ten years from 1927-1937 working in Siam, and was fluent in Thai and Chinese. He spent two weeks of this time in Sài Gòn and Hà Nội.⁴³ Arriving in Sài Gòn by air from Bangkok on January 17, Landon noticed the country was heavily populated with scattered villages amongst rich rice lands, but there were large areas not planted at all and “great burned areas which I learned later the Annamese had burned to keep the French from getting the rice.”⁴⁴

Landon stayed at the badly crowded Hôtel Continental where he was given a room vacated by Major Alexander Griswold, who was in charge of a group of former OSS, now SSU men. Major Griswold told Landon the day’s “affairs go off like a bad melodrama with spies tumbling over each other.” At times, Landon’s diary and letters to his wife offer a travelogue-like view of his surroundings. The lights in the hotel “were only on part of the time and the water seldom ran and the whole place had the faint nostalgic odor of an unflushed toilet.” There were French families still residing at the hotel, but one room was reserved for prostitution where “fornication” occurred every twenty-four minutes. “Just at dusk,” he noted in his diary, “I walked along the main

⁴³ Harry Maurer, *Strange Ground: Americans in Vietnam, 1945-1975, An Oral History* (New York: Henry Hold and Company, 1989), 37, 39; Landon’s Diary.

⁴⁴ Kenneth to Margaret Landon, 25 January 1946, Box I B 7 KL to ML (1946-66), and Kenneth Landon’s Diary, January 1946, Landon Papers.

street. The People were very mixed of all shades and colors. Creoles, Annamese, Chinese, French, Indians, British. I never could have dreamed up such a hodgepodge of humanity if I had tried.” “The only people who did not hug carbines to their chests along the street,” Landon told his wife, “were the children, a few girls, and myself. At night the shots pop off now and then and frequently the big guns boom ten miles out of town.”⁴⁵

General Lu Han’s political adviser, Yuan Zijian 袁子健 (Yuen Tse Kien), told Landon that both the French and Vietnamese had pledged free access to the port at Hải Phòng and non-discriminatory tax policies for rail transit between Hải Phòng and Yunnan. The Chinese were concerned, however, that once they left Indochina, war was going to break out between the French and Vietnamese on their southern border which would interrupt trade and communications along this corridor. A more immediate concern which threatened to disrupt negotiations for Chinese troop withdrawal north of the 16th parallel was treatment of the ethnic Chinese in Chợ Lớn. The Chinese Consul General told Landon that he had compiled a list to be forwarded to his government in Chongqing of 2,000 alleged acts of pillaging, rape, and murder committed by the French on the Chinese in Chợ Lớn. Other Chinese had confirmed to Landon that “shops have been looted, women raped, and men killed” there.⁴⁶

According to one Chinese report, the Vietnamese resistance there used the Chinese occupation in the North for protection, concealing arms and personnel shipments in vehicles and boats under the Chinese flag, while terrorists pinned Guomindang

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid; Landon, State Department to Vincent and Moffet [sic], 24 January 1946, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center.

symbols and Chiang Kai-shek's portrait on their clothing. Unable to distinguish friend from foe, French indiscriminately sought to suppress insurgent resistance activities in Chợ Lớn. The Chinese community suffered the brunt of the French police's frustration and lack of discipline as they forced the Chinese to remove head coverings and to pull Chinese flags from rickshaws and carts.⁴⁷ However, American reports reveal another side to the story.

There were also earlier complaints that the British Indian troops had committed rapes and looted Chợ Lớn, leading the Chinese and Vietnamese to form a unified basis of action against the British occupation which sponsored the restoration of French colonial rule. The SSU had been filing reports of this sort since October, 1945, which stated that the Chợ Lớn Chinese had suffered 200 civilian deaths and damages estimated in the millions of *piastres*. On November 1, the President of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce was arrested and found to be carrying a copy of a "mutual assistance agreement" made with the Vietnamese calling for a boycott and blockade of the Sài Gòn-Chợ Lớn area. This same day, anti-British posters written in Chinese characters were found displayed in Chợ Lớn. The four major organizations in Chợ Lớn, the seven Congregations, the Chamber of Commerce, the Guomindang, and the Communists organized a boycott of all Europeans and Japanese for an unspecified period ending only

⁴⁷ SSU Intelligence Summary Number 41, 13-19 December 1945, Folder IS Oct.-Dec., Box 408, Entry 108, RG 226; SSU NR A-65215, 30 January 1946, Folder ZM 27, Box 3, Entry 108D, RG 226, NARA; and Chen, 146.

after grievances were presented to the British on November 4, but a sit down strike remained in its place for at least three additional days.⁴⁸

Landon told his wife that the Chinese “are not permitted to have any arms but are given whistles to blow when attacked. Night after night I heard them blowing their whistles at a great rate for sometimes a half hour and apparently no one came to their side.” In a telegram he drafted on January 19 for the State Department, Landon added that “3 Chinese had been killed last night.” He also told the Department that Yuan Zijian had already sent his protest to Chongqing, but had not received a reply due to poor communications.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, de Gaulle had resigned on January 19, explaining in a letter to Félix Gouin, who headed the SFIO (Socialists), he had previously decided his duty “would be finished once the representatives of the nation were reassembled and the political parties were in a position to assume responsibilities.” The tripartite alliance continued and Gouin was chosen to succeed de Gaulle as President of the Provisional Government, while MRP’s (Christian-Democrat) Georges Bidault continued as Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Socialist Marius Moutet, who succeeded Jacques Soustelle as *Ministre des Colonies* (Minister of the Colonies) in December, retained his position but the ministry’s

⁴⁸ SSU Intelligence Summary Number 35, 29 October–6 November 1945, Folder ZM-139, Box 396; SSU Intelligence Summary Number 41, 13-19 December 1945, Folder IS Oct.-Dec., Box 408; SSU Intelligence Summary Number 46, 17-23 January 1946, Folder Intelligence Summary 1/46, Box 407, Entry 108; SSU NR A-65215, 30 January 1946, Folder ZM 27, Box 3, Entry 108D, RG 226, NARA.

⁴⁹ Kenneth to Margaret Landon, 25 January 1946, Box I B 7 KL to ML (1946-66), Landon Papers; Landon, State Department to Vincent and Moffet [sic], 24 January 1946, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center.

name was changed to the more benign *de la France d'Outre-mer* (Ministry of Overseas France).⁵⁰

Concerned over the changing political scene in the *métropole*, D'Argenlieu left Sài Gòn to speak to members of the new government in Paris on February 13, leaving Leclerc in charge in his absence (Leclerc had dispatched General Jean-Etienne Valluy to Paris in mid-January to discuss potential landings at Hải Phòng).⁵¹ He need not have gone, according to Martin Shipway who argues that even after de Gaulle's departure, his influence remained on French policy towards Indochina through the *Comité Interministériel de l'Indochine* (Cominindo, or Interministerial Committee on Indochina), and his appointees, d'Argenlieu and Leclerc (not to mention Cédile and Sainteny, the latter not being appointed directly by de Gaulle, but by his intermediaries) where the power was really located, on the ground. The influence of Moutet's ministry was "at a low ebb," though Henri Laurentie remained the most important opposition within the inner circles of power in France to the de Gaullist approach to Indochina, as will be discussed at a later point.⁵²

After visiting other places in Southeast Asia on behalf of the State Department, Landon returned to Sài Gòn on February 12. Madame Galsworthy, d'Argenlieu's mistress and private secretary, aided him in obtaining a French flight to Hà Nội. He made the trip on the 14th with eleven other passengers including the French General

⁵⁰ B.D. Graham, *The French Socialists and Tripartisme, 1944-1947* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1965), 137-38, 140-41; Martin Shipway, *The Road to War: France and Vietnam, 1944-1947* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), 164. Dates offered of de Gaulle's resignation vary from January 19-21.

⁵¹ Giap, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 88; Shipway, 165, 167.

⁵² Shipway, 151.

Raoul Salan, who appeared to be dressed in an American uniform.⁵³ After arriving in Hà Nội, Landon managed to get a ride from the side of the road as the French officers drove off in their waiting cars. He was dropped off at the Hôtel Métropole and began exploring the city when he noticed the Vietnamese “hissed” at him, apparently thinking he was French, even though he wore an American flag armband as “identification.” Landon then met Major Robert E. Buckley of the SSU who invited him to stay at his house. Buckley had arrived sometime around the beginning of the month.⁵⁴ The following descriptions of life in the tense, postwar colonial city have been extracted from Landon’s diary:

February 16. Hanoi is an armed town and everyone feels the tension of waiting for the explosion. There are about 50,000 Chinese troops in town and they have armed guards at every corner. The glint of the bayonet is as normal as the twinkling legs of a pretty girl on 5th Ave. Less frequently the Annamese blue jackets and shorts and Japanese guns. The French are gathered in two areas and go about without arms. They seem to be philosophic about it all. The Annamese President Ho Chi Minh is in a large bldg. opposite the Hotel Metropole. Sand bag blocks are set up at the gates.

⁵³ *Time* 79, 4 (January 26, 1962): 22-29; 79, 17 (27 April 1962): 27; and 79:22 (1 June 1962): 22-23; and Landon’s Diary. A *Time* article states that Salan was an administrator in a jungle area of Indochina bordering on China, Burma and Laos during the 1920s and 1930s. This was probably in Laos because we learn that later during Landon’s visit to Hà Nội, the two spoke together, but since Landon could not speak French and Salan could not speak English, they spoke in Thai and Lao respectively. Salan was nicknamed “the Mandarin” because he possessed a strong interest in “Oriental philosophy and astrology.” He had a son, named Victor, with his “Indo-Chinese” mistress around 1936, and took the boy to France for his education. The elder Salan later participated in the abortive Generals’ Rebellion in Algeria in 1961 before going underground to head the Organisation de l’Armée Secrète (OAS, or Secret Army Organization) which fought even against de Gaulle’s Government to retain Algeria after de Gaulle had announced that he favored self-determination in the colony. OAS committed terrorist acts in France aimed at “Cabinet ministers, 35 legislators, journalists, the rest assorted officials, politicians and” anti-OAS “intellectuals, including Jean-Paul Sartre (twice).” OAS wanted “to intimidate Frenchman, not infuriate them, the bombs are usually exploded at times and places when they are not likely to kill. So far, only two have died.” Colonel Yves Godard, another veteran of fighting in Indochina, acted as Chief of Operations for OAS. Salan was captured in April 1962, with Jean Ferrandi who also served with him in Indochina, and sentenced to life imprisonment a short while later by a nine-man military tribunal.

⁵⁴ INDIV to Buckley, 7 February 1946, Folder 356, Box 44, Entry 140, RG 226, NARA. Charles S. Reed II, American Consul to the Secretary of State, September 24, 1946, Reel 2, Indochina Center. Reed referred to an incident involving Buckley, who Clarac, political adviser to d’Argenlieu, blamed for showing “considerable and vocative bias in favor of the Annamite cause and prejudice against the French. Reed’s telegram No. 16 of March 2, 1946, which I was unable to locate, described the incident.

February 17. At night Hanoi was clear of Europeans—at 9-10 pm just occasional knots of Annamese out looking for trouble. At every corner a Chinese soldier on guard. Every house closed and dark. As our house—every shutter closed so that the people inside would not be fired on from outside—even at 2nd and 3rd story as Annamese climb them and shoot in.

A mixed group of Chinese, French, Americans and Eurasians settled down to determined gaiety [at an evening dance given by a Chinese general]. The windows and doors were all boarded up to keep people outside from shooting or tossing a bomb in. Each time the door opened there was a moment of pause and people turned to look.

February 24. [After commenting on the famine] Even now it is a common sight to see people collapse on street and lie there while well fed people walk by. I saw a woman rotten with smallpox collapse on a curb. She looked so awful and past humanity. Children with emaciated bodies played sickly—big eyes framed in circles of bone. At same time rich meals were being served in Chinese hotels to Chinese officers—and to everyone else with the money to buy. The French are mostly herded—20,000 of them in the Citadel and two hotels and a few houses.... The town has been stripped by the Chinese and the shops have little for sale. Chinese officers have pockets bulging with packets of hundred *piastre* notes and buy gold, jade, ivory, and tortoise shell stuff.

The city is in a state of military control and has an air of expectancy. Almost every corner is piled with sand bags and is criss crossed with barbed wire. Stolid Chinese sentries stand with sub machine under arm or rifle and bayonet on alert. And everything is dirty and dingy.⁵⁵

Landon, often accompanied by Major Buckley, met several times with Hồ Chí Minh (though he never recorded anything of note from these visits), General Lu Han and Yuan Zijian, with whom he spoke Mandarin, Bảo Đại (Vĩnh Thụy),⁵⁶ members of the VNQDD, members of the Vietnamese-American Association, the British Force 136 agent Trevor Wilson, d'Argenlieu's political advisor Achilles Clarac, renowned French scholar of Southeast Asian studies Georges Coedès, and American journalists A.T. Steele and Gordon Walker. During a meeting with Hồ Chí Minh on the 16th, the President of the Vietnamese Government asked Landon what he could do to get the U.S. or the United

⁵⁵ Landon's Diary.

⁵⁶ Bảo Đại, whom he described as having a "build like a football player with heavy shoulders and a wrestler's neck," told Landon "he wanted Annamese independence but that he feared that it could not be achieved and so he favored a compromise with the French on self govt. within the frame of the French empire."

Nations to support Vietnamese Independence. Landon said he did not know, but “informally suggested publicity in the press through war correspondents or a petition to the principal [states of the] United Nations to put the question before the UNO.” Ending their meeting, Hồ asked if Landon could stay for several days so he could have some time “to do some more thinking.”⁵⁷

Gordon Walker, the Chief Far Eastern Correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor* “had spent the war in the Pacific, island-hopping with General MacArthur’s troops.” Veteran Asian correspondent A.T. Steele and Walker had come to Hà Nội from Shanghai on February 18. The following morning, after having breakfast with Landon, they had a three-hour interview with Hồ Chí Minh. In one article, Walker referred to Hồ as an “ex-Communist.” In his article reporting on the interview, Walker wrote that Hồ “complains that cables he had dispatched to the United Nations meeting and to London, Moscow, and Washington had received no answer.” While clearly imperfect, the article quoted at the beginning of the previous chapter, shows the unique insight and skill Walker possessed, the kind that led him later to be the first to discover and write that the Japanese postwar constitution had been written by a small group of Americans.⁵⁸

Walker also wrote a piece in defense of the “three armies” of “the former Yunnan warlord, Gen. Long Yun.” Beginning with the erroneous statement that after “France discovered that it was unable to spare sufficient troops to immediately occupy the entire

⁵⁷ Ibid. Landon reported that Lê Xuân was the chief spokesman, “temporarily an AP correspondent,” and “the most violently radical of them all.”

⁵⁸ Gordon Walker, “French Await Troops’ Arrival”; “Indo-China: Revolt Led By Moderate,” (26 February 1946): 1; and Takashi Oka, “A meeting that set the course of my life,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (25 September 2003): 22; Landon’s Diary.

colony, demobilize the Japanese and maintain order, the Chinese agreed to help,” Walker observed:

This is the first time Chinese forces have occupied foreign territory in modern history and they are doing what most observers consider a creditable job.

It is no easy task to maintain order in a chaotic city like this one where French Legionnaires and colonial civilians mingle on the streets with vehement Annamite Nationalists, supposedly disarmed Japanese troops, and Chinese soldiers who have never known anything but utter poverty, illiteracy, and an army pay equivalent to 45 cents a month.

There are many charges made against the Chinese army of occupation, such as its inability to prevent the current wave of kidnappings, murders, and graft. Yet in a hotbed of seething political contradictions and explosive emotions, it is doubtful whether any occupation could do better.

Chinese troops here show no outward discrimination against political groups. They guard disarmed French Legionnaires and Annamite Government headquarters alike. And when opposing factions within the Nationalist independence movement stage huge popular demonstrations, Chinese guards armed with machine guns march along and maintain order with equal impartiality.⁵⁹

Violence over impending Sino-French and Franco-Vietnamese agreements reached new heights just after Landon’s departure. In February and early March, Strategic Services Unit reports described French soldiers in Sài Gòn as undisciplined. “Drunkenness is prevalent since the French troops on leave have few recreational facilities,” and there were occasional “random shootings by French sentries” according to one report. Another stated that French sentries were “trigger-happy” and would snipe at and fire on the Vietnamese.⁶⁰ However, poor discipline could not always be blamed for French acts of brutality against the Vietnamese.

⁵⁹ Chief Far Eastern Correspondent of the Christian Science Monitor, “Chinese Sit Atop Shaky French in Patrol of North Indo-China,” *Christian Science Monitor*, Atlantic Edition (1 March 1946), 1.

⁶⁰ SSU NR A-65159, 2 February 1946, Folder ZM 27, Box 3, Entry 108D, RG 226, NARA; SSU NR A-66073, 5 March 1946, Reel 1, M1656, NARA.

Lieutenant Colonel Jacques Massu's Groupement Massu, formed entirely of volunteers from the Deuxieme Division Blindée (2nd Armored Division) which fought under General Leclerc in France, was about the size of a brigade. On February 27, 1946 members of Groupement Massu led as many as 500 mostly French uniformed, colonial soldiers carrying rifles in three hours of rioting in Sài Gòn. One target of the rioting was



Lt. Colonel Jacques Massu⁶¹

Paul Valère, the editor of the Socialist weekly, *La Justice*, in which several articles critical of French soldiers' undisciplined behavior in Cochinchina appeared in the two weeks leading up to and on the actual day of the attacks. These articles reminded the soldiers that they were paid by the French government whose "keystone" or "foundation" was the Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO, or Socialist Party). The French soldiers looted and burned Valere's residence, destroyed his printing plant, and seized all available copies of the *La Justice* from "newsboys" (Vietnamese men employed in the service professions were called "boys") and café readers and burned them in the city's main square.⁶²

⁶¹ Ordre de la Libération, Jacques Massu, http://www.ordredelaliberation.fr/fr_compagnon/661.html (accessed April 24, 2005).

⁶² SSU NR A-65936, 28 February 1946, Reel 1, and A-67520, Reel 2, M1656 Strategic Services Unit (SSU Reports) Intelligence Reports 1945-46; and "French Riot in Saigon," *The New York Times* (28 February 1946): 9. Douglas Johnson, "General Jacques Massu," *The Guardian*, Monday October 28, 2002, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/france/story/0,11882,820598,00.html> (accessed November 27, 2004). Later, in 1957, Massu became infamous for leading the suppression of a strike called by the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN or National Liberation Front) in the *casbah* of the capital of French Algeria, Algiers, in

Rampaging soldiers also sought out a prominent Socialist, Constant Metter. Metter, who had been imprisoned for two and a half years by the Vichy Indochina Government for resistance activity, was targeted by the soldiers for signing a petition, published in the bilingual Franco-Vietnamese newspaper, *Tuong Lai (Future)*, calling for immediate cessation of hostilities and recognition of Việt Nam's independence. According to a Strategic Service Unit report of the incident, a lieutenant of the French "North African native cavalry led four soldiers to drag Metter out of his sick bed in his apartment, and beat him in a main street." He was only saved from a lynching at the last minute. Meanwhile, other soldiers smashed the windows of his apartment, looted it, and then set it on fire while shouting, "Vive Leclerc, Death to the Communists, Thorez to the Post!"⁶³

Evidence suggests that these incidents were not a spontaneous reaction to these two publications, but planned events. Municipal police and military police posted on the streets in anticipation of d'Argenlieu's return from Paris stood by passively as the soldiers rioted. One theory suggested the broader aim of the rioting was to protest any moderation of the terms of a compromise with the government of Việt Nam d'Argenlieu was expected to bring back that same day. A French naval officer reportedly informed Leclerc of the violence shortly after it began, leaving American observers to believe that "even if the riots were not instigated by the General or his staff, they at least had official military sanction or approval." On February 28 all transmission of newspaper stories of

1957 where the widespread use of torture was reported. Maurice Thorez was a Socialist and the deputy premier in the tripartite coalition.

⁶³ SSU NR A-65936. "Spahis" was the generic term for the North African native cavalry led by French officers.

these incidents, including d'Argenlieu's own report, were stopped by the French Post Office. Censorship was subsequently imposed on French-language periodicals. At 7 p.m. curfew was imposed on French soldiers in Sài Gòn, but reports of the incidents and their aftermath were devoid of any mention of discipline being meted out to the soldiers involved.⁶⁴ The *colons* were reported to have favored the *La Justice* criticisms of the "undisciplined troops," but were against any compromise with the Việt Minh and were upset at suggestions in the paper that they themselves had collaborated with the Japanese.⁶⁵

John McAlister portrays Leclerc as taking a cautious approach to French reentry north of the 16th parallel, arguing that he considered an agreement with the Việt Minh as "indispensable." Initially at least, he only had 20,000 men available for operations in the North because the rest of the French forces were needed for his pacification campaign south of the 16th parallel. Over time more forces would be freed up, but he was concerned for the safety of the estimated 30,000 French citizens in the North, and "the potential for protracted resistance by the Viet Minh armed forces."⁶⁶

In a letter to de Gaulle in October 1945, d'Argenlieu wrote that Leclerc was "absorbed by dreams of reconquest," and his position seems to have changed little by late January 1946.⁶⁷ An SSU document from early January revealed British support for this view:

⁶⁴ Ibid; Intelligence Summary Numbers 52, 28 February-6 March and Intelligence Summary Number 53, 7-13 March 1946, Folder Intelligence Summary 1/46, Box 47, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA.

⁶⁵ Intelligence Summary Number 53, 7-13 March 1946, Folder Intelligence Summary 1/46, Box 47, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA; *FRUS, 1946* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 31.

⁶⁶ John T. McAlister, Jr., *Viet Nam: The Origins of Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 279-80.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Shipway, 163.

General Gracey recently stated that, in his opinion, the situation in French Indo-China was a “complete mess” that showed little promise of being cleared up [by] the French in the near future. Reliable sources from Saigon indicate that he believes that the French will take years to control the Annamites, as long as Leclerc’s die-hard colonial attitude continues to play its large part in French policy in F.I.C. involving ruthless suppression of the Annamites, torture of Annamite prisoners, burning and looting of Annamite homes which Leclerc once justified as being justifiable because of the German looting of France.⁶⁸

Other SSU documents based on discussions with d’Argenlieu’s liberal Conseil d’Information (adviser) Jeannin, who was reportedly sympathetic to the Vietnamese, suggest that Leclerc favored retaking Việt Nam north of the 16th parallel aggressively. Jeannin argued that the 60,000 troops available (not including 10,000 “native or colonial troops”) to retake Indochina were insufficient, that such an endeavor would require 200,000 troops, and it would take several months even to build a force of 100,000. He also believed that it would be easy to take the Hà Nội-Hải Phòng-Nam Định triangle, but it would take at 10 years to control the rest of Bắc Bộ. Leclerc voiced strong opposition to Jeannin’s remarks, countering that 60,000 troops would be sufficient and the campaign would begin in April.⁶⁹ De Gaulle’s exhortation of September 1945 to Leclerc that “it is

⁶⁸ Strategic Service Unit, “Intelligence Questionnaire for French Indo-China,” 7 January 1946, Box 90, Folder 1 (Southeast Asia, General, 1945-1946), Wedemeyer Papers, Hoover Institution.

⁶⁹ Giáp, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 87; SSU NR A-65215, 30 January 1946, Folder ZM 27, Box 3, Entry 108D, RG 226; and SSU NR A-67520, 8 March 1946, SSU, Roll 2, M1656, NARA. Giáp states: “According to French documents, after occupying a number of provinces in the South, the French general staff in Saigon prepared a military plan for a return to the North. In general outline, this plan was as follows: the armored units of Massu and the light and mobile troops of Valluy, with the support of artillery units, would land in Haiphong. Paratroopers would be dropped to occupy a number of vital points in Hanoi, paralyze the central government, liberate 5,000 French troops being imprisoned in the city, quickly rearm them, and assign them the task of helping the paratroops keep Hanoi until the arrival of the armored units; then all forces would advance from there to occupy every strategic position.” He also states that the “French command staff had reservations about this plan,” and “Leclerc figured that he would need an expeditionary corps of 350,000 men, composed entirely of whites.”

vitaly urgent that French authority should be exercised on the spot,” continued to guide him.⁷⁰

Another more “liberal” view than Leclerc’s was expressed by Henri Laurentie, who on July 31, 1945 expressed his concern that since the Vietnamese had “tasted independence,” they would pose a formidable opposition, and if the French were not able to build of force of no less than four divisions at the critical moment, Indochina could be lost. He also felt that it might be necessary to accept Vietnamese independence.⁷¹ Shipway demonstrates that in the French negotiations with the Vietnamese, Sainteny and d’Argenlieu viewed the term “independence” flexibly. In an October report to d’Argenlieu, Sainteny believed recognition of Vietnamese “independence” was a “precondition to any negotiations,” but suggested the French had latitude because the Vietnamese had “forgotten to ask what it means.” By December, d’Argenlieu had concocted several ways to qualify “independence” within the French Union.⁷² Leclerc even notified Paris the day after d’Argenlieu left for France that the word “independence” no longer had to be an impediment to concluding negotiations with the Vietnamese when, in the spirit of de Gaulle, he wrote:

Giving way on the utterance of this word four months ago was tantamount to admitting our impotence. At present we have reaffirmed French sovereignty and power, restored order in Cochinchina, Cambodia and in parts of Laos and Annam, and we are just about

⁷⁰ Quoted in Shipway, 162.

⁷¹ Stein Tønnesson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945 : Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh, and De Gaulle in a world at war* (London: Sage Publications, 1991), 366. On August 1, Paul Mus had gone further than most in arguing that Indochina could not be retaken by force. He urged, instead, an approach that exploited de Gaulle’s prestige together with a program of radical reforms, however, he was not in a position to have much influence in the debate.

⁷² Shipway, 154-55.

to arrive in force at the gates of Tonkin. Now we can talk to the Annamites and make concessions, as a sovereign power and on the terms most favourable to us.⁷³

In the minds of the de Gaullists, negotiations with the Vietnamese contained an element of disregard for transparent meaning, suggesting the ultimate goal was simply to develop room for maneuver. The French seem never to have accepted defeat, rather they approached Indochina with “fight and see as it goes” approach by taking advantage of every opportunity they found and creating others when confronted with obstacles. After all, the U.S., Great Britain, and even China had given them a mandate by acknowledging their sovereignty over Indochina; much of the rest was a matter of tactics.

After Bảo Đại had abdicated in favor of the Việt Minh’s Provisional Government, for example, the French reached out for a replacement. The Americans learned about one candidate, former Vietnamese Emperor Duy Tân, who by this time went by the name Vĩnh San, from a French Army Intelligence Officer, Sub-Lieutenant Bosquet, Deuxième Bureau Liaison Officer with Intelligence Branch SACSEA Control Commission No. 1. However, when reviewing the information given to the intelligence service of one country by an intelligence officer of another country, we need to keep in mind the fact that intelligence agencies spread disinformation as well as accumulate information.⁷⁴

Bosquet approached a Strategic Services Officer and requested an interview without stating the nature of the subject he wanted to discuss. In the meeting, he explained that he was a former professor of modern literature at the Sorbonne in Paris, and had served duty with the French army detachment stationed in Germany when he

⁷³ Ibid, 167-68.

⁷⁴ SSU SN: ZM 2566, 27 December 1945, Folder 5, Box 217, Entry 210, RG 226, NARA.

became acquainted with a Lieutenant Than. Drawn together by their mutual love of literature the two became intimate friends, and Than revealed to Bosquet that he was really the former Vietnamese Emperor Duy Tân. “Disappointed by the failure of his efforts to obtain Annam’s freedom,” Bosquet explained, “Duy Tân retired completely from the public scene.” In reality, Duy Tân’s retirement was forced (this much is admitted later in the account) when he was exiled by the French to their colonial island of Réunion, near Madagascar, in 1916 along with his father, whom he had been picked to succeed, when the French had removed him from office as well. However, in Bosquet’s account, Duy Tân lived in China and Indochina, where only the villagers had not forgotten him, “in complete obscurity” from 1916 to 1940. In 1940, according to the account, he was suddenly working as a radio operator on Lé Reunion and after leading the resistance movement against the Vichy government, was thrown into jail for nine months.⁷⁵

After France was liberated, Duy Tân wanted to go to France and had reached Madagascar in September (presumably this is September 1945, not 1944, but there is no clarification in the account) where “an alert French functionaire” discovered him and asked the former emperor to make a radio address. The timing of these “chance” events could not have been more fortuitous for the French since Bảo Đại had abdicated in August. Bosquet’s account includes a portion that could have been written by such a critic of French colonialism as Franklin D. Roosevelt:

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Arriving in Saigon six weeks ago, Bosquet started off by reviewing the Franco-Annamite situation for himself. He frankly states he was shocked and ashamed of what he found. The French economic milking of the country and the treatment of the “indigene” he found to be not only morally questionable but not even profitable from the financial standpoint. According to Bosquet’s survey France’s trade balance with Indo-China for 1939 was only one billion French francs. Most of this went to pay for housekeeping costs, i.e., supporting the military garrison and paying the salaries of civilian officials. The relatively paltry remainder was divided between the shareholders of a few large corporations.

This restoration must also be on an interim basis with complete freedom guaranteed by France and underwritten by the United Nations Organization at some specific time in the future. United States treatment of the Philippines is a pattern.⁷⁶

“But dismal as it was,” we learn, “Bosquet’s investigation did bear out Than’s belief that France should maintain—at least for the postwar reconstruction period—its foothold in the country.” Bosquet said that he lobbied French colonial officials such as d’Argenlieu and Vietnamese notables as well, on Duy Tân’s behalf, suggesting that he would be a viable candidate to lead a compromise government agreeable to both the French and the Việt Minh. The account concludes with an admission that Duy Tân would be acceptable to the French, “to whom he guarantees—at least for a considerable time—continuation of their suzerainty.”⁷⁷ This report of the meeting with Bosquet was dated December 27, 1945. Although Bosquet had stated in his account that d’Argenlieu was noncommittal in response to his inquiries, we know that Duy Tân met with de Gaulle on December 14, and was promised to be reinstated as the emperor in the following spring. While flying back to Réunion to see his family, however, he died in a plane crash in French Equatorial Africa on December 28, 1945.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Shipway, 161.

By far the most significant event of Landon's visit to Hà Nội was his conversation with Major Sainteny at a small dinner party given by the Commissioner on February 22, shortly before the former's final departure for Thailand a few days later. In his diary entry, Landon records that Sainteny offered his guests Corona cigars before taking him aside to tell him about a conversation he had had with Hồ Chí Minh several days earlier in which:

He had offered the Annamese complete self government as one of the community of French nations; that Ho was a reasonable man and easy to deal with; and that Ho was satisfied with the offer. Sainteny [sic] said that he was not sure that the Annamese in Cochinchina would be willing to become part of northern Annamese nation and he [thought] that they would prefer to be a French colony. On further questioning he explained that the independent Annamite govt. would of course have French advisers in every department of government, that the Annamese would not send ministers to other countries but as part of the French community would have the opinions of its Minister of foreign affairs expressed through French channels; that the Annamese army and war dept. would be a part of the overall army and war dept. of the French community that the Annamese finance and commerce ministries would of course have to have French advisers as the Annamese were not experts in these matters and the French had too great investments to jeopardize by trusting purely Annamese control unadvised by the French.⁷⁹

Hồ had "definitively abandoned his claim to the term 'independence'" by this time, according to Shipway, citing a report made by Leclerc, and accepted Sainteny's proposal that Nam Bộ's (Cochinchina) "decide its own future."⁸⁰

According to Shipway, General Salan had gone to Hà Nội on February 14 to *inform* Lu Han that the French were planning to land troops in Hải Phòng during the

⁷⁹ Landon's Diary; Landon, Hanoi for Moffat and Culbertson of State (Landon and Buckley cooperating), Rec'd 19 February 1946, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center. Landon sent two telegrams to the State Department on the 19th. In one he stated simply that "Regardless Annamese internal differences all Annamese strongly united in opposing French resumption of sovereignty." In the second telegram he reiterated what was already widely known, that the VNQDĐ had been "resurrected" and was sponsored by the Chiang Kai-shek Government.

⁸⁰ Shipway, 168-69.

beginning of March.⁸¹ Leclerc's brazen attitude seems to have infected the French military command in Indochina. The French had first to sign agreements with both the Chinese Government and the Vietnamese Provisional Government, but their approach suggests they viewed these agreements, with the issues having already been put on the table by all sides, flexibly. A Sino-French agreement had to be reached first permitting French troops to replace Chinese occupation forces, and all top French colonial authorities appear to have been in agreement that some sort of *modus vivendi* had to be worked out with the Vietnamese Provisional Government before their troops could begin landing in Bắc Kỳ. King Chen argues that the most urgent factor influencing the timing of negotiations on the Chinese side was the need to free up troops in Indochina to send to fight the Chinese Communist forces in Manchuria under Lin Biao 林彪 (Lin Piao).⁸²

Clarac, after returning from talks with the Chinese in Chongqing, informed State Department representative Landon at Hà Nội of the main points of a Sino-French agreement, and these were forwarded to Washington, D.C. on February 24.⁸³ The final Sino-French agreement was made in an exchange of letters between French Ambassador to China, Jacques Meyrier, and Wang Shijie 王世杰 (Wang Shih-chieh), was signed on February 28, and provided for the following:

Chinese concessions.

1. French troops to relieve Chinese troops in Indochina north of the 16th parallel from March 1-15 and be completed by the end of the month, under procedures to be agreed upon by the

⁸¹ Ibid, 168.

⁸² Chen, 141. *Occupation of Indo-China, North of the 16th N. Latitude*. As early as August 26, the 52nd, 60th and 93rd Armies were designated under a joint U.S.-China plan to be sent to Manchuria "when shipping becomes available."

⁸³ FRUS, 1946, 28.

military staffs of both countries.

2. The French Command would take responsibility for:
 - a) Guarding Japanese prisoners.
 - b) Maintenance of order and security.
 - c) Protection of Chinese nationals in Indochina north of the 16th parallel.
3. Chinese military authorities will not oppose the rearming of French troops in the Hà Nội Citadelle.

French concessions.

1. The French Government renounced all extraterritorial and related rights in Shanghai 上海, Tianjin 天津, Hangzhou 杭州 and Canton 广州.
2. Chinese to receive most-favored nation rights for travel, residence and commerce in all French territories, including Indochina.
3. Chinese to be granted a free trade zone in Hải Phòng for transshipment of goods to China via the Indochina Railway.⁸⁴

Lu Han disapproved of the agreement. Vietnamese began fleeing the city after it was publicized.⁸⁵ Hồ attempted to allay the fears of the Vietnamese populace saying, “No matter what, practically all the Chinese people have always, from their youth to their adulthood, in the past as well as now, agreed with our nationalist movement.” Adding, “The thing we pay the most attention to is making preparations, staying calm and keeping our morale firm.”⁸⁶

The French intended to move into Hà Nội by March 9 as a symbolic gesture of return on the anniversary of the Japanese coup, but due to the tides, the landing at Hải Phòng could only be made between March 5 and 7. The Việt Nam Advisory Group received a message from Chongqing stating that General MacArthur’s headquarters had to be notified before the Chinese withdrew from Indochina. The Advisory Group urged

⁸⁴ *Viet-Nam Crisis: A Documentary History*, edited by Allan W. Cameron (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 76-77; Chen, 141-42.

⁸⁵ Chen, 142-43.

⁸⁶ Giap, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 97.

the military authorities not to permit the French landing and advised Hồ Chí Minh to negotiate an immediate settlement with the French. French and Chinese liaison officers were also prevented from flying to Hải Phòng to authorize the French troops to land. The French had known since March 3 that the Chinese would resist their landing at Hải Phòng, but Leclerc was adamant that the landing would go on as planned at 8 a.m. on the 6th.⁸⁷

At 7:50 a.m. on March 6, General Valluy ordered landing craft (British landing craft infantry or LCI) to execute the mission, but “do not respond if fired upon” based on Leclerc’s order. Two LCI and the *Triumphant* were fired on for at least an hour from shore batteries manned by the Chinese 53rd Army. At 9:50 a.m., Valluy ordered fire from five-inch guns be directed at the shore, and the *Triumphant* pulled back to deeper waters at the mouth of the river. All hostilities ceased by 10:50 am. On the French side, casualties were thirty-four killed, ninety-nine wounded, and one LCI was sunk. The Chinese suffered fifteen killed, eight wounded, and two small gunboats sunk. The French Admiral went ashore a short while later and all hostilities ceased, but French troops were sequestered in the area until an agreement was concluded.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Worthing, 161-62; Chen, 143-44; and Jean Sainteny, *Ho Chi Minh and His Vietnam: A Personal Memoir*, translated by Herma Briffault (Chicago: Cowles Book Company, Inc., 1972), 62.

⁸⁸ Worthing 162-67; Chen 144-45; 153; and A-65022 and A-65929, 6 March; and A-66089a 8 March 1946, SSU, Roll 1, M1656, NARA. Peter Worthing offers the most detailed and believable account of the Haiphong Incident based on French reports and the Chinese commander of the division in the 53rd Army responsible for the firing on French attempting to land. Chen states that the fighting began at 8 a.m. The SSU version is based on an interview with Colonel de Guillibon, Leclerc’s Chief of Staff, and gives 10 a.m. as the start of hostilities and states that it lasted 40 minutes. One SSU report stated there were 300 French casualties, but it is unclear what source they relied upon for this figure. O’Sullivan to SECSTATE, 20 April 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center. After this incident, clashes between the Chinese and French were rare, however, 12 French were killed and 20 civilians were wounded, 4 Chinese killed and an unknown number were wounded in a fight that broke out in April. A truck carrying Chinese troops had collided with a French personnel carrier. The French soldiers were unarmed because they were off duty, but were backed up a half hour later by French tanks.

In the meantime, Franco-Vietnamese negotiations had stalled despite Sainteny's optimism when discussing them with Landon. It appears Hồ's earlier concessions were influenced by the recognition that the French were close to concluding an agreement with the Chinese for landing troops in Bắc Bộ.⁸⁹ Franco-Vietnamese talks stalled afterwards, and all subsequent evidence suggests that Hồ was holding out for concessions from the French on disposition of their troops north of the 16th parallel.

On March 5, a group of Chinese occupation representatives met with Hồ, informing him that the French had entered the Tonkin Gulf, and advised him to reach a settlement with them before they landed. French negotiators arrived after the Chinese left and talks resumed late into the night without any success. Meanwhile, Leclerc had authorized Sainteny "to do everything within your power to reach agreement as soon as possible, *even if this means taking initiatives which would later be disavowed.*"⁹⁰ Leclerc would later feel vindicated by the Hải Phòng Incident, believing that despite the Sino-French Treaty, "in case there had been serious combat with the Vietnamese the Chinese would have immediately exploited these difficulties in order to prevent us from reoccupying Tonkin."⁹¹

The Preliminary Agreement and Annex, or *modus vivendi*, were signed by Hồ Chí Minh, as the special delegate of the Council of Ministers, Vũ Hồng Khanh, and Sainteny

⁸⁹ Shipway, 170. Relying on Devillers, Shipway argues that Hồ's position as leader of the Provisional Government was threatened by the VNQDĐ and Đồng Minh Hội, and that he had even offered to exchange positions with Conseiller Suprême Nguyễn Vĩnh Thụy (Bảo Đại) before the coalition government was formed on March 2. However, if we accept Bernard Fall's evidence that the Việt Minh had ignored the election results to continue to hold power, there is no reason to suspect Hồ held any real concern for Chinese-sponsored opposition parties.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 171.

⁹¹ McAlister, *Viet Nam: The Origins of Revolution*, 280.

“as delegate of d’Argenlieu, trustee of the power of the French Republic,” at 4 p.m. on March 6. The provisions of the Preliminary Agreement and Annex (slightly abbreviated) appear below, according to the translation made by the SSU:

Preliminary Agreement (Convention Préliminaire)

1. The *French Government recognizes the Vietnamese Republic as a Free State* having its own Government, its own Parliament, its own Army and its own Finances. *In that which concerns the reuniting of the three “Annamite Regions” the French Government pledges itself to ratify the decisions taken by the population consulted by referendum.*
2. The *Vietnamese Government* declares itself *ready to welcome amicably the French Army* when, conforming to international agreements, *it relieves the Chinese Troops.* A Supplementary Accord, attached to the present Preliminary Agreement, will establish the means by which the relief operations will be carried out.
3. The stipulations formulated above will immediately enter into force. Immediately after the exchange of signatures, each of the High Contracting Parties will take all measures necessary to stop hostilities in the field, to maintain the troops in their respective positions, and to create the favorable atmosphere necessary to the immediate opening of friendly and sincere negotiations. These negotiations will deal particularly with:
 - a) diplomatic relations of Vietnam with Foreign States
 - b) the future law of Indo-China
 - c) French interests, economic and cultural, in Vietnam.

Hanoi, Saigon or Paris may be chose as the seat of the conference.

Supplementary Accord (Accord Annexe)

1. The Relief Forces will be composed:
 - a) of *10,000 Vietnamese*
 - b) of *15,000 Frenchmen*, including the French forces now resident in the territory of Vietnam, north of the 16th parallel. *The said elements must be composed solely of Frenchmen of metropolitan origin* with the exception of troops charged with guarding Japanese prisoners.

The movement, lodging, and utilization of these forces will be decided in the course of a Staff Conference between the Representatives of the French and Vietnamese Commands, which will be held at the time of the landings of the French Units.

Mixed Commissions will be created in all echelons, to assure, in a spirit of friendly cooperation, the *liaison* between the French and Vietnamese troops.

2. The French elements of the relieving forces will be divided into three categories:
 - a. *[units guarding Japanese POWs] will be returned home as soon as their mission shall have lost its purpose as a consequence of the evacuation of the Japanese prisoners, however within a maximum of 10 months time.*
 - b. *units charged with assuring, in cooperation with the Vietnamese Army, with the maintenance of public order and safety in Vietnamese territory. These units will be relieved by 1/5 each year by the Vietnamese Army, this relief therefore being effectively completed within five years.*
 - c. *units charged with the defense of naval and air bases. The duration of the mission entrusted to these units will be determined in subsequent conferences.*

3. *In localities where French and Vietnamese troops are garrisoned, they shall be assigned to clearly defined cantonment areas....*⁹²

Leclerc returned to France after the Preliminary Agreement and Annex Accord were signed. In a meeting of the Cominindo on March 13, Foreign Minister Bidault blasted the provisions of the Annex Agreement placing restrictions on French troops, while the head of the head the Ministry's Direction d'Asie-Océanie (Asia-Oceania Division), Philippe Baudet, lamented that as a result Indochina was sure to be lost. All the debate about how flexibly the term "independence" could be construed meant nothing after the French had conceded so much on the issue of their troops' presence in North

⁹² [as attached to] H. Ben Smith, Chief, Intelligence Division to Deputy Director, FESI, SSU, Washington D.C., 13 March 1946, Folder 427, Box 53, Entry 140, RG 226, NARA. (italics added) *The Military Art of People's War*, 29. In the introduction to *The Military Art of People's War*, Russell Stetler states that the "military annex" was "signed by Giap, Sainteny, and Gen. Raoul Salan," but the copy of the typed agreement in French provided to the Americans as the one printed in France, Direction de la Documentation, *Principaux Textes de Politique Internationale de l'Annee 1946* (Paris: 1955), 41, and Sainteny's *Histoire d'une Paix Manquée: Indochine 1945-1945* (1953), 182-84, show Sainteny, Hô and Khanh as the signatories (see *Viet-Nam Crisis: A Documentary History*, 77, note †). Allan Cameron states that the version in France, Direction de la Documentation, *Notes Documentaires et Etudes*, No. 548 (February 15, 1947), 4-5, "also lists General Raoul Salan and Vo Nguyen Giap as signatories of the Annex," but apparently in error. "Sainteny does not mention Vo Nguyen Giap as one of the people present at the ceremony; General Salan was present." Cameron also explains that provision 2.c. was omitted and later numbers rearranged in the Annex version appearing in both *Notes Documentaires et Etudes*, No. 548 and Devillers's *Histoire du Viêt-Nam de 1940 à 1952* (1953), 182-84.

Việt Nam just to get them into the territory. Although Sainteny deferred to Leclerc as the commander of French military forces in Indochina when negotiating military terms in the Supplementary Accord, d'Argenlieu had been back in Sài Gòn for nearly a week when it was signed, evoking Minister of Overseas France Moutet's wrath. D'Argenlieu demanded Sainteny explain why he signed away "the future of French land, sea and air forces." In his response, according to Shipway, Sainteny told d'Argenlieu that "the question of the 'relève' ["relief" in 2b above] had been mentioned by Ho on the last day." D'Argenlieu did not hold Sainteny responsible. In April, he contacted General Juin, the Commander-in-Chief of the French Army, demanding that Leclerc be recalled for failing to execute orders, apparently in retaliation for the concessions in the military annex to the March *modus vivendi*. Leclerc was succeeded as commander in Chief of the French forces in Indochina by General Jean-Etienne Valluy, Commander of the 9^{ème} DIC (9th Division of the Colonial Infantry) on July 18.⁹³

CONCLUSION

The Chinese occupation was a period of tests for the fledgling Vietnamese state. Its Provisional Government had to appeal to the Vietnamese populace for a united front

⁹³ Giap, *Unforgettable Days*, 99-101, 276, and 317-18; Alain- Gérard Marsot, "The Crucial Year: Indochina 1946," *Journal of Contemporary History* 19 2 (April, 1987): 342; and Shipway, 165, 172-73. Võ Nguyên Giáp claimed that the last-minute compromise worked out after Hồ proposed "independence" be substituted with a more agreeable term for the French, "free state," and the French agreed to hold a referendum in Cochichina over whether or not to be united with the Democratic Republic of Việt Nam. However, Leclerc had already reported agreement on these two issues several weeks earlier to Paris. Like his predecessor, Valluy had feared before the Sino-French Treaty and March Preliminary Agreement were signed that a purely military action would lead the Vietnamese to massacre the French in Hà Nội and Hải Phòng, and provoke the Chinese into supporting a Vietnamese guerilla war against the French.

against the French by effectively combating famine, abolishing onerous taxes, instituting broad education through a literacy campaign, while administering the region with minimal funds and building defenses for the probable fight to come. The Việt Minh were confronted with opposition parties sponsored by the Chinese occupiers that threatened their hold on the Provisional Government and, more importantly, the unity of the Vietnamese nationalist movement. They survived these tests only for the Chinese occupiers to negotiate an agreement for French troops to replace their own north of the 16th parallel. Obviously this did not bode well for the Vietnamese, who had seen how the French had, with the help of the British, re-imposed control over the region south of the 16th parallel.

The Preliminary Agreement and Annex Accord Hồ Chí Minh was able to negotiate with Sainteny looked great on paper, but there was one nagging problem. French reluctance to accept the preferred Vietnamese wording of “independent,” preferring instead “free state” to describe the Democratic Republic of Việt Nam pierced the illusion of the wording throughout the rest of the document. Meanwhile, the French disputed amongst themselves who was to blame for what was seen as last-minute devastating concessions in the Annex Agreement.

The final chapter of this work will chart the breakdown of relations from the signing of this *modus vivendi* and arrival of the French at Hải Phòng until the beginning of the Franco-Vietnamese War at the end of the year, with special attention paid to American observations and response to these events. Although d’Argenlieu, Leclerc and

Cédile were the principal players behind this breakdown, they were supported by de Gaullists and others in the *métropole*.

If the conditions on which we do not compromise and which can be summarized in these two words, independence and alliance, are not accepted, if France is so shortsighted as to unleash conflict, let it be known that we shall struggle until death, without permitting ourselves to stop for any consideration of persons, or any destruction.

Hồ Chí Minh in interviewed with Jean Lacouture for *Paris-Saigon*,
February 1946¹

We watched the negotiations between French and Vietnamese from the sidelines, encouraged when at times it seemed as if a liberal agreement would be worked out, sorrowfully when both sides would breach agreements that had been made and when it gradually became apparent that as the French brought more military forces into the country their willingness to concede self-rule correspondingly decreased. I think both EUR and FE hoped that the French would reach an effective agreement with the Vietnam Provisional Government; but late in 1946 concern about Communist expansion began to be evident in the Department.

Abbot Low Moffat²

Do not lose sight [of the] fact that Ho Chi Minh has direct Communist connections and it should be obvious that we are not interested in seeing colonial empire administrations supplanted by philosophy and political organizations emanating from and controlled by the Kremlin.

Secretary of State George Marshall, February 1947³

Chapter 15

Modus Vivendi or Vini Vidi Vici?

The March *modus vivendi* (Preliminary Agreement and Supplementary Accord) held different meaning to different players. To the Chinese, it suggested that peace might be possible on their southern border with Việt Nam after they pulled out. Although the Chinese 53rd Army and independent units remained in Indochina well into May, their presence was little more than an annoyance for the Vietnamese or French after the March

¹ Quoted in *The Military Art of People's War: Selected Writings of General Vo Nguyen Giap*, edited by Russell Stetler (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 26.

² "Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War," *Hearings before the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 92nd Congress* (Washington: United States GPO, 1973), 168.

³ Department of Defense, *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967*, book 1 of 12 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), C-4.

6 Incident.⁴ Hồ Chí Minh believed the March Preliminary Agreement offered the first step towards the attainment of a lifetime's struggle, independence for the Vietnamese people. Few French saw it this way. Alain-Gérard Marsot argues that the French were inflexible on the colonial question in Indochina during the crucial year of 1946 leading up to the Franco-Việt Nam War due to what D. Bruce Marshall calls the "colonial myth":

The symbolic language that those politically active groups and individuals who were concerned about colonial issues played in analyzing colonial problems and rationalizing their policy preferences to a larger public... It provided a common universe of discourse to virtually all segments of the political élite, both metropolitan and colonial, who thought of themselves as sharing many goals and expectations.⁵

Despite initial disputes and blame tossed around over the military provisions in the Supplementary Accord, French resolve to regain lost colonial territory during the war was more determined than ever. The concessions made in the March *modus vivendi* were forgotten nearly as soon as the ink had dried. To de Gaullists like High Commissioner Admiral d'Argenlieu, Major General Leclerc, and Commissioners Colonel Cédile and Major Sainteny it served as a temporary convenience for getting French troops and military equipment into the North for eventual re-conquest. As leader of de Gaulle's hand-picked colonial leaders in Indochina, d'Argenlieu led the charge to reestablish French colonialism in the North with religious zeal, even maneuvering to replace the rest of the top de Gaullists in this group one by one throughout the year to assure there were

⁴ Acting Secretary of State Dean Acheson to General Marshall, 15 May 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

⁵ Quoted in Alain-Gérard Marsot, "The Crucial Year: Indochina 1946," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 19:2 (April, 1984), 338, 353. Marsot states that Marshall's concept was itself derived from Harold Lasswell and Karl Deutsch.

no deviations from his plans.⁶ After the Supplementary Accord was signed, restricting French forces in the North to 15,000 men and stipulating a reduction in this force beginning in ten months, he had to begin a race against the clock. In this race, it mattered little that other provisions of the agreements had to be sacrificed, but a propaganda campaign had to be maintained to offer diplomatic protection.

After a brief meeting with Leclerc in Hải Phòng on March 7, Giáp was reportedly shocked by the sight of French tanks and armored cars being offloaded on the beach.⁷ A week after signing the *modus vivendi*, Hồ Chí Minh began complaining that the French were not abiding by the agreement. They were continuing to attack and disarm Vietnamese troops south of the 16th parallel. The French landing at Hải Phòng, absent the Provisional Government's approval, he believed, was a violation of the agreement. Hồ was also concerned that a week had gone by without an agreement on a "clearly fixed" date for official negotiations to be conducted in Paris.⁸ A French force of 1,076 men had settled in Hà Nội by March 18, "bringing with them truckloads of weapons for rearming the French prisoners to be released."⁹ As the year progressed, the descent into war became increasingly clear. There were, of course, charges and countercharges of who was responsible for the breakdown of one, then two *modi vivendi*, but the events were transparent enough.

⁶ D'Argenlieu was himself replaced in early 1947.

⁷ *The Military Art of People's War: Selected Writings of General Vo Nguyen Giap*, edited by Russell Stetler (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 30.

⁸ Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, Volume III (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), 59-61. The Preliminary Agreement stipulated Hà Nội, Sài Gòn or Paris "as the seat of the conference."

⁹ King C. Chen, *Vietnam and China, 1938-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 145.

Admiral d'Argenlieu¹⁰General Leclerc¹¹Colonel Cédile¹²Jean Sainteny¹³

Hồ Chí Minh's connection with the Americans ended with the departure of remnants of Patti's team. American influence on the Chinese occupation disappeared in December 1945 with General Gallagher's departure. Active participation by a few

¹⁰ Ordre de la Libération, Georges Thierry d'Argenlieu, http://www.ordredelaliberation.fr/fr_compagnon/967.html (accessed 22 April 2005).

¹¹ Ordre de la Libération, Philippe Leclerc de Hauteclocque, http://www.ordredelaliberation.fr/fr_compagnon/569.html (accessed 22 April 2005).

¹² Ordre de la Libération, Jean Cédile, http://www.ordredelaliberation.fr/fr_compagnon/190.html (accessed 22 April 2005).

¹³ Ordre de la Libération, Jean Sainteny, http://www.ordredelaliberation.fr/fr_compagnon/886.html (accessed 22 April 2005).

Americans gave way to an “observer status” approach to Việt Nam, but American Lend-Lease equipment essential for the French to fight the Việt Minh continued to flow to French colonial forces. For example, the British had requested permission to hand over to the French approximately 800 jeeps and trucks given to the British under Lend-Lease to “maintain order in Indochina.” President Truman agreed based on the premise that no new equipment was being brought into the area and that it was impractical to remove the jeeps and trucks.¹⁴ Congressman Emmanuel Celler of New York was one of the few to criticize the supply of Lend-Lease goods destined for Indochina when in December 1945 he remarked on the floor of the House of Representatives:

Mr. Speaker, it is reported that some eight American Victory ships were turned over to the British Government to redeploy British and French soldiers to French Indochina to maim civilians actively engaged in the independent movement there.

These ships should be used to bring our marines and GI's home from India and China forthwith.

This is the same brave British Government which fights its way into peaceful villages in Palestine, killing the innocent with American lend-lease machine guns, tanks, and planes—the same courageous British who used tear gas and V-bombs on civilians in Burma, Dutch territory. Remember, this is the same British who are asking us for a huge loan to bolster and further their imperialistic cunning and imperialistic cruelty in Asian and in the Levant.¹⁵

The State Department installed Charles Shadrach Reed II as Consul in Sài Gòn and James O'Sullivan as Vice Consul in Hà Nội. They began sending regular reports to the State Department in April 1946.¹⁶ Reed had worked with a rubber company in

¹⁴ Freeman Matthews to Dean Acheson and reply from Acheson, 18 January 1946, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center.

¹⁵ Congressional Record, Proceedings and Debates of the 79th Congress, First Session (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1945), 11412.

¹⁶ War Department—Strategic Services Unit to Shanghai, Singapore and Bangkok, 31 January 1946, Folder 25, Box 2, Entry 90, RG 226, NARA; Charles S. Reed II, American Consul to the Secretary of State,

Sumatra from 1925-1927, before becoming a Foreign Officer for the State Department. During the 1920s and 1930s, he was stationed in Japan, China, Yugoslavia, and from July 20, 1939 to December 7, 1941, had been assigned consul at Sài Gòn though he resided in Hà Nội. O'Sullivan had been a newspaper reporter from 1938, when he graduated from college, until 1941 when he began attending Yale University Law School.¹⁷ He was a low-ranking official in the American Embassy in Chongqing before his request to be assigned to Hà Nội was approved by John Carter Vincent. He had no previous knowledge of Việt Nam, he simple wanted to get out of the embassy in China:

The State Department had nobody in Hanoi. The only Americans there were with a graves registration team [headed by Captain Farris] that was looking for flyers who'd been shot down over Indochina. And there was an army team in Haiphong loading out Japanese POWs, about 35,000 of them. I was supposed to set up a listening post and keep an eye on what was happening up there. I had the rank of Vice Consul class A, I think it was. There were eight classes above that—FSO 8 through 1. I was about as far down the totem pole as you could get.¹⁸

D'Argenlieu's strategy for chipping away at the March *modus vivendi* began with an invitation for Hồ Chí Minh to meet him on the cruiser *Emile Bertin* in Hạ Long Bay on the 24th to confer about future negotiations. Since the French were the dominant power in Sài Gòn, and the Việt Minh were still in control in Hà Nội, there was little doubt the subsequent conference would be held in Paris. Believing the French could strengthen

September 24, 1946, Reel 2, Indochina Center; *FRUS, 1946* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 15, 26. Reed had participated in a Department interview of General Gallagher in Washington, D.C., on January 30 and was expected to arrive in Sài Gòn in mid-February and visit Hà Nội later in the month. Landon does not mention seeing Reed in his diary, letters to his wife or dispatches to the State Department, but Secretary of State sent him a telegram in Sài Gòn on February 19. O'Sullivan probably arrived a short while later.

¹⁷ *Biographic Register of the Department of State, April 1, 1941* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951), 337, 364.

¹⁸ Harry Maurer, *Strange Ground: Americans in Vietnam, 1945-1975, An Oral History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1989), 50.

their position through a preliminary conference in the South at Đà Lạt, d'Argenlieu convinced Hồ that such a conference was prudent prior to the Paris conference. The Đà Lạt Conference convened on April 17 with d'Argenlieu and Võ Nguyên Giáp attending and ran for about three weeks. Max André, de Gaulle's onetime representative to negotiate with Hồ, MRP member of the Conseil Général (Senate) who had close ties to the Banque d'Indochine and Catholic missions, and a former resident of Indochina who was known as "a pure reactionary," was chosen to lead the French delegation, which also included Pignon, Clarac, General Salan, and Albert Torel. Foreign Minister and former VNQDD leader Nguyễn Tường Tam led the Vietnamese delegation, which also included Dr. Phạm Ngọc Thạch.¹⁹

Giáp had hoped to make some gains on the issue of Cochinchina, but was outmaneuvered by the French, who, under d'Argenlieu's guidance, signaled a clear retreat from the March *modus vivendi*. D'Argenlieu expelled the Vietnamese representative Thạch from the conference, according to Consul Reed, "on grounds that he is notorious anti-French Cochin Chinese and that Cochin China not yet part of Vietnam."²⁰ This was a significant propaganda victory for the French since Thạch (along with Phạm Văn Bạch) had been a member of the Southern Provisional Administrative Committee and had negotiated with Commissioner Cédile before the British-French coup

¹⁹ Shipway, 181-84; Marsot: 340-41; and O'Sullivan to Secretary of State, 18 April 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center. Đà Lạt was a hill station built by the French colonial officials and *colons* could escape the heat of the Sài Gòn. See Barbara Crossette's *The Great Hill Stations of Asia* (New York: Basic Books, 1999) for a broad treatment of this colonial phenomenon. Shipway, who appears to rely on Devillers for the date of the opening of the conference states it began on April 19 and ran to May 11, but the American Vice-Consul sent a message to the State Department on April 18 stating that it had already begun.

²⁰ O'Sullivan to Secretary of State, 13 November 1946; Reed to SECSTATE, 27 April 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center; and Edward Rice-Maximin, *Accommodation and Resistance* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 38.

in September 1945 at Sài Gòn. Thạch also acted as a member of the Vietnamese Provisional Government's Cabinet. By neutralizing a pre-coup spokesman for Vietnamese nationalism in the South who had possessed an undeniable association with the Vietnamese Provisional Government, the French were able to fortify their argument that they were merely conducting "police operations" when they were continuing to suppress the less well organized and armed nationalists movement in south of the 16th parallel.²¹

Efforts in the North to suppress opposition from other nationalist groups also made French propaganda claims that any opponents in the South were Việt Minh from the North more believable. The assassination of a Vietnamese member of the Cochinchina Consultative Council, Dr. Phat, on March 29, while sending a warning to collaborators, had helped generate an opinion in the South that nationalists were extremists, thus working against Hồ Chí Minh's carefully crafted propaganda.²² French propaganda labeling Vietnamese guerilla tactics as "terrorism" found a receptive audience among American observers, who readily adopted the use of this term. The northern suburbs of Sài Gòn were viewed as a haven for northern nationalists. Vietnamese were coming from this area when the French attacked them at bridges over the Arroyo de l'Avanche on September 23, 1945, and in the following weeks the British and French made sweeps of these areas to suppress resistance. Since this was also the

²¹ *The Military Art of People's War*, 31. The dismissal of Thạch is an overlooked issue of the conference that had tremendous importance. Fortunately it was mentioned in several American documents of the period, but American observers did not seem to recognize the political relevance of the dismissal, instead focusing on the subsequent violence which occurred in Cochinchina.

²² Reed to SECSTATE, 1 April 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

area where Vietnamese from Bắc Bộ (Tonkin) resided, attacks from this area supported the French view that Vietnamese nationalism was something fomented only by the northerners.

In March and April 1946, following organized pro-French demonstrations, groups of demonstrators went to these northern suburbs to break into homes and beat the residents, often times while the Vietnamese police looked on. On other occasions, northern Vietnamese were attacked on the streets without provocation. By the end of this period of attacks, the French Army began making raids on the homes in the area, typically before dawn, with the excuse that the resident was suspected of having hidden arms or resistance propaganda material. If the resident was then found to be a northern Vietnamese, he would be immediately loaded on a truck and taken to the provincial prison to have his identity verified. If discovered to be a southern Vietnamese (different dialects were spoken in the different regions), he would be released.²³

Those taken before the prison authorities who were not in possession of their identification papers—they were often not given time to retrieve them before they were hauled away—were considered “dangerous” and sent to the Immigration Service. Prior to the Allied division of Việt Nam, this department dealt primarily with Chinese immigrants, but after French administration was reintroduced in the South—apparently in an arrangement between the Army and the rubber plantations—the Immigration Service began sending those northern Vietnamese prisoners from these raids “who appeared to be

²³ SSU NR A-68937, 7 May 1946, Reel 2, M1656, NARA.

coolies” to the plantations, while others were sent back to northern Việt Nam.²⁴

Lacking support of the state apparatus south of the 16th parallel, Việt Minh attacks, whether supported by the government in Hà Nội or not, revealed the desperation of the nationalist movement to avert the permanent division of the country. After one “spontaneous” parade calling for autonomy in Cochinchina in May, a number of hand grenades were tossed at the procession, wounding several demonstrators.²⁵ Similar incidents with participants of “spontaneous” pro-Cochinchina autonomy demonstrations attacking the nationalists and nationalist counter attacks were also reported in Biên Hòa by a Canadian missionary.²⁶

On the day the Đà Lạt Conference convened, an assassination attempt was made on an editor of a Vietnamese newspaper in Sài Gòn who had advocated that Cochinchina remain separate from Việt Nam. On 17 April, a failed assassination attempt was made on the editor of a Sài Gòn vernacular newspaper who had advocated the separation of Cochinchina from Việt Nam. On the 26th, a second member of the Consultative Council, Dr. Phạm Ngọc Thạch (not the same Dr. Phạm Ngọc Thạch who was expelled from the Đà Lạt Conference), was assassinated. “The French have retaliated,” reported Reed, “with wholesale arrests and burning houses, villages where terrorists may have sheltered.”²⁷

On April 30 d’Argenlieu maintained that the expulsion of the other Dr. Thạch

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ [unsigned] to Secretary of State, 12 May 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

²⁶ Reed to Secretary of State, 21 May 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center. The American Consuls seemed to have been stationery in Sài Gòn and Hà Nội and so were reliant on informants for news of events outside of these particular metropolitan areas.

²⁷ Ibid, 18, 27 April; 4, 21 May 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

from the Đà Lạt Conference was justified. He added, prematurely, that the violent reaction experience in Sài Gòn passed. A number of hand grenades were thrown into the crowd of a large “spontaneous” demonstration held in support of a separate Cochinchina on May 11. The French responded by arresting all the northerners in the neighborhood of the incident.²⁸ On the 21st, Reed reported that:

Anti-French activities still continue and most recent outbreak featured two attacks on train near Bien Hoa with some casualties. Reported that such anti-French activities being countered by French supported partisans who are working for Cochin China autonomy apart from Viet Nam. Canadian missionary just returned from interior mentions brutality such partisans and also concentrated effort to make autonomy demonstrations appear spontaneous. Reported French have turned down Viet Nam request to leave delegation in Cochin China to observe conditions leading up to referendum. Announcement Cochin China Government expected this week upon Admiral’s return.²⁹

By the second half of 1946, incidents of grenade throwing and sniping in the Sài Gòn-Chợ Lớn metropolitan area became common, both in opposition to calls for the permanent division of Việt Nam and in direct response to events in Bắc Bộ. There were also attacks on French commerce, such as a suspicious warehouse fire which consumed 400 tons of new rubber. The French retaliated with sweeps of arrests and military attacks on Vietnamese in the areas surrounding the city.³⁰

As it represented institutionalized collaboration, the Cochinchina Consultative Council became an obvious focal point of attack by Vietnamese nationalists. The Council was formed on February 4, 1946 to advise the Commissioner and draft a

²⁸ Ibid, 18, 27, 30 April and 4 May 1946; [unsigned] to Secretary of State, 12 May 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

²⁹ Reed to SECSTATE, 21 May 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

³⁰ Ibid, 19 August and 6 September 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center; SSU Intelligence Summary Number 38, 21-28 November 1945, Folder ZM41-2, Box 396, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA. The American Consuls seemed to have been stationery in Sài Gòn and Hà Nội and so were reliant on informants for news of events outside of these particular metropolitan areas.

constitution. Led by Dr. Nguyễn Văn Thinh, leader of the Parti Démocrate Indochinois (Indochinese Democratic Party), it had four French and eight Vietnamese members, seven of whom were French citizens. Laurentie had worried in July 1945 that after the Japanese coup there was no party to counterbalance the Vietnamese nationalists. After the British-French coup in September, all the parties that had existed during the Japanese occupation went underground and were replaced by pro-French parties. Commissioner Cédile found Thinh a promising candidate for the Consultative Council he was devising in October.³¹ Born in Chợ Lớn, Thinh was a doctor who had interned in Paris' hospitals, though he lived off his large holdings of rice fields. He was a naturalized French citizen, had a French wife, and was considered by American observers to be "closer to the French than to Annamite circles," though the one particular aspect of his history which must have interested Cédile most of all was his experience as a prisoner of the Việt Minh for a brief time.³²

Sensing "signs here and in Saigon of a growing temptation to divide and rule," Laurentie expressed his concern to Minister of Overseas France Marius Moutet on March 20 that "Cédile, with his usual heavy-footed enthusiasm, is throwing himself into a Cochinchina policy." He then warned Moutet that "if you do not straighten things out, we will lose all the benefits of our agreement with Vietnam in the twinkling of an eye." On the 26th, the Cochinchina Consultative Council voted, surely with Commissioner

³¹ Shipway, 189; Stein Tønneson, *The Vietnamese revolution of 1945 : Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh, and De Gaulle in a world at war* (London: Sage Publications, 1991), 366; and SSU NR A-68992, 24 May 1946, Reel 2, M1656, NARA.

³² SSU NR A-68513, 19 April and SSU NR A-68992, 24 May 1946, Reel 2, M1656, NARA; Shipway, 189. Anthony Short, *The Origins of the Vietnam War* (New York: Longman, Inc., 1989), 24. According to Anthony Short, only 2,500 Vietnamese had obtained French citizenship by as late as 1938, and three-fifths of them were in Cochinchina..

Cédile and High Commissioner d'Argenlieu's approval, if not insistence, to establish the Provisional Government of the Republic of Cochinchina. Moutet ignored Laurentie's warning and, apparently unaware of the Consultative Council's vote which held no legal validity without French action, suggested to d'Argenlieu on April 13 that the Council could be used "to organize a propaganda campaign to prevent" Cochinchina's "union with Tonkin, under the slogan 'Cochinchina for the Cochinchinese.'" Contradicting Moutet, the new Secretary-General of Cominindo, Labrouquère, advised d'Argenlieu on the 20th not to form a Cochinchinese government or send a Cochinchinese delegation to the forthcoming Paris talks, but to adhere to the March Preliminary Agreement.³³

D'Argenlieu responded to Labrouquère with an appeal to the "colonial myth" (described at the beginning of this chapter), and attempted to impugn the Vietnamese desire to reunify their country by comparing such efforts to the Nazi German *Anschluß*:

Was not the argument of linguistic unity used by the Führer to force German minorities to join the Reich? In Indochina it has always been, and remains, France's mission to protect the ethnic minorities against the Annamite tendency to imperialism.³⁴

However, even American observers in Việt Nam recognized that "the Viet Minh and other Resistance parties would carry most of the regions" in a fair election. The French-sponsored political parties lacked support, according to an SSU report, "and the followers they would obtain in an election would result from the hope for immediate material gains":

³³ Shipway, 190-91. In re-juxtaposing the sequence of events, Shipway suggests that Moutet provided encouragement to the colonial administration in Indochina prior to the Consultative Council's action, and, based on Laurentie's remarks, that Moutet later back tracked on his suggestions promoting a separate Cochinchina. The sequence as provided above, according to the dates given, suggests a slightly different story. Shipway does not give Labrouquère's first name.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 192.

The Viet Minh and other Resistance groups have lost popularity in many villages because of their lack of discipline and their tendency to pillage and rob. On the other hand, there is no doubt in the minds of most people that these new parties being backed in Saigon have no patriots as leaders and that they are more or less traitors to the Viet Nam cause.³⁵

While Laurentie stands out from the rest of the French players in these events as a liberal, he should be seen more simply as one who recognized France's decline and merely sought to negotiate the most favorable settlement within this reality. He made no secret of his dislike for the Vietnamese Provisional Government as "both brutal and childish," and stated despite his protests in favor of the March *modus vivendi* that "In the specific case of Cochinchina they are showing signs of appetite way in excess of their likely digestive capacities." Still, he proposed that plans for a Cochinchina referendum continue, but with an assurance much like Xiao Wen had imposed on the Vietnamese Provisional Government on behalf of the VNQDD and Đồng Minh Hội, a guarantee for cabinet posts for Cochinchinese representatives.³⁶

Concerned that Hồ Chí Minh would exploit the Paris Conference for propaganda value, d'Argenlieu continued to undermine the March *modus vivendi* by maneuvering at the last moment to change the conference location to the Palace of Fontainebleau, fifty kilometers south of the cosmopolitan capital. Then, on June 1, Commissioner Cédile announced the formation of an "independent Cochinchinese Federation in the Indo-Chinese Federation and the French Union," while attempting to placate some critics by concurrently stated that its first work would be to hold a referendum on the question of

³⁵ SSU NR A-68513, 19 April 1946 (Date of information February and March), Reel 2, M1656.

³⁶ Shipway, 193, 195-96. Moutet's failure to sign Laurentie's draft proposal provides further evidence that he was more inclined to support the High Commissioner and Commissioner than his Director of Political Affairs.

whether or not to join Việt Nam. Sainteny told Hồ that “the decision regarding Cochin China was temporary and in no way prejudicial to the referendum provided for in the” March Preliminary Agreement.³⁷ D’Argenlieu would not dare to hold a referendum, as the SSU reported, because “resistance has increased throughout Cochin China as a result of the installation of the new government. Military resistance will continue as long as Ho Chi Minh is abroad to show opposition to the government which is headed by Dr. Thinh.”³⁸

The Tripartite Government headed by Félix Gouin had just been overturned when Hồ arrived in France. An election for the second Constituent Assembly was held on June 2, resulting in a big gain for the Christian-Democrat MRP, at the expense of its coalition partners the Socialist SFIO and the Communists. The MRP gained nineteen seats to become the party with the most votes in the Assembly, 160, while the Socialist SFIO lost nineteen seats for 115 total votes, and the Communists lost two seats for 146 votes. The Fontainebleau Conference was delayed while a new government was being formed. On June 19, the Christian Democrat Georges Bidault received 384 votes to succeed Gouin as President (the Communists, and two minor parties abstained from the vote), and although

³⁷ Jean Sainteny, *Ho Chi Minh and His Vietnam: A Personal Memoir*, translated by Herma Briffault (Chicago: Cowles Book Company, Inc., 1972), 74. *Viet-Nam Crisis: A Documentary History*, 80-82. The Franco-Cochinchinese Convention signed by Cédile and Thinh on June 3 demonstrates clearly that the French continued to control this region of Việt Nam. The convention remained “provisional” and could be “modified by agreement reached between the Commissioner of the French Republic in Cochin China and the Provisional Government, subject to the approval of the French High Commissioner of Indochina.” The Commissioner continued to be responsible for “the maintenance of internal and external security,” would recommend “French officials and technicians,” retained power to disapprove “heads of the technical departments, and would act as advisor to the Provisional Government, whose head would “receive him in private and personal audience, whenever he requests.” The “services within the jurisdiction of the Commissioner” would continue to be “organized in their present form,” until there were modifications by “mutual agreement.” Similarly, “fiscal and financial organization for Cochin China will be subject of a special agreement.”

³⁸ SSU NR A-68962, 22 June 1946, Reel 2, M1656, NARA.

the SFIO and Communists still held a large majority over the MRP, the Christian-Democrats' victory strengthened d'Argenlieu's policies as the Socialists moved further to the right.³⁹

Although Hồ Chí Minh went to France for the Fontainebleau Conference, he was not an official participant to the negotiations, but remained in the background primarily in the mode of an extended state visit, with officials and the press alike. Nguyễn Tường Tam had been named to head the Vietnamese delegation, but he reportedly became ill shortly before departure and was replaced by Phạm Văn Đồng of Hồ's inner circle. Tam disappeared from Hà Nội a short while later, apparently escaping to Kunming in fear for his life as the Việt Minh continued to wipe out all opposition to them amongst the Vietnamese.⁴⁰ An armed VNQDD unit forced a rival Đồng Minh Hội leader and some of his unit across the frontier after moving into Lào Cai, while the remainder of the latter unit joined with the VNQDD. This enlarged VNQDD force pushed the Việt Minh out of Tiên Yên by August 10. After the intercession of a Chinese general, a cease fire was reached by the end of the month and the VNQDD's equipment, largely supplied by the

³⁹ B.D. Graham, *The French Socialists and Tripartisme, 1944-1947* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1965), 112, 175-78, and 183; Shipway, 196, Graham, 175-81; and *Public Opinion, 1935-1946*, edited by Hadley Cantrill (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 237. Martin Shipway argues that because the French electorate voted against the Communist-Socialist inspired draft Constitution of May 5, "it was an auspicious moment" for d'Argenlieu to act on Cochinchina. However, in his study of the Tripartite coalition governments from 1944-1947, B.D. Graham argues news heralded throughout the country four days before the election that Léon Blum had signed an agreement with the U.S. cutting France's debt for Lend-Lease aid from \$3,500 million to \$700 million led many to believe that SFIO might make gains. Two opinion polls taken after, taken on April 16 and October 1, asked the question: "Are you following the discussions of the Constitution?" The number of respondents who chose "sometimes" or "never" instead of "regularly or always" was 82 percent in April and 83 percent in October, suggesting that the Constitution may not have been as important an issue to which party people voted for as Shipway believes.

Marius Moutet continued on as Minister of Overseas France, but the MRP gained the important Ministries of Finance and National Economy.

⁴⁰ James L. O'Sullivan to Secretary of State, 13 November 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

Chinese, was handed over to the Việt Minh. After these struggles were concluded the Việt Minh had effectively ended any organized opposition from Vietnamese groups north of the 16th parallel.⁴¹ In September, Reed reported that the troops of the Đồng Minh Hội had been eliminated. VNQDD forces were believed to be increasingly isolated to the Red River Valley from the mouth of the delta to Lào Cai, and Consul Reed characterized 1000 men associated with the group at Móng Cái as more likely simple pirates. Troop strength of the VNQDD, excluding those at Móng Cái, was estimated at 4,900, while the Việt Minh were believed to have 41,300 troops (in violation of a strict reading of the Supplementary Accord which limited the Vietnamese force to 10,000).⁴²

De Gaulle's influence did not remain just in Indochina, but influenced the makeup of the French delegation to the Fontainebleau Conference as well. Though Hồ Chí Minh would remain in France for four months as the Fontainebleau Conference (July 6 to September 10, 1946), delayed and later interrupted, dragged on, Leclerc never met with him. Sainteny argues that because Leclerc was "severely criticized by some of his peers for his 'liberal' action in Indochina, he obviously did not want to meddle further in Indochinese affairs."⁴³ However, we now know that Leclerc sent a confidential letter on June 8 to MRP President, Maurice Schumann, denouncing Hồ as a great enemy, and asserting the France had nearly completed its re-conquest of Indochina. Max André, who had led the delegation to the March Đà Lạt Conference, was chosen to head the French delegation, which according to Alain-Gérard Marsot, consisted of "second-rank

⁴¹ Chen, 153. A force of VNQDD under Vũ Hồng Khanh continued to fight both the French and Việt Minh from around Lào Cai beyond the end of the year.

⁴² Charles S. Reed II to the Secretary of State, 19 September 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

⁴³ Sainteny, 82.

figures and civil servants who were, by definition, unsympathetic to the Vietnamese position.”⁴⁴

Another French delegate, Paul Rivet, who represented the Section Française de l’Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO, or Socialist Party), quit after just two hours, as he later explained:

It is certain that the choice of Max André could not please the Vietnamese delegation, who were not unaware of his links with the Franco-Chinese Bank and, consequently, with the Bank of Indochina.

However it may be, M. Max André invited to his home, on July 5, 1946, all the French delegates in order to make contact before the first official Franco-Vietnamese conference, which was to take place the next day at Fontainebleau. I accepted this invitation. I was surprised not to find among the delegates men whom I knew for their profound knowledge of the Indochinese scene... I asked as soon as the meeting opened for the text of the agreements of March 6, which would serve as the basis of the discussions and I hoped to be able to study them that evening. My question appeared inopportune and I was told that this text would be communicated to me later. On the contrary, they insisted more on the necessity for strict discipline in the delegation and a rigorous adherence to decisions made by the majority of the members. From this moment, my role was a silent one. I listened to the comments that the delegates exchanged and, when I took leave of M. Max André, I announced to him that I was resigning.

That evening I communicated this decision M. Marius Moutet in a long letter in which I said that I intended to be neither a dupe nor accomplice nor hostage, and in which I denounced the large-scale maneuver which was going to be undertaken with rare tenacity during long months: to bring the Fontainebleau conference to an impasse, to profit from the discredit that the failure of the negotiations was supposed to cast on the negotiators, in particular on Ho Chi Minh, and to propose the Bao Dai combination; if necessary, to impose it, by depriving Tonkin of rice supplies from Cochin China and thus provoking famine.⁴⁵

After Rivet’s resignation, Henri Lozeray, the solitary delegate from the Parti Communiste Français decided to remain, but in an inactive capacity and only to keep his party

⁴⁴ Marsot: 340-41.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Ellen J. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954), 167-68.

informed of the Conference's progress.⁴⁶ On the first day of the Conference d'Argenlieu did not appear to preside over the proceedings as promised because he was "indisposed." In his place Max André delivered a welcoming speech and declared the conference open. Phạm Văn Đồng, then rose to denounce d'Argenlieu's replacement and the direction the proceedings had taken, before enumerating French violations of the March Preliminary Agreement.⁴⁷

In Indochina, d'Argenlieu worked to undermine the talks at Fontainebleau and consolidate the fiction of a unified southern Việt Nam by holding a conference for two weeks at Đà Lạt. The "native peoples of South Annam and high plateau of southern Indo-China" were invited to send representatives, but the Democratic Republic of Việt Nam was excluded. The delegates' opening speeches recognized Cambodia, Laos, and Cochinchina as federal states, and no mention was made of a referendum for Cochinchina. By August 12, these handpicked delegates of d'Argenlieu further attacked the March *modus vivendi* by condemning the Fontainebleau Conference and the Government of Việt Nam "which aspires" to "dictatorial domination" over the country. Several years later, d'Argenlieu reiterated his earlier propaganda in an interview with historian Ellen Hammer: "You must always remember all the people who drink the waters of the Mekong."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Edward Rice-Maximin, *Accommodation and Resistance* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 38.

⁴⁷ Caffery to Secretary of State, 7 July 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

⁴⁸ Reed to Secretary of State, 5, 6 and 12 August, 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center; Hammer, 171. The high plateau was typically referred to as the Moï's plateau (referred to in one document as the Lộc Ninh-Trois Frontieres-Buôn Ma Thuột area, but more loosely construed for French designs; see: SSU Intelligence Summary Number 46, 17-23 January 1946, Intelligence Summary, January 1946, Box 407, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA), and is now called the Tây Nguyên (Central Highlands). Moï's was a term used for the people who traditionally lived in the highlands, or mountainous areas, but has fallen from favor as it

The Vietnamese delegation at Fontainebleau broke off negotiations after hearing that the Đà Lạt Conference had convened. Consul Reed reported from Sài Gòn that the appearance of placards emblazoned with “Vive le Viet Nam” calling for Vietnamese to stay off the streets for two assigned hours on the following afternoon appeared to be synchronized with the delegation’s decision to suspend negotiations. He also stated that this latest action, combined with the earlier moves to establish a separate government and Consultative Council in Cochinchina, “give the decided impression of French double dealing so far as the free choice of Cochin-China to join or stay apart from Viet Nam is concerned.” “Authorities in France may not agree with policy adopted in Indo-china to foster separatist Cochin-China government” but, wrote Reed, it is well known that” Commissioner Cédile “has forced this issue and threatens to resign unless his policy is carried through.”⁴⁹

Violence erupted in the North during this period as well. According to American consular reports, at 5 a.m. on August 3 a supply convoy protected by two armored jeeps and consisting of thirty American-built “two and a half” trucks, a few odd vehicles including an ambulance, small trucks and official cars, and some casual personnel set out from the Citadelle at Hà Nội for two garrisons located at Phủ Lạng Thương and Lạng Sơn. The French had established themselves at Phủ Lạng Thương in June and Lạng Sơn in July based on their understanding that the March Supplementary Accord provided for

now connotes a bitterly derisive condemnation of a savagely uncivilized people. D’Argenlieu ignored the fact that the Mekong flows through Laos and Cambodia before spreading out into a delta in southern Việt Nam, what the French referred to as Cochinchina, and so the Vietnamese and highland peoples of Trung Bộ (Annam) did not “drink the waters of the Mekong” unless they crossed territorial boundaries to do so.

⁴⁹ Reed to Secretary of State, 3 August 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

French border patrols in the “area” of Lạng Sơn. The Vietnamese Government contested the establishment of the garrison at Phủ Lạng Thương based on their interpretation of the Supplementary Accord that the French were to confine themselves specifically to Lạng Sơn. Moreover, there had been a constant series of incidents in that area, not Phủ Lạng Thương. The Vietnamese Government stated that a similar convoy returning to Hà Nội two days earlier had been stopped at a bridge by the Vietnamese National Guards, who demanded their papers, but the French reply was only a salvo of rifle shots killing two National Guardsmen and two civilians, and wounding eight National Guardsmen and civilians. Just before the convoy of the 3rd departed, according to the French, a Vietnamese officer, concerned that there might be trouble, suggested a liaison team be sent ahead of the convoy. No action was taken, Vice Consul O’Sullivan speculated, possibly because there was no officer of sufficient rank to delay the convoy.⁵⁰

Approximately five miles from Hà Nội, the last few vehicles of the convoy, which had by then been spread out over three kilometers, crossed the bridge. According to the French version of events, they were fired upon at about 8 a.m. and radioed the Citadelle for assistance. The Vietnamese claimed that the French convoy began firing in all directions without reason. The French stated that the convoy was divided into four sections with the first having reached Phủ Lạng Thương safely, the second section stopped in the town of Bắc Ninh where the uninjured soldiers entered private homes to better defend themselves, and the last two sections were trapped one and two kilometers outside the town respectively. Gunfire was exchanged between the Vietnamese and the

⁵⁰ Ibid, No. 75 [date illegible; SEA received 27 September 1946], Reel 2, RG 59; Sullivan [sic] to Secretary of State, 4 August 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

French of the three trapped sections of the convoy along four kilometers of road for several hours. According to the Vietnamese account, the French burned two hamlets in one location and seven houses in another (French soldiers in the armored force acknowledged this in part), killing a woman and wounding two civilians en route to Bắc Ninh. French liaison officers caught up with French armored forces from Hà Nội at the outskirts of Bắc Ninh in the late afternoon and negotiations lasting several hours began. Meanwhile, according to the French account, the Vietnamese absconded with supplies and payroll exceeding one million *piastres* carried by the convoy. The following day, the French forces occupied the old French military barracks in Bắc Ninh, cut telephone lines between the town and Hà Nội, and four French planes dropped six bombs and strafed certain sections of the town the French desired to occupy. Another convoy was fired on the following day with additional casualties, but this fight apparently never reached the level of the incident on the 3rd.⁵¹

In his report of the events, O'Sullivan warned the Secretary of State that "there now exists imminent danger of open break. Rupture of relations would probably be followed by period of anarchy in the country which French can over-run quickly but which even they admit cannot be pacified save in longer bitter operation."⁵² On August 9, Moffat suggested to the head of the Far Eastern Section, John Carter Vincent, that the State Department should be prepared to express "our hope that they will abide by the spirit of the March 6 convention."⁵³ On the 19th, Consul Reed from Sài Gòn reminded

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² O'Sullivan to Secretary of State, August 7, 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

⁵³ Moffat, SEA, to Vincent, FE, 9 August 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

the Secretary of State that violence, which had begun nearly a year earlier with the British-sponsored French coup of September 23, continued unabated. There had been several grenade throwing incidents over the previous weekend, a dock fire had destroyed 800 tons of rubber, and in reprisal for shots fired during the fire, French troops had burned another Vietnamese village to the ground. A similar dock fire occurred on September 5, destroying another 400 tons of rubber, and several Vietnamese carrying hand grenades were arrested nearby.⁵⁴

Moffat sent another memo to Vincent on the 19th highlighting events that had occurred in Việt Nam, north and south of the 16th parallel, since the March *modus vivendi*. At the time, he did not believe the French would allow the Fontainebleau Conference “to break down completely,” concluding that:

It is SEA's view that the Annamese are faced with the choice of a costly submission to the French or of open resistance, and that the French may be preparing to resort to force in order to secure their position through Indochina. It may not be advisable for this Government to take official notice of this situation during the Peace Conference, but the Department should be prepared, SEA believes, to express to the French, in view of our interests in peace and orderly development of dependent peoples, our hope that they will abide by the spirit of the March 6 convention.⁵⁵

On August 22, Reed forwarded a report by O'Sullivan in which he reported an incident where three or four French soldiers rode about the city of Hà Nội on the night of the August 6-7, riding down rickshaws and shooting a tommy-gun at any Vietnamese pedestrians they happened upon. Casualties had been estimated at between eight to twelve victims. The Commissioner for the Republic of Tonkin and North Annam

⁵⁴ Reed to Secretary of State, 19 August and 6 September 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

⁵⁵ Moffat, SEA to Vincent, FE, 19 August 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

Colonel Jean Crépin (Sainteny's replacement), apologized to the Vietnamese government and extended his assurance that the guilty persons would be apprehended and tried, but there had been no progress in the investigation by the time this report was filed. This suggests that these crimes were condoned, if not directed, by high level French colonial officials.⁵⁶

According to Võ Nguyên Giáp, the first dispute over customs authority in Hải Phòng occurred when the French tried to intervene in a matter in mid-August. The Vietnamese customs authority had confiscated one hundred cases of cigarettes and an unspecified amount of new French currency which the Vietnamese Provisional Government had not allowed to be introduced into circulation. The merchant involved in the incident, who was presumably Chinese or French, claimed privilege under the Sino-French Treaty of February designating Hải Phòng as a free port. The French claimed authority over customs at Hải Phòng, demanded the merchant be released and his property returned, and threatened to respond with military force if there were future incidents. The issue escalated a few days later when a French gunboat seized a Vietnamese customs boat and its crew. On August 29, Colonel Pierre Louis Dèbes sent a French force with tanks and armored cars to seize the Vietnamese customs house and police station, and arrest the Vietnamese policemen at the port of Hải Phòng. This incident was resolved after the Vietnamese-French Liaison and Control Commission, provided for under the March Preliminary Agreement, interceded.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Charles S. Reed II, American Consul to Secretary of State, 22 August 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

⁵⁷ Võ Nguyên Giáp, *Unforgettable Days* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1975), 319-21.

With d'Argenlieu's well-orchestrated Đà Lạt Conference complete, violence increased both north and south of the 16th parallel, and with the Fontainebleau Conference over after September 10, Hồ Chí Minh was left to appeal to world opinion through a few more meetings before he had to return home. He gave a four-hour interview to CBS correspondent David Schoenbrun in Paris on September 11. Schoenbrun told Hồ that Americans "did not think Communism was compatible with freedom and would hesitate before straining our relations with France, with whom we shared common ideals, by giving support to a revolutionary government about which we knew so little."⁵⁸ Hồ replied, "My people hunger for independence and will have it. If men you call Communists are the only men who lead the fight for independence, then Vietnam will be Communist."⁵⁹ Then Schoenbrun asked him if he would have to fight. In a rare moment free from his usual diplomatic reserve, Hồ began by explaining:

Yes, we will have to fight. The French have signed a treaty and they wave flags for me, but it is a masquerade. We do not have the true attributes of independence: our own customs control, our own diplomatic representatives abroad, our own currency. Our country is truncated. They have set up puppet, separatist regimes in the south. Yes, I fear that in the end we will be forced to fight!"

When Schoenbrun told him that a fight against the French would be futile, Hồ responded with resolve:

No, it would not be hopeless. It would be hard, desperate, but we could win. We have a weapon every bit as powerful as the most modern cannon: nationalism! Do not

⁵⁸ David Schoenbrun, *As France Goes* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 232-33. While Schoenbrun's interview is included here, it remains highly suspect because it is inconsistent with all of Hồ Chí Minh's recorded discussions with American officials and representatives of the press, which were always remarkable for the constraint and diplomatic tact he displayed, such as the interview he gave later in the day. Perhaps this was one rare occasion when the pressure of events overcame him.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 233.

underestimate its power. You Americans above all ought to remember that a ragged band of barefooted farmers defeated the pride of Europe's best-armed professionals.⁶⁰

He continued to explain:

It would be a war between an elephant and a tiger.... He will leap upon the back of the elephant, tearing chunks from his hide, and then he will leap back into the dark jungle. And slowly the elephant will bleed to death. That will be the war of Indochina.⁶¹

In the evening, George W. Abbott conducted an interview with HỒ on behalf of Ambassador Caffery which contrasts sharply with the Schoenburn interview. As usual, HỒ drew attention to his contacts with the OSS during the jungle battles with the Japanese, his hope that the principle applied to the Philippines would be applied to Indochina as well, and denied he was a communist. His comments on negotiations with France were the typical, restrained diplomatic approach more characteristic of HỒ's contacts with American representatives. He complained that no date had been set for the referendum in Cochinchina as agreed in the March Preliminary Agreement, and that the French authorities had continued military operations against Vietnamese resistance there. He recognized that a permanent treaty could not be signed by France until a constitution had been accepted and expressed his willingness to adjourn the Fontainebleau Conference until January or whenever it took. In the meantime he continued to hold out hope that an agreement could be reached before he had to leave on September 14 (he did not actually depart until the 19th).⁶² A new *modus vivendi* was agreed to at the last minute between HỒ and Moutet on the 15th, the most important point of which was that talks would resume in January 1947. The September *modus vivendi*, as it has come to be

⁶⁰ Ibid, 234.

⁶¹ Ibid, 234-35.

⁶² George W. Abbott to The [American] Ambassador [of France, Caffery], 12 September 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

known, also called for a cease fire and release of French and Vietnamese prisoners held by the other side.⁶³

In October, the French attempted to counteract Hồ Chí Minh's successful enchantment of the press in France with comments by d'Argenlieu broadcast in Chongqing, Melbourne and New Delhi such as: "Our idea is to make Indo-China a free member of the French commonwealth. Her future position would be the same as that of Canada or Australia in the British Commonwealth." D'Argenlieu also continued to attack "Annamite imperialism" as the "greatest danger in French Indo-China today," and referred to the "many backward minority races in Indo-China besides the Annamites who, instigated by the Japanese, were anxious to rule other races such as the Laotians, Cambodians and Coch-Chinese [sic]." He said France is "determined to protect the minorities against Annamite imperialism." "Indo-China must be considered as a union of several federated states, each with its own characteristics," he said.⁶⁴

Just as d'Argenlieu attempted to discredit Vietnamese ambitions for reunifying their country as "imperialistic," the French, despite their own record as collaborationists with the Nazis and Japanese, sought to characterize the Việt Minh as either supplied by the Japanese or their puppets. The SSU, for example, reported French assertions in December 1945 that: "We believe this so-called revolution is largely a piece of Japanese sabotage. When the Jap is eliminated from the picture, the Vietminh movement will fall apart under its own weight." The French maintained that the Japanese had conceived of

⁶³ Shipway, 219.

⁶⁴ III Interim Report of Subversive Propaganda Pressures within Indo-China, [no date given, but information covered goes into third week of October, 1945], Folder 2477, Box 186, Entry 139, RG 226, NARA.

the “revolution in propaganda, supported it with arms, and financed it with profits of the currency inflation,” while claiming that only 15 percent of the Vietnamese population was disloyal.⁶⁵ By early 1946, the Japanese had been mostly repatriated and yet the Việt Minh did not simply fold, so French officials modified their propaganda, insisting that the Vietnamese had received training from the Japanese between the March coup and the surrender, and by Japanese deserters and the Chinese afterward.⁶⁶

We have seen in an earlier chapter that before the coup, the French continued to brutally suppress Vietnamese nationalists while the Japanese only resisted such efforts in sporadic and minor ways. Even after the coup, the Japanese only nominally supported Vietnamese nationalism, and armed Vietnamese only in support of their own military. It is true Major General Tsuchihashi Yuitsu had agreed, before the surrender, to organize 10,000 former members of the French Indochinese Army into a security force and ordered rifles, bayonets, pistols, and ammunition be sent to the Huế area to arm them. The Việt Minh were believed to have obtained these weapons after the surrender, but if they did had, it was not through collusion with the Japanese.⁶⁷

Vietnamese nationalists obtained weapons from anywhere they could get them, and there is not evidence to support early French claims that any one group provided the principal source of their support. In mid-1945, General Wedemeyer had instructed OSS officials to provide “incidental arms” to both French and Vietnamese resistance groups.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ SSU NR 40, 6-12 December 1945, Folder IS Oct.-Dec., Box 408, Entry 108, RG 226, NARA.

⁶⁶ SSU NR A-65S79, 27 February 1946, Reel 1, M1656; A-65063, 22 January 1946, Folder 22, Box 3, Entry 108E, RG 226, NARA.

⁶⁷ Kiyoko Kurusu Nitz, “Independence without Nationalist? The Japanese and Vietnamese Nationalism during the Japanese Period, 1940-45,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 15,1 (March 1984): 122.

⁶⁸ “Recent Developments in Indochina,” 4 June 1945, Reel 1, RG 59, Indochina Center. Although

After the surrender, the Japanese took the position that they could not supply their arms to Vietnamese nationalists, but were not so reticent about selling confiscated French weapons. There is also ample evidence that the Chinese were an important source of Japanese, French, and American weapons sales as part of their “occupation for commercial gain,” though any training would have been restricted to the opponents of the Việt Minh, such as the Đồng Minh Hội, VNQDD, and Đại Việt.⁶⁹ An American consular report from March 1946, responded that the Việt Minh’s armaments “consist mainly of (1) arms ceded by the Japanese, rifles, L.M.G.s [light machine guns], a few H.M.G.s [heavy machine-guns], and mortars and perhaps half a dozen [sic] French 75s, (2) small arms obtained from *Tirailleurs* and Garde Indochinois, and (3) small arms and L.M.G.s dropped by the American OSS organization (particularly 5,000 rifles and Tommy guns dropped on the 10th August in the area of Thai-nguyen).”⁷⁰ Vice Consul O’Sullivan learned that Vietnamese prostitutes demanded French soldiers pay in hand grenades, pistols, and bullets.⁷¹ In June 1946, an OSS report had explained that resistance groups in Cochinchina were buying arms and ammunition from French soldiers and were looking

Wedemeyer’s instructions included the proviso that weapons supplied to the Vietnamese not be used against the French, there was no practical way he could enforce this order, nor is it likely, given his anti-colonial position, that he was really concerned with this eventuality.

⁶⁹ SSU NR A-62911, 5 November 1945, Folder ZM 2200, Box 401, Entry 108 RG 226, NARA; Archimedes L.A. Patti, *Why Viet Nam? Prelude to America’s Albatross* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 337; and Vo Nguyen Giap, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, translated by Mai Van Elliott (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1975), 36, 56. Patti states that these sales were limited in part to willing “cooperation with pro-Chinese nationalists,” but there is no reason to believe that this necessarily restricted the flow to the Việt Minh, whose flexibility under Hồ Chí Minh’s leadership shifted as with the direction of the wind. According to an SSU report, the Chinese occupying forces were “selling the majority of their inferior small arms to the Tonkinese. They in turn send them to Cochin China and to the Vietnam in South Annam as reinforcements.”

⁷⁰ Charles S. Millet, American Consul, Canton, China to Secretary of State, March 8, 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center. According to this report, most of the arms supplied by the OSS were being used by Việt Minh forces operating around Sài Gòn.

⁷¹ Maurer, 51.

for foreign sources of supply as well.⁷²

Weapons used by the Việt Minh also included spears, lances, machetes, and bows and arrows. In an interview with British Major Peter Prentice, Dunn learned that a platoon of Gurkhas had been fired on near Sài Gòn by Việt Minh with bows and arrows, amongst other weapons, and that one soldier received an arrow in the arm as a result of the engagement.⁷³ Võ Nguyên Giáp explained that there was an enthusiastic campaign to forge these pre-industrial weapons in the countryside where children would compete against each other to collect scrap iron and steel, while adults would often contribute metal objects used for worship such as bronze incense burners and urns, to be melted down.⁷⁴

A French source who claimed the Việt Minh churned out 20,000 to 30,000 copies of various foreign arms from hastily constructed arsenals during 1946 can be discounted as lacking credibility.⁷⁵ Giáp said nothing about copying modern weapons, but admitted his army used over types types of weapons firing bullets of different sizes, and gives a sample listing:

<i>Vietnam:</i>	Phan Dinh Phung rifles without range finder Muskets
<i>France:</i>	Mousqueton rifles Indochinese rifles

⁷² SSU NR A-68962, 22 June 1946, Reel 2, M1656, NARA.

⁷³ Peter M. Dunn, *The First Vietnam War* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1985), 222.

⁷⁴ Giáp, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 54. Despite the fact that such weapons were of little use against guns, the campaign to procure metal and forge the implements seems to have been much more successful, and devoid of the devastating consequences of Mao Zedong's more ambitious Great Leap Forward campaign a decade later.

⁷⁵ Chen, 250-52, This argument relies on a belief that the Japanese provided technical assistance and even Chen believes that the type of weapons produced were probably limited to pistols which would not have been particularly effective for the type of guerilla warfare the Việt Minh engaged in.

	Muskets
	7.5 mm Mas rifles
	Tromblon rifles with grenade launchers
	12, 16 and 20 gauge shotguns
<i>Japan:</i>	Japanese rifles with short barrels used by cavalry
	Japanese rifles with long barrels used by the infantry.
<i>England:</i>	English 7.7 mm rifles
<i>USA:</i>	Remington 1903
	Remington 1917
<i>Russia:</i>	(Tsarist period): Russian 7.9 mm rifles with long barrels
<i>China:</i>	(Chiang Kai-shek period): seven-nine rifles
<i>Germany:</i>	(Nazi): Mauser. ⁷⁶

In short, the Vietnamese obtained weapons from anywhere they could obtain them, including the French themselves. They also made use of fortifications left behind by the Japanese in preparation for an American invasion. As late as July, the French charged that “thousands” of Japanese were training Vietnamese troops—“10,000 Japanese may be in Tonkin.” However, the Chinese Consul General estimated that only a few hundred Japanese had escaped repatriation north of the 16th parallel, and Vice Consul O’Sullivan reported that the U.S. repatriation team estimated 150 Japanese had deserted from January 10 to late July, 1946.⁷⁷

Not surprisingly, the evidence suggests that the French received much more direct support from the Japanese than did the Vietnamese. After all, the British could not suppress Vietnamese aspirations with 2,500 colonial Indian troops and armed French

⁷⁶ Giap, *Unforgettable Months and Years*, 56.

⁷⁷ O’Sullivan to Secretary of State, 25 July 1946 Reel 2, RG 59. Christopher E. Goscha, *Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of the Vietnamese* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999), 184-96. Christopher Goscha explains that post-World War II Southeast Asia was an arms storehouse from which the Việt Minh were able to purchase arms during the coming Franco-Vietnamese War. American and British clandestine services had dropped roughly 175 tons of arms in Thailand, for example, including “Thompson submachine-guns, grenades, British sten-guns, detonators, booby traps and ammunition,” which were placed in dumps rather than reclaimed by the Allies.

POWs alone. Japanese garrisons at Đà Lạt, Nha Trang and other outlying areas continued to defend against Vietnamese on the orders of the British occupation. Japanese army and naval units assisted the British in engagements against the Vietnamese at Sài Gòn and Vũng Tàu (Caps St. Jacques). The British and French also relied on Japanese equipment and installations. Even after French troops began to arrive, “Japanese planes operating with Japanese crews under British orders had flown 100,000 miles, carried 45,000 pounds of supplies, ferried 1,000 French and Indian troops over road-blocked areas,” according to an American correspondent. “All food and supply lines, all roads and outlying installations were guarded by Japanese soldiers.”⁷⁸ British, Japanese, and American Lend-Lease aid for the French put them at a clear advantage to the Vietnamese, with their meager supply of armaments, as a peaceful solution in Việt Nam was fast dissipating.

Upon returning to Việt Nam on October 4, a month after leaving France, Phạm Văn Đồng stated on behalf of the delegation:⁷⁹

We have not succeeded in obtaining our two essential demands: unity of our country and total independence within a frame of the French Union, but we have obtained an important result, that is to interest international opinion in favor of our movement and especially to interest French public opinion and various French political circles which have understood and supported us.⁸⁰

Upon his return, Hồ Chí Minh’s message was the same. After four months he had failed to obtain a clear statement of Việt Nam’s independence and unification of the three *tam*

⁷⁸ Harold Isaacs, *No Peace for Asia*, 158-59, 162. French troop strength south of the 16th parallel reached roughly 50,000 in December, 1945.

⁷⁹ Caffery to Secretary of State, 2 August 1946; James L. O’Sullivan to Secretary of State, 6 October 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Sullivan to Secretary of State, 6 October 1946.

Kỳ (the three “parts” of Việt Nam under French colonialism: Bắc Kỳ (or Bắc Bộ) for Tonkin, Trung Kỳ (or Trung Bộ) for Annam, and Nam Kỳ (Nam Bộ) for Cochinchina), “due to the present situation in France.” The greatest accomplishment he could claim was that the Conference had brought greater attention to Việt Nam from the French and the world, and he still held out hope for formal resumption of talks.⁸¹

O’Sullivan later recalled

After that, the tension really began to mount. It was only a question of time before the collision. Under the [September] *modus vivendi* the French were supposed to have free circulation through northern Indochina as of November 1. That never happened. In early November the Viets started cutting the roads out of Hanoi. They put up barricades manned by Viet troops, and they wouldn’t let anybody through. The idea was to contain the French, prevent them from roaming around the countryside. The barricades were made out of dirt, railroad ties, torn-up buildings, brick, concrete. They were big, sometimes twenty feet high. But the French didn’t try to clear them.”⁸²

Meanwhile, French legitimacy in Cochinchina suffered a blow from an erstwhile supporter. In the early morning hours of November 10, Consultative Council President Dr. Nguyễn Văn Thinh hung himself with a copper wire suspended from the ceiling of his bedroom in his Sài Gòn home. A week earlier he had sent a cable to the French Premier Georges Bidault informing him that an assassination attempt using hand grenades was made on his colleague’s life a few days earlier. About the same time, he agreed to reshuffle his cabinet and stated to his confidantes, “I am being asked to play a farce, and even after the Cabinet changes, the farce will continue.” On the morning of the 9th, Dr. Thinh had asked to see d’Argenlieu, but was told he was too busy to see him. A short while later, he saw his colleague leaving the High Commissioner’s office. Then,

⁸¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, III, 72-73.

⁸² Maurer, 54.

he learned from one of his friends, who had refused to join the government, that the Vietnamese police sent to remove placards put up by the Việt Minh had been stoned by the crowd.⁸³

In writing about Thinh's suicide, Laurentie told de Gaulle, "while Ho Chi Minh was the centre of attention in Paris, we were giving the impression of not playing along with Thinh, to whom we refused credits, a police force, proper administrative quarters, etc."⁸⁴ Some considered Thinh's suicide the highest form of protest by a Buddhist. On November 13, d'Argenlieu approved the nomination of Dr. Lê Văn Hoach, Thinh's main critic, but he still had to be elected by the Consultative Council. The Council, now consisting of fourteen Frenchmen nominated by the business interests and twenty-eight Vietnamese nominated by headmen, adjourned for about a week after "four stormy sessions" without electing a President, according to Consul Reed. "General reaction," he wrote, "is that no one wants to be President of a government without real power and to be merely a cover for French political maneuvers." Dr. Hoach was finally elected President on November 29. He took his oath of office in front of a Buddhist altar before 2000 locals, "mostly French," Foreign Legionnaires, paratroopers, sailors and marines.⁸⁵

In the midst of these events, a member of General Valluy's General Staff detailed the reasons implementation of the September *modus vivendi* was not progressing in a handwritten and unsigned note, with the heading: "For L.B. [Leon Blum, foremost leader

⁸³ Reed to Secretary of State, 12 and 13 November 1946, Reel 2, RG 59; Hammer, 181; and "Cochin China chief takes his own life," 11 November 1946, *The New York Times*.

⁸⁴ Shipway, 239.

⁸⁵ Ibid; "Cochin China chief takes his own life," *New York Times* (11 November 1946): 15; "President Sworn for Cochin-China," *New York Times* (8 December 1946): 48. Reed to Secretary of State, 21 November and 3 December 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

of the French Socialist Party], Very Confidential, to be carried by a ‘reliable friend,’”
dated Sài Gòn, November 17, 1946:

On the French side, all the former colonial personnel is in place and stronger than ever, including civil administrators such as [Albert] Torel and [Léon] Pignon. They oppose the ‘modus vivendi’ and will do everything to sabotage it. The catholic missions, with Father Vicondelet from Hong Kong, Procurator of the ‘Missions Etrangères’, close to the Bank of Indochina, and Father Drapier (‘a little tyrant at the Hué Court’), pursue their dream of a Monarchy supported by the Vietnamese MRP. The handful of settlers, planters, half-castes, rubber barons (‘caout-choutiers’) want a return to 1919 and cheap labor. On the Vietnamese side, there is also defiance. They are perfectly aware of the situation and bank on our political uncertainty. The army is reinforced, aspires to play a role (perhaps one day in collaboration with the Chinese), speaks up, and not in our sense. They hamper the negotiations for an amnesty, as the maintenance of the status quo is in their favour. The Parisian intelligence services (DEC, successor of the DGER) have only one preoccupation: to make files on the officers of Valluy’s General Staff—this writer on top of the list—who have caused displeasure because of their objectivity.

If one does not clean out the old colonials (civil service), one will never be able to apply the policy defined by Moutet and in that case, since one wants to stay here, it will be necessary to resort to force at any cost. They know it. They want to push us into that dead-end.⁸⁶

On the morning of the November 20, Võ Nguyên Giáp complained to O’Sullivan that the French were continuing the “campaign of terror” in the South, the effectiveness of his forces there had been reduced, and that the French were not releasing, with a few symbolic exceptions, political prisoners as required by the September *modus vivendi*. In addition to relaying his conversation with Giáp, O’Sullivan reported to Washington, D.C. that according to reliable sources, there were 20,000 troops in Bắc Bộ (Tonkin) and northern Trung Bộ (Annam), 5,000 more than the aggregate of all French troops agreed upon in the March *modus vivendi*. These forces were expected to remain to protect “air and sea bases”—the March *modus vivendi* had stated that this contingent would be composed of one-third of the total French force to be determined by subsequent

⁸⁶ Marsot: 344-45.

conferences. O'Sullivan had also learned that the French intended to be responsible for the security of Việt Nam, a further violation of the March Supplementary Accord if not done "in cooperation with the Vietnamese Army."⁸⁷

The French continued to provoke fights in the North, this time at Lạng Sơn and Hải Phòng. The French had been planning a commemorative ceremony for November 24 in honor of those massacred by the Japanese in and around Lạng Sơn. Before the ceremony could be held, the French had planned to rebury bodies at a military cemetery in Lạng Sơn. Some of these bodies were in areas occupied by Việt Minh troops. Attempting to enter one such area on the 20th, French troops found the road had been blocked and the convoy withdrew. Without negotiating any right of passage, in violation of the March Supplementary Accord, the French soldiers returned the next day, and two soldiers were killed when removing roadblocks which had been mined. The convoy then proceeded on to the recovery area located between two Vietnamese encampments. A four-hour skirmish ensued with the French bringing in reinforcements. Fifty-four Vietnamese and eleven French were killed (no count of other casualties was offered).⁸⁸

About the same time Giáp was complaining to O'Sullivan about how the French colonial administration was violating the terms of the September *modus vivendi*, a Navy light combat aircraft (LCA) used by the French Customs Service approached a Chinese junk which had already cleared the Vietnamese Customs Service as it approached the Hải Phòng market on a canal. Recall customs authority was one of the issues that was supposed to be negotiated after the March *modus vivendi*, but nothing had been achieved

⁸⁷ O'Sullivan to Secretary of State, 20 November 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

⁸⁸ O'Sullivan to Secretary of State, Despatch No. 9, 23 November 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

on this matter as well as a host of other crucial matters at either the first Đà Lạt Conference or the Fontainebleau Conference, and a serious conflict had resulted in August over the issue at Hải Phòng. The French had information that the junk was carrying petroleum products that the French colonial authorities in the North, in defiance of the Vietnamese Government's authority, had declared contraband. After the French took the junk in tow, fire broke out either from the junk or the shore. Some Vietnamese seized five unarmed French soldiers who were buying goods in the market and the French military command sent tanks to release them. Fighting subsided about an hour after it had begun only to resume an hour later when the Vietnamese shot some 60mm shells at a French motor pool.⁸⁹

Colonel Lami, in charge of Political and Administrative Affairs for the French in the North attempted unsuccessfully to contact Giáp late in the afternoon, but was able to speak with Hoàng Hữu Nam, undersecretary of state for interior and the two signed a ceasefire agreement a short while later calling for the opposing forces to return to their respective barracks. Fighting continued through the morning of the following day, however, when a mixed Franco-Vietnamese mission, called for in the previous day's agreement, made its way from Hà Nội to Hải Phòng and a supplemental agreement was signed by Nam and Colonel Herckel, Commandant d'Armes of Hà Nội, ending the conflict by mid-afternoon. The deal included 240 Vietnamese and twenty-three French, including all liaison officers. An unknown number of Vietnamese and sixty-three French

⁸⁹ O'Sullivan to Secretary of State, Despatch [sic] No. 9, 23 November and 1 December 1946, Reel 2. RG 59, Indochina Center.

were wounded.⁹⁰

The conflict was reignited and compounded on November 22, after the Chinese Vice Consul at Hải Phòng lodged a verbal protest with the Franco-Vietnamese delegation. Exploiting this protest as an excuse for further action, Colonel Lami said he had received orders from “high authorities” to take over protection of the Chinese quarter at Hải Phòng, basing this action on the February Franco-Chinese Treaty ending the Chinese occupation. Later that day, the commanding officer of the French forces in Hải Phòng, Colonel Dèbes, “a sort of firebrand who ‘hated the Vietnamese,’” requested permission from General Louis-Constant Morlière, Valluy’s successor as commander of French forces in the North, to use his artillery, but the General refused to grant permission.⁹¹

The French published a story in *l’Entente* the same day, which claimed that they had captured documents proving the Vietnamese guard posts had been on an alert since November 8 and the Tự Vệ had been ordered since November 16 to take combat positions in case of an incident involving the customs. The Vietnamese replied by publishing a captured French document planning for the seizure of Hải Phòng “on our own initiative.” That evening at 6:30, after circumventing General Morlière by going directly to General Valluy, Dèbes delivered an ultimatum to the Vietnamese Administrative Committee of the city. Setting a time limit of 9:00 the following morning

⁹⁰ Ibid. The delegation was composed of Colonel Lami, Director of Political and Administrative Affairs for Tonkin and Northern Annam, Colonel Herckel, Commandant d’Armes at Hà Nội, Commandant Fonde, head of the French-Vietnamese Liaison Office, for the French; and Undersecretary of State for Interior Hoàng Hữu Nam and several staff officers for the Vietnamese.

⁹¹ Ibid; Marsot: 345. Marsot quotes this characterization of Dèbes from George Chaffard, *Les carnets secret de la décolonization* (Paris, 1957), tome 1, 61.

(but later extended to 9:45), it read:⁹²

By order of the General, High Commissioner of the French Republic of Indo China, I demand:

1. That all Vietnamese military and semi-military forces evacuate:
 - a. The Chinese quarter
 - b. The quarters North-East of Avenue de Belgique (including that street)
 - c. The village of Lac-Vien (near the railroad station)

2. That all the villages be disarmed and that no arms or munitions dumps be established in those (villages) which are usually unarmed. I ask a pure and simple acceptance of these conditions before 9 a.m. November 23. In default of that, I reserve (the right) to take all measures by the situation.⁹³

French officials said nothing of the ultimatum to the Vietnamese Government in Hà Nội until 10:00 a.m. on the 23rd when Colonel Herckel told Hoàng Hữu Nam that Colonel Dèbes had delivered the ultimatum at Hải Phòng. Thirteen minutes later (Vietnamese version) or half hour later (French version) they began to attack at Hải Phòng. Using Spitfires, the French bombed and strafed a village of Kiến An about ten kilometers outside of Hải Phòng. They also used 155 millimeter cannon on the village. Using American Lend-Lease equipment, the French used guns of up to 105 millimeter howitzers in the city, itself with supporting fire from small warships in the harbor. The

⁹² Ibid; James L. O'Sullivan to the Secretary of State, 1 December 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center..

⁹³ Ibid. The Chinese Vice Consul's protest was enumerated as:

1. Installation by force of Viet-Nam guard posts in Chinese houses.
2. Arrest of two Chinese by the Vietnamese.
3. During the incident, the Vietnamese had forbidden the Chinese to fly their national flag.
4. During the course of a fusillade on the Consulate General of China November 20 and 21, a Chinese woman inside the Consulate was wounded.
5. Vietnamese disguised as Chinese climbed on the roofs of Chinese houses and fired on the French.

O'Sullivan commented on point 5: "It might be noted parenthetically that there are numerous Chinese deserters in Haiphong. Some of these are little better than pirates. Others are employed by the French and still others are employed by the Vietnamese."

bombing carefully avoided the Chinese quarter of the city, which French troops had occupied and begun searching for snipers' nests.⁹⁴

When O'Sullivan asked Colonel Lami about reports of fighting in Hải Phòng, he was told "flatly that the situation remained as it was the night before and that he had no news of fighting." O'Sullivan was clearly upset in relating this to the Secretary of State, adding: "It was such a blatant falsehood that I did not press the matter." Colonel Lami acknowledged the conflict at a press conference three hours later. Fighting continued until the 27th. Estimates of the total casualties related to this incident range from 2,000-6,000, as many as 3,000 Chinese lost their homes, and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Hải Phòng blamed both French and Vietnamese troops for looting stores and homes. In his summary analysis of the incident, O'Sullivan also stated: "That the French seriously could have wished for a favorable reply to their ultimatum is incredible." He felt it was impossible for the Committee in Hải Phòng, from the time the ultimatum was received until the deadline, to request and receive instructions from the government in Hà Nội.⁹⁵

In his analysis of the origins of these fights at Lạng Sơn and Hải Phòng, O'Sullivan presumed that the Vietnamese had fired first but believed their action was provoked by unilateral action on the part of the French to take "more and more control into their own hands." Even though Hồ and Sainteny would resume negotiations after these

⁹⁴ Ibid; 1 December 1946, Reel 2. RG 59; James L. O'Sullivan to Secretary of State, 24 November 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center. Shipway, 243-44. Valluy later criticized Morlière for not being more aggressive. Dèbes was promoted to replace Morlière in January 1947 and eventually received the *légion d'honneur*.

⁹⁵ Ibid; "2,000 Reported Slain in Haiphong," *New York Times* (8 December 1946): 48.

incidents, the Franco-Vietnamese War had effectively begun. These incidents, the one at Hải Phòng in particular, precipitated the Việt Minh withdrawal from Hà Nội shortly before the , just as had occurred in Sài Gòn more than a year earlier, in preparation for a guerilla campaign against the French. The Vietnamese Government arrested pro-French Vietnamese, ordered the evacuation of the city, massed their troops around it, and ordered the government's archives to be partially removed to Hà Đông. Meanwhile, the French had ordered Vietnamese troops to withdraw from Hải Phòng. D'Argenlieu continued to lobby for American support through the American Ambassador in Paris with the insistence that Hồ Chí Minh's government was "Communist and used Communist methods," and that they only represented a small portion of the population of Indochina.⁹⁶ The French also claimed to have "positive proof that Ho Chi Minh is in direct contact with Moscow and is receiving advice and instructions from the Soviet Union."⁹⁷

Abbot Low Moffat made a trip to Sài Gòn and Hà Nội, just missing the Lạng Sơn and Hải Phòng incidents. "I was impressed with the basic hatred for the French," he later said. But he "was also impressed by the number of really competent and dedicated French officials" he met in Sài Gòn. "Four or five really top-notch people very interested in the country, very fond of the Vietnamese." After arriving in Hà Nội, he attended a cocktail party thrown by the American Vice Consul O'Sullivan to which French and Vietnamese leaders, including Võ Nguyên Giáp, were invited.⁹⁸ His impression of Giáp,

⁹⁶ James L. O'Sullivan to the Secretary of State, Despatch No. 9, 23 November, 29 November 1946, 1 and 4 December 1946, Reel 2, RG 59; and Caffery to the Secretary of State, 4 December 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center; and Maurer, 54..

⁹⁷ Caffery to Secretary of State, 29 November 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

⁹⁸ Maurer, 45.

stated here, was similar to O'Sullivan's:

He was the first of what I called the typical Commie—the cartoon Commie that I met; in other words, he was absolutely immobile as to face. He had no—I just couldn't get any reaction out of him at all. So I just didn't take to him very much.⁹⁹

Yet Moffat had “found a great many people who knew him, French and others, who really knew him,” and “all liked him immensely.”¹⁰⁰

Between this informal meeting with Giáp and one he arranged with Hồ, Moffat sent a message to the State Department warning that should a settlement in the conflict fail “within a reasonable future,” the “French position will steadily deteriorate and possibility even French influence vanish leaving area to Chinese-Soviet competition,” in spite of the so-called “neutral policy.”¹⁰¹ Moffat was in a difficult position. He could see the situation had worsened (though he probably did not realize the extent), yet his hands were tied. “We weren't in a position to make any commitments to Ho. We were still dealing only with the French officially.” So when he and O'Sullivan met with Hồ and his Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hoàng Minh Giám, about December 14 or 15, there was little that could be said.¹⁰²

When I saw him he was sick in bed. He was an impressive person even then, lying there. It's hard to define how you find somebody impressive, but he was. There was something about him, an aura, if that's the right word. I though I was talking to somebody who really was a great person. I suppose we must have talked for fifteen, twenty minutes. I had to talk about the weather and how pleased I was to meet him. I couldn't go beyond banalities. I think he told me the usual, that he hoped America would recognize him, the usual line. And I'm sure it was painfully obvious I didn't have instructions. Because if I had anything to say, I had plenty of time to do it, and all I did was talk about the

⁹⁹ “Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War,” 202.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Moffat to Secretary of State, 12 December 1946, Reel 2 RG 59, Indochina Center.

¹⁰² Maurer, 45-46, 54.

weather.¹⁰³

Moffat did not receive the instructions from the State Department he had anticipated having before his meeting with Hồ. After he returned to Sài Gòn, he received a cable from acting Secretary of State Dean Acheson, which reaffirmed the position developed by under Grew and Dunn several months earlier:¹⁰⁴

Keep in mind Ho's clear record as agent international communism, absence evidence recantation Moscow affiliations, confused political situation France and support Ho receiving French Communist Party. Least desirable eventuality would be establishment Communist-dominated Moscow-oriented state Indochina in view DEPT, which most interested INFO strength non-communist elements Vietnam...

Avoid impression US Govt making formal intervention this juncture. Publicity any kind would be unfortunate.¹⁰⁵

In Paris, President Bidault and his ministers had resigned on November 28. In the voting for a new government, the Communist Thorez and Bidault were rejected in successive attempts to form a new government. On December 11, Socialist Léon Blum of the SFIO was chosen as both Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs.¹⁰⁶ Blum wrote an article in the *Le Populaire* in which he appeared to offer an opening for discussion with the Vietnamese, declaring, "Overall policy should be determined by parliament. Decisions should belong not to military authorities or settlers in Indochina, but to the government in Paris, not to an interministerial committee [Cominindo], but to a responsible cabinet and minister." Hồ Chí Minh sent a conciliatory letter to Blum around the 15th in which he proposed a cease fire and return to positions held on November 20,

¹⁰³ Ibid, 46.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Department of Defense, A-30-A-31.

¹⁰⁶ Graham, 237-40.

but it did not reach Blum until the December 26, apparently delayed by the French colonial administration. Already on the 21st Blum appeared to have closed the door shut when in echoing de Gaulle's often reiterated position, he told the National Assembly his goal was "to resume loyally the interrupted task, that is the organization of a free Vietnam within an Indochinese Union freely associated with the French Union. *But, before everything else, peace and order have to be re-established, as they are the necessary basis for implementation of any contract.*"¹⁰⁷

In Hà Nội on December 17, French troops crossed a Việt Minh barricade and fired on the headquarters of the Tự Vệ. When fire was returned, the French began attacking the surrounding civilian residences. The next day, French forces occupied the offices of the Vietnamese Government's Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Communications and Public Works. At the same time, General Morlière sent an ultimatum to the Hồ Chí Minh's Government demanding the Tự Vệ disarm.¹⁰⁸ Vietnamese Government evacuated from Hà Nội on December 19, and the Việt Minh staged an attack on the French in the city around 8:00 p.m. when mortar shelling cut the power lines, knocking out the lights. Commissioner Sainteny was seriously wounded in the fighting, which continued into the next day as low-flying Spitfires patrolled the city. Fighting spread to other areas of Bắc Bộ as the French garrisons at Hải Dương, Phủ Lạng Thương and Bắc Ninh were attacked. Fighting also broke out at Huế, and eighteen people were reported to have been injured by grenades thrown in Sài Gòn. The French

¹⁰⁷ Marsot: 347-48. (italics added)

¹⁰⁸ Trường-Chinh, *Primer for Revolt; the Communist Take-over in Viet-Nam* (New York, Praeger, 1963), 100; Giap, *Unforgettable Days*, 317-18.

had 89,000 troops in Indochina at this time, but military experts were estimating that an additional 200,000 would be necessary to “reconquer” the colony.¹⁰⁹

Following the news of the outbreak of hostilities in Việt Nam, Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson met with French Foreign Minister Georges Bonnet in Paris to inform him that the U.S. did not wish to mediate in the conflict in Indochina, effectively granting the French *carte blanche* to re-impose their colonial rule through force. Before his meeting, the heads of the European and Far Eastern Divisions sent a joint memo to Acheson acknowledging the general trend of events as reported by Reed and O’Sullivan since the March *modus vivendi*. Surprisingly, this joint memo made the best case for not supporting French aspirations in Indochina because it would weaken rather than strengthen the *métropole*:

Although the French in Indochina have made far-reaching paper-concessions to the Vietnamese for autonomy, French actions on the scene have been directed toward whittling down the powers and the territorial extent of the Vietnam “free state”. This process the Vietnamese have continued to resist. At the same time, the French themselves admit that they lack the military strength to reconquer the country. In brief, with inadequate forces, with public opinion sharply at odds, with a government rendered largely ineffective through internal division, the French have tried to accomplish in Indochina what a strong and united Britain has found it unwise to attempt in Burma. Given the present elements in the situation, guerilla warfare may continue indefinitely.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ “French Beat Back Attacks at Hanoi,” *New York Times* (21 December 1946): 1; “Fighting in Annam and Elsewhere,” and “Big Task for France Seen,” *New York Times* (21 December 1946): 7. Maurer, 54-55. James O’Sullivan later said the Vietnamese population had begun evacuating from the city about a week before the 19th, “Mostly at night, I guess they walked or rode bicycles. Day by day, there were fewer Vietnamese around. The streets got more and more empty. You could feel that something was going to blow.” General Morlière told him that his troops had gotten in two firefights before the war broke out, and that each time he had confined them to barracks afterwards—of course this characterization of events is disputed by the Việt Minh. Then, on the 19th, the Vietnamese authorities had suggested he let out his troops to reduce tensions in the city. He kept the troops confined to the barracks, but believed if he had let them out, they would have been returning from the nearby movie theaters and bars just about the time the Việt Minh launched their attack.

¹¹⁰ Vincent, FE to Acheson, 23 December 1946, and Byrnes to American Embassy, Paris, 24 December 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

While stating that he opposed intervention as had been proposed in the Chinese press (The Chinese Embassy in Paris had earlier approached the British Embassy proposing a joint Chinese-British-American intervention in Indochina), Acheson used a reference to the British approach in Burma to imply that a re-conquest of Việt Nam through military force would be unwise, and offered that the U.S. was “ready and willing to do anything which” the French Government “might consider helpful in the circumstances.” Bonnet attempted to reassure Acheson by referring to Prime Minister Blum’s speech to the Assembly earlier that day, in which he stated his desire to end the conflict through “conciliatory means,” and “reiterated that French policy was to assure the independence (within the French empire) of Viet Nam and complete self government.”¹¹¹

“Self government” had become a French catch phrase for puppet rule. By November, Bảo Đại was living in Hong Kong and, according to a report by O’Sullivan, had suggested the possibility of residing in French North Africa in a recent newspaper interview.¹¹² Ellen Hammer tells us that d’Argenlieu and his advisers sent emissaries to Vĩnh Thụy’s wife, Nam Phương, with the suggestion that she rule as regent on behalf of her husband’s son, Bảo Long. Nam Phương, a devout Catholic who reportedly only listened to the emissaries at the insistence of the Apostolic Delegate, rejected the offer.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² James L. O’Sullivan to Secretary of State, 13 November 1946, Reel 2, RG 59, Indochina Center.

¹¹³ Hammer, 149. Bảo Đại eventually returned to South Việt Nam in 1949 to become Premier and Emperor under the French. He was replaced as Prime Minister in 1954 by Ngô Đình Diệm and lost all political privileges as Emperor a year later.

CONCLUSION

There should be little surprise that the Franco-Vietnamese War began before January 1947. The Supplementary Accord had restricted the size of the French force in the North to 15,000 personnel and this number was to be reduced after 10 months. There is considerable doubt that the de Gaullists had really intended to grant the Vietnamese any significant degree of autonomy at the time of the March *modus vivendi* anyway. These agreements merely provided a vehicle to get troops back into the North. There is little evidence to suggest the de Gaullists had intended to honor the Preliminary Agreement and Supplementary Accord, despite the fact that the *métropole* had responded to criticism of the military provisions by criticizing d'Argenlieu and removing Leclerc. The French *métropole* showed no real desire to maintain the March Accords or to restrain the colonial administration, particularly d'Argenlieu. The failure of the Fontainebleau Conference attested to this collusion. The French attacks at Lạng Sơn and Hải Phòng should be seen as provocations timed to initiate full scale conflict before the French were required to reduce their troop strength in the North.

The Americans on the ground in Việt Nam never impacted policy formulation in Washington, D.C. in the way that French adventurers, military, administrators, and *colons* in the colony had always influenced policy in the *métropole*. Even internal policy challenges by a handful of area experts like Moffat, as moderate as they were, were considered extremely radical. It was clear throughout this period, however, that the U.S. had an opportunity to encourage and act as a mentor to the fledgling representative

government of the Vietnamese people. Hồ Chí Minh and the Việt Minh were beyond doubt communists, but they owed allegiance to no one and openly sought support for the one aspiration which subordinated political ideology, independence. Hồ and the other leaders were nationalists before they were communists, Leninism provided them with an ideology to build support outside of their homeland, but this support seems to have been restricted largely to study and propaganda training during this period.

The U.S. aided and abetted the re-imposition of French colonial rule in the South and attempts to do so in the North by agreeing to the Potsdam division of the country, ignoring the fact that the French relied upon American Lend-Lease equipment mostly funneled through the British, and refusing to apply any pressure on the French to negotiate with the Vietnamese. This was a clear renunciation of Roosevelt's agenda on Indochina, regardless of how muddled his policy appeared to some. In forcing the Vietnamese to choose sides in an increasingly bipolar world, the U.S. missed numerous opportunities in late 1945 through 1946 to avoid the quagmire that would lead to decades of destruction in Việt Nam, a war that also spilled over into Cambodia and Laos. It would leave America with its most enduring experience of division since the Civil War and its most embarrassing defeat since it gained its own freedom from the English *métropole*.

We are reaping today, in my opinion, and so are all Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians, the tragedy of our fixation on the theory of monolithic, aggressive communism that began to develop at this time and to affect our objective analyses of certain problems.

As [State] Department concerns about the Communist domination of the Vietnamese Government became more apparent and more uncritical we began, I felt, to allow our fears of such domination to overrule our better judgment; we let the nationalist feelings of the country recede in importance and we ignored the father figure that Ho Chi Minh was becoming for most Vietnamese. The French seemed not adverse to taking advantage of our increasing occupation with Communism.

Abbot Low Mowfat, May 1972¹

Conclusion

THE MISUNDERSTOOD STORY

Throughout this work, two separate stories have unfolded. The historical drama which took place in Việt Nam was often disconnected from the process through which the U.S. developed its policy toward that country. American popular perceptions of their country's relationship with Việt Nam during World War II have, in the past, failed to recognize this. Prior to March 1945, cooperation by the French colonial administrators in Indochina kept the Japanese from using their defeat of the other European colonial powers to promote the idea of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere in Việt Nam. This changed after they initiated a coup and openly promoted the ideal of nationalism in

Annam, Cambodia, and Laos, if less so in Cochinchina and Tonkin. The confinement of the French Indochina Army created a power vacuum after Japanese surrender of which the Việt Minh, who had patiently developed their organization in southern China and Thailand before doing so in the mountains of northern Tonkin, took particular advantage of. Việt Minh organizational success was not limited to this area, however, and they were the principal component of the Vietnamese group which took over the administration from the Japanese in the major Vietnamese cities of Sài Gòn and Huế, as well as Hà Nội in the North.

The British occupation force, supplemented by the British-trained and American Lend-Lease supplied Corps Léger d'Intervention, and the similarly supplied French Régiment d'Infanterie Coloniale troops, defeated the armed Vietnamese nationalists south of the 16th Parallel. Antagonistic to European colonialism which had led to their country being carved up into "spheres of influence" for commercial exploitation during since the middle of the nineteenth century, the Chinese occupiers in the North were less eager to support the return of French colonial rule in the territory on their southern border. Chiang Kai-shek had benefited from Allied, particularly American Lend-Lease, support throughout the war and was anxious for backing from the Allies in the immediate post-war period in fighting the Communist Chinese threat. As a result, the return of the French in Indochina was accepted in exchange for trade concessions in Tonkin and an agreement to end unfair policies imposed on the Chinese during the era of European hegemony which had receded during the war.

The U.S.' policy approach toward Việt Nam had been decided by mid-1945, and was reflected in the division of Indochina and quiet support of French colonialism. The U.S. backed the resumption of French colonialism in Indochina while attempting to maintain pretence of support for self determination in colonial societies. In Việt Nam, it did so through the division of the country, unobstructed Lend-Lease aid, and inaction as the French violated peace agreements governing their relations with the Vietnamese in both halves of the country and forcibly moved to re-impose their authority in the north through provocations and superior force of arms. These facts have been obscured by a misunderstanding of the capabilities of men in the field (and one woman, Katiou Do Huu Thinn, a.k.a. Madame Meynier or "Paula Brown") to affect this policy.

COMMUNISM, POLICY SHIFT, & THE MEN ON THE GROUND

Việt Nam had come into being in a way similar to U.S., through spreading colonizing groups. One was simply characterized by a westward movement across a continent in what was later given the justification Manifest Destiny near its culmination, while the other moved south in what the colonizers simply termed *nam tiến* (southward drive). The bountiful resources of America attracted its colonial settlers and later a burgeoning population of immigrants from an overpopulated, virtually resource exhausted Europe to make their western drive. The same condition which led Europeans to migrate to America encouraged them to conquer and exploit new colonial frontiers, as the French did in the territories they named "Indochina." The resource-rich U.S.

maintained a commercial advantage over the Western Europeans in open international trade, leading them to adopt the “Open Door” policy favoring open markets—a different conceptualization of “new frontier”—rather than closed colonial markets of classical European colonization.

When the American relationship with Việt Nam began during World War II, American “Open Door” neo-colonialism was rapidly outpacing the declining fortunes of classical European colonization. Those looking beyond the war saw in the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the two dominant powers in the world. Russian military prowess was the single most decisive factor in the defeat of the Germans, and there was real concern that they might pose a growing threat to the other dominant power due to their economic system which was antagonistic to capitalism and the “Open Door” policy. There was also a distinct cultural divide between the Russians and Western-Europe and America, which those maneuvering for power and security in a post-war order used to their advantage in the subtextual cultural debate. Capitalism continued to tie the Americans and Western Europeans together even if they practiced two distinct forms of colonialism, thus allowing for them to unite in the perception that the Soviet Union would be the post-war enemy.

Americans, even the “experts” had little understanding of Việt Nam and the Vietnamese even as late as early 1945. Sumner Welles and President Roosevelt led a minority of Washington decision makers, who were steadfast in their opposition to colonialism. French colonialism in Indochina was an easy target upon which Roosevelt could focus his anti-colonial rhetoric and most persistently aim his proposals for action.

The French had capitulated and collaborated with the Germans in Europe and the Japanese in Asia. De Gaulle's extreme chauvinism made him a symbol of resistance, but also threatened the alliance as he undermined unity in favor of promoting himself and his country without regard to common goals. In losing Welles, his trusted aide and foreign policymaker, to political scandal, Roosevelt also lost his most effective ally in opposition to those within his government who were less critical of colonialism and increasingly more concerned about Russian Communism, a trend the British and French imperialists vigorously fostered. The American fight against colonialism all but ended with Roosevelt. American support for Indonesian independence from Dutch colonialism was one of the remarkable exceptions, but the nationalist Sukarno effectively distanced himself from the Communists in a way that Hồ Chí Minh never could.

We simply cannot know if Roosevelt could have succeeded in ending French colonial rule over Indochina. All evidence suggests that he died with this intention, but he did little in the final months of his life to achieve this long mentioned goal. We can blame his physical health, his isolation on the issue within the foreign policy establishment, or both, for this failure. His death left Abbot Low Moffat, head of the Southeast Asia Division as the most vocal State Department official continuously opposed to colonialism in Southeast Asia in general, and Indochina in particular. Ironically, Moffat was a moderate on the issue, who early on accepted the return of the French, but was viewed within the predominately right-of-center Department as a radical for his persistent call for pressure on the French to liberalize their colonial practices aiming for eventual self-determination of Việt Nam.

Most of the men on the ground in Việt Nam and China, particularly OSS officers and military officials, but also journalists and foreign service officers who spent enough time in the country to develop a sense of the situation in the region and Việt Nam, were overwhelmingly supportive of Vietnamese nationalist aspirations. A perception has persisted in America that these men on the ground, who developed ties with the future leaders of Việt Nam, could have helped steer their country, and more importantly, the Vietnamese from the violence of the next three decades. Major Peter Dewey, Captain Archimedes Patti, Lieutenant Charles Fenn, General Philip Gallagher, General Albert Wedemeyer, and Ambassador Patrick Hurley all tried in various ways, but in the end there was little they could do to advance Vietnamese nationalism .

This work has been one on various relationships, competing individuals, groups and nations, some in alliance with others, most in competition with each other, to explore America's relationship with Việt Nam during this formative period. The story of the Vietnamese during this period has been subordinated to a narrative of these relationships, but in this approach, an attempt to crystallize one element of the Vietnamese story has been attempted. Hồ Chí Minh and the Việt Minh were above all, nationalists. The fact that they were Communists is both the crucial point and beside the point. Hồ symbolizes the organizational strength of the Việt Minh based on an ideology that interpreted French colonialism in their country as a symptom of capitalism. At the same time, Moffat's description of Hồ as a "father figure" was a carefully cultivated image, emblematic of Việt Minh organizational ability. Yes they were Communists, but their struggle began before communism, or more appropriately Leninism, became an ideology within which

they could frame their struggle. American opposition to them as communists was formed at a point when the Russian Communists were not providing any aid or support of significance and the Chinese Communists had yet to turn the tide against the Guomindang in their struggle for power in China. The lost chance, if there truly was one, was that of dispelling misperceptions, but these misperceptions continue to exist today. This study has been an attempt to better understand the realities of the situation.

¹ "Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War," 168-69.

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Glossary Acronyms

Acronyms used by diplomatic, intelligence and military services:

ABCD Powers	American, British, Chinese, Dutch
ABDA	American, British, Dutch and Australian
AGAS	Air Ground Aid Section
AGFRTS, 5329 th	Air Ground Force Resources Technical Staff- a combination of Chennault's 14 th Air Force and the O.S.S.
BAAG	British Army Aid Group
BMM	British Military Mission
BCRA	Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action, Central Bureau of Intelligence and Operations
CBI	China-Burma-India
CCC	Chinese Combat Command
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CEFEO	Corps Expéditionnaire Français en Extrême Orient, French Expeditionary Corps to the Far East
CFLN	Comité Français de Libération Nationale, French Committee of National Liberation
CLI	Corps Léger d'Intervention, Light Intervention Corps
CNF	Comité Nationale Français, French National Committee
Cominindo	Comité Interministériel de l'Indochine, Interministerial Committee on Indochina
Detachment 101	OSS unit at Nazir, India
Detachment 202	OSS unit at Chongqing, China
Detachment 303	OSS unit at New Delhi, India
Detachment 404	OSS unit at Kandy, Sri Lanka
DGER	Direction Générale des Études et Recherches, French clandestine Service of Information and Action
DIC	Division d'Infanterie Coloniale
DMI	Director of Military Intelligence
DRV	Democratic Republic of Việt Nam
EUR	State Department Division of European Affairs
FE	State Department Division of Far Eastern Affairs
FFI	Force Française d'Indochine, French resistance in Indochina
FIC	French Indochina
Force 136	British Special Operations Executive unit in SEAC
G-2	Army Military Intelligence
G-5	Civil affairs/military government section
GBT	Gordon-Bernard-Tan Group
GLO	General Liaison Office
GPRF	Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Française, Provisional Government of the Republic of France
HMG	heavy machine gun
IBT	India-Burma Theater
INDIV	Intelligence Division, OSS China Theater (formerly Secret Intelligence, SI)
JCS	American Joint Chiefs of Staff
LCA	light combat aircraft
LCI	British landing craft infantry

Glossary Acronyms

LMG	light machine gun
LST	landing ship tank
MAAG	Military Advisory and Assistance Group
MI-6	British Intelligence Service espionage
MIS-X	War Department intelligence unit
MMF	Mission Militaire Française, French Military Mission
MO	Morale Operations, OSS unit charged with "black" propaganda
MOI	Minister of Intelligence
MRP	Mouvement Républicain Populaire, Christian Democratic Party
ONI	Office of Naval Intelligence
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
OWI	British Office of War Information
PCF	Parti Communiste Français, PCF Communist Party
POA	Pacific Ocean Area
PW	Psychological Warfare
PWE	British Political Warfare Executive
RAF	British Royal Air Force
RIC	Régiment d'Infanterie Coloniale, Colonial Infantry Regiment
SA	Service d'Action, the action branch of French intelligence
SACO	Pronounced "Socko" Sino-American Cooperate Organization
SEA	State Department Division of Southeast Asian Affairs
SEAC	Southeast Asia Command
SFIO	Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière, Socialist Party
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force
SIS	British Secret Intelligence Service
SI	Secret Intelligence
SLFEO	Section de Liaison Française en Extrême Orient, French Far Eastern Liaison Section
SO	Special Operations
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SOS	Services of Supply
SP	State Department Division of Southwest Pacific Affairs
SR	Service de Renseignement
SREO	Service de Renseignement Extreme Orient, French Far Eastern Intelligence Service
SSU	Strategic Services Unit
SWNCC	State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee
SWPA	Southwest Pacific Area
USMAAG	United States Military Assistance Advisory Group
USNR	U.S. Naval Reserve
WE	State Department Division of Western European Affairs
X-2	OSS counterespionage unit

Glossary Chinese terms

Chinese terms (second romanized spelling is *Wade-Giles* unless noted):

An Nan (Annam) 安南	"Pacified South," colonial-era term for central Vietnam
Baise (Bose) 百色, (Poseh)	town in southern Guangxi province
Beihai 北海 (Pakhoi)	coastal town in Guangxi
Changchun 长春	town in Jilin province
Chiang Kai-shek, Generalissimo 蒋介石, <i>pinyin</i> : Jiang Jieshi	leader of Guomintang China and Taiwan
Chinese Communists Party 中国共产党	organization of the Communist Chinese
Cholon 堤岸	ethnic Chinese enclave now part of Saigon
Chongqing 重庆, Chunking <i>chunom</i> 字喃	city where WW II Guomintang government was located
Dai Li, General 戴笠, Tai Li	"language of the Southerners"
Dainam 大南	head of Guomintang intelligence agency
Danang 岷港	name of Vietnam under Nguyen Dynasty
Diyi Fangmian Jun 第一方面军	coastal Vietnamese city in central Vietnam
Disi Fangmian Jun 第四方面军	Chinese First Front Army
Dong Xing 东兴, Tonghsing or Tunghsing	Chinese Fourth Front Army
Du Yuming, General 杜聿明, Tu Yü-ming	border town in southern Guangxi opposite Mongcai
<i>fabi</i> 法币	Chinese general involved in the "Kunming Incident"
Guangdong 广东, Kwantung	Chinese currency brought into Vietnam during occupation
Guangzhou 广州, Canton	southern coastal province in China
Guangxi 广西, Kwangsi	historic trade city in Guangdong province near Hong Kong
<i>guanjin</i> 关金 kuan-chin (<i>haiguanjin danwei duihuanquan</i> 海关金单位兑换券)	southern Chinese province bordering on Vietnam
Guilin 桂林, Kweilin	gold-unit
<i>guobi</i> 国币	(customs golden unit exchange certificate)
Guomintang, GMD, 国民党, Kuomintang, KMT	city in northeastern part of Guangxi province
Hainan 海南	"national currency" brought into Vietnam during occupation
Hangzhou 杭州, Hankow	Nationalist Party of Chiang Kai-shek
Hekou 河口, Hokow	Chinese island in eastern Gulf of Tonkin
He Yingqin, General 何應欽, Ho Ying-chin	coastal town in Zhejiang province southwest of Shanghai
Hu Zhi Ming 胡志明, <i>Vietnamese</i> : Hồ Chí Minh	border town in Yunnan province opposite Lao Cai
Huangpu 黄埔, Whampoa	Chief of General Staff of the Chinese armed forces
Jiang Jieshi 蒋介石, Chiang Kai-shek	one of the numerous pseudonyms used by Nguyen Tat Thanh
Jiangxi 江西, Kiangsi	military academy established by Sun Yat-sen near Guangzhou
Jingxi 靖西, Tsingsi, Ting Hsi or Chi'ing-Hsi	leader of Guomintang Chinese
Junshi Canaryuan 军事参议院	inland province contiguous with Guangdong and Fujian
Junshi Weiyuanhui 军事委员会	border town in southern Guangxi south of Baise
	Military Advisory Council
	National Military Council

Glossary Chinese terms

- Junshiweiyuanhui Tiaocha Tongji Ju
军事委员会调查统计局 (Jun Tong)
- Bureau of Investigation and Statistics BIS under the National Military Council headed by Dai Li
- Kunming 昆明
city in Yunnan province
- Leizhou Bandao 雷州半島, Leichou Pantao
the peninsula extending in southern China to Hainan island
- Li Jiang 漓江, Li River
river in Guangxi connecting Nanning with Longzhou
- Liang Qichao 梁启超, Ch'i-ch'ao
Qing Dynasty government official and reformer
- Liaodong 辽东, Liaotung Peninsula
strategic peninsula in Liaoning (northern China)
- Lin Biao 林彪 Lin Piao
commander-in-chief of Red Army in Manchuria
- Ling Jihan 凌寄寒, Ling Qihan
Foreign Ministry representative on Vietnam Advisory Group
- Liu Yongfu 刘永福
former general of Taiping Rebellion; head of Black Flags
- Liuzhou 柳州, Liuchow
town in Guangxi province between Guilin and Nanning
- Long Yun 龙云, Lung Yün
warlord leader of Yunnan province
- Longzhou, 龙舟, Lung-chou
border town in Guangxi near Lang Son
- Lugouqiao 芦沟桥
also known as Marco Polo Bridge
- Lu Han, General 卢汉
commander of Chinese occupation forces in northern Vietnam
- Ma Ying, General 馬瑛
Lu Han's Chief of Staff
- Mao Zedong 毛澤东, Mao Tse-tung
Communist Chinese leader
- Mengzi 蒙自, Mencius
customs control town along railway in southern Yunnan
- Nanjing 南京, Nanking
(southern capital) onetime capital of China; site of massacre
- Nanning 南宁
town in southern Guangxi
- guo yu 国语
national language
- Qianlong Emperor 乾隆
reigned 1735-1796
- Qingdao 青岛, Tsingtao
coastal town on Shandong peninsula
- Saigon 西貢 Sài Gòn
important southern city in Vietnam
- san jiao 三教
three schools of thought or religions: Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism
- san min zhuyi 三民主義, san min chu-i
"Three Principles of the People"
- Shandong 山东, Shantung Peninsula
peninsula extending out into Yellow Sea towards Korea
- Shanghai 上海
trade city at mouth of Changjiang (Long River)
- Shao Baichang 邵百昌, Shao Pai-ch'ang
Military Admin. representative on Vietnam Advisory Group
- Shenyang 沈阳
city in Liaoning province formerly known as Mukden
- Sichuan 四川, Szechuan
western Chinese province
- Simao 思茅, Szemao
proposed base for intelligence under Project Quail
- T.V. Soong 宋子文, pinyin: Song Ziwen;
Wade-Giles: Soong Tzu-wen
GMD Minister of Finance; Chiang Kai-shek's brother-in-law
- Song Qingling 宋庆龄,
Soong Ch'ingling
Chiang Kai-shek's wife; T.V. Soong's sister
- Sun Ke 孫科, Sun K'o
Sun Yat-sen's son; President of Executive Yuan
- Sun Yat-sen 孫逸仙, pinyin: Sun Yixian
- Tonkin 東京
nationalist leader of China
- Việt Nam 越南
country bordering China, Laos and Cambodia
- Waishi Si 外事司
Foreign Affairs Section
- Xiao Wen, General 萧文, Hsiao Wen
Vietnamese: Siêu Văn
chief of Zhang Fakui's Foreign Affairs Section

Glossary Chinese | French terms

Xing Senzhou, Hsing Shen-chou	Guomindang representative on the Advisory Group
Xing Zheng Yuan 行政院	Executive Yuan
Ye Jianying 叶检英, Yeh Chien-ying	commander of the Communist Eight Route Army
Yanan 延安, Yan'an (sometimes Yenan)	Communist Chinese Party base following Long March
You Jiang 右江	You River
Yuan Zijian 袁子健, Yuen Tse Kien	Chinese political adviser in Hanoi
Yuenan Guwen Tuan 越南顾问团部	Vietnam Advisory Group
Yun Jixun, General 尹继勋	Lu Han's Deputy Chief of Staff
Yunnan 云南	Chinese province bordering on Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam
Zhabei 闸北, Chapei	district of Shanghai bombed by the Japanese in 1932
Zhang Fakui, General 张发奎, Chang Fa-k'uei	Commanding General of the Fourth War Area
Zhou Enlai 周恩来, Chao En-lai	Chinese Communist leader connected to Ho Chi Minh
Zhou Fucheng, General, Chou Fu Sheng or Ch'eng	Commander of the 53 rd Army in Vietnam
French terms:	
Annam	Central Vietnam
Annamite	Annamese English variant, term applied to the Vietnamese people by the French through the colonial period
Banque de l'Indo-Chine	Bank of Indochina
Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action	BCRA, Central Bureau of Intelligence and Operations
Caps St. Jacques	Vung Tau
Citadelle	Citadel
Cochinchine	Cochinchina, or southern Vietnam
<i>colon</i>	French resident in Indochina
Comité Français de Libération Nationale	CFLN, French Committee of National Liberation
Comité Interministériel de l'Indochine	Cominindo, Interministerial Committee on Indochina
Comité Nationale Français	CNF, French National Committee
Commissaire	rough equivalent to the Gouverneur/ Resident Superieur, but there were only two after WWII, one representing each division of Vietnam
<i>comptoirs</i>	agencies
Convention Préliminaire	Preliminary Convention/March 6, 1946 Accord
Corps Expéditionnaire Français en Extrême Orient	CEFEO, French Expeditionary Corps to the Far East
Corps Léger d'Intervention	CLI, Light Intervention Corps
Conseiller Suprême	Supreme Counselor
Délégué Général de la Résistance	General Delegate of the Resistance
Délégué Militaire de la Résistance	Military Delegate of the Resistance
Délégué Politique de la Résistance	Political Delegate of the Resistance
Deuxième Bureau	French Intelligence in Indo-China during WWII
Directeur Générale des Études et Recherches	DGER, French clandestine service of intelligence and operations (literally "study and research") replaced the Deuxième Bureau after the war
Division d'Infanterie Coloniale	DIC, Colonial Infantry Division
École Coloniale	Colonial School

Glossary French terms

École Française d'Extrême-Orient	French School of the Far East
Force Française d'Indochine	French Indochina Force (French resistance in Indochina)
<i>garde indigène</i>	Vietnamese Security Garrison under French colonial rule
Gouverneur Général	Governor General, chief French colonial official in Indochina
Gouverneur	Chief French colonial official in the colony of Cochinchina
Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Française	GPRF, Provisional Government of the Republic of France
Haut Commissaire	High Commissioner, equivalent of the Gouverneur general after WWII
Hôtel Continental	Continental Hotel
Hôtel Métropole	Metropole Hotel
Indo-Chine Française	French Indochina
La Ligue de l'Indépendance de l'Indochine	The Indochinese Independence League
Longchéou (Longzhou 龙舟)	border town in Guangxi near Lang Son
<i>métis</i> (m), <i>métisse</i> (f)	mixed-blood, French-Vietnamese
<i>métropole</i>	the capital of a colonial power
Mission Militaire Française	MMF, French Military Mission
Moïs	Mois, French term for the minority Highland peoples (derogatory)
Moïs Plateau (Tay Nguyen)	"Central Highlands"
<i>montagnard</i>	highlander
Mouvement Républicain Populaire	MRP, Christian Democratic Party
<i>nouveau riche</i>	new rich
Parti Communiste Français	PCF, Communist Party
Parti Démocrate Cochinchinois	Cochinchinese Democratic Party
Parti Démocrate Indochinois	Indochinese Democratic Party
<i>petits blancs</i>	poor whites
<i>piastres</i>	French currency in Indochina
Poulo Condore (Côn Sơn)	colonial-era island prison off coast of southern Vietnam
Rassemblement Populaire Cochinchinois	Cochinchinese Popular Gathering
Résident Supérieur	Resident Superior, chief French colonial official in the protectorates of Annam and Tonkin
Régiment d'Infanterie Coloniale	RIC, Regiment of Colonial Infantry
Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière	SFIO, French Section of the Workers International
Section de Liaison Française en Extrême Orient	SLFEO, French Far Eastern Liaison Section
Service d'Action	SA, the action branch of French intelligence
Service de Renseignement	SR, Intelligence Service
Société des Missions Etrangères	Foreign Mission Society
<i>sous</i>	1/100 th of a <i>piastre</i> (French currency in Indochina)
<i>sûreté</i>	French colonial intelligence service
<i>tirailleurs</i>	native soldiers
Tonkin	Northern Vietnam
Tourane (Đà Nẵng)	coastal town in central Vietnam
Union Française	French Union

Glossary Japanese terms

Japanese terms:

- Arita Hachirō 有田八郎
bakufu 幕府
bunmei kaika 文明開化
bushidō 武士道
 Chōshū 徴収
 Chubu 中部
 Dai Sanjūhachi Gun 第三十八軍
 Dai Tōa Kyōeiken 大東亜共栄圏
 Daihonei 大本營
 Dainan Kōshi 大南公司
 (Đại Nam Công Ty)
 Fukuzawa Yukichi 福澤 諭吉
 Futsuin 仏印
 Gozen Kaigi 御前会議
 Hirota Kōki 広田弘毅
 Hokkaidō 北海道
 Hokubu 北部
 Imperial Headquarters 大本營
 Inukai Tsuyoshi 犬養毅
 Indoshina インドシナ
 Indoshina Chūtongun インドシナ駐屯軍
 Katsura Tarō 桂太郎
 Kawakami Sōroku 川上操六
 Keiō Gijuku 慶應義塾
kempeitai 憲兵隊
 Kita Ikki 北一輝
 Konoe Fumimaro 近衛文麿
 Kōtō, 広東, *Chinese*: Kwangtung
 Manshūkoku, 満洲国, *Chinese*: Manchukuo
 Matsui Iwane, General 松井石根
 Matsumoto Shunichi, Ambassador
 松本俊一
 Matsuoka Yōsuke 松岡洋右
 Matsushita Mitsuhiro 松下光広
 Meigō Sakusen 明号作戦
 Meiji Restoration 明治維新
 Mikuni Naotomi, Lt. General 三国直富
minzoku kaihō 民族解放
 Nagano, General 長野
 Nakamura Aketo, General 中村明戸
 Nambu 南部
 Nihon Bunka Kaikan 日本文化会館
 Nihon Kaizō Hōan Taikō
 日本改造法案大綱
- Foreign Minister at time of Anti-Comintern Pact
 military government
 civilization and enlightenment movement
 Japanese warrior code
 samurai of this domain participated in the Meiji Restoration
 middle region (Annam)
 38th Army
 Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere
 Japanese Imperial Headquarters
- business owned by Matsushita Matsuhiro
 founder of Keiō Gijuku during period of Western influence
 French Indochina
 Imperial Headquarters-Government Liaison Conference
 Premier of Japan during the 1930s
 Japanese island north of Honshu
 northern region (Tonkin)
 responsible for military in occupied areas
 leader of Japanese party who met with Phan Boi Chau
 Indochina
 Indochina Stationary Forces
 participated in the development of Japan's military; Premier
 participated in the development of Japan's military
 (free private school)
 Japanese military police
 Japanese writer who influenced Japanese militarists
 Prime Minister during 1930s
 Kwangtung Army
 Manchuria
 delivered speech challenging French sovereignty in Indochina
- Japanese Ambassador to Indochina at time of coup d'état
 Foreign Minister when occupation of Indochina negotiated
 Japanese businessman; supporter of Vietnamese nationalism
Operation Bright Moon
 era of Westernization/modernization in Japan
 Commander of the 21st Division in Tonkin
 liberation of people
 Commander of 37th Division
 led first Japanese engagements in Indochina at Tonkin
 southern region (Cochinchina)
 Japanese Cultural Center
- A Plan for the Reorganization of Japan*

Glossary Japanese | Vietnamese terms

Nishihara Issaku, Major-General

西原一作

Okuma Shigenobu 大隈重信

Ōshima Hiroshi, Ambassador 王島博

Rikken Kaishintō 立憲改進党

Saikō Sensō Shidōsha Kaigi

最高戦争指導者会議

sakoku 鎖国

Satō Naotake, Ambassador 佐藤尚武

Satsuma 薩摩

Shigemitsu Mamoru, Foreign Minister

重光葵

Tazoe Masanobu 田添正信

Terauchi Hisaichi, Field Marshal Count

寺内寿一

Terauchi Masatake 寺内正毅

Tōgō Heihachirō 東郷平八郎

Tōjō Hideki, General 東条英機

Tsuchihashi Yūichi, Major General

土橋有一

Tsukamoto Takeshi, 塚本武

Yamagata Aritomo 山県有朋

Yokoyama Masayuki 横山正行

Yoshizawa Kenkichi, Ambassador

芳沢 謙吉

zaibatsu 財閥

Vietnamese terms:

ba mươi sáu phố phường

An Nam 安南

An Nam Cộng Sản Đảng

áo dài

Bắc Bộ

Bắc Cạn

Bắc Kỳ

Bạc Liêu

Bắc Sơn

Bắc-Quang

Bắc Ninh

Ban Mê Thuột

báo an binh

Bảo Đại

Bảo Long

Biên Hòa

Buôn Ma Thuột

Cần Thơ

responsible for military negotiations with French in Indochina

leader of Japanese party who met with Pan Boi Chau

Japanese military attaché who negotiated with Germans

Constitutional Reform Party

Supreme War Command Council

national isolation

Ambassador to Russia

samurai of this domain participated in the Meiji Restoration

pro-nationalist Foreign Minister of Japan from 1943-1945

Commander of 62nd Regiment

Commander of the Southern Expeditionary Group

one time Prime Minister of Japan

Japanese fleet commander of decisive battle with the Russians

wartime Prime Minister of Japan

commanded Japanese military in Indochina during 1945

Secretary General and General Manager of Japanese
diplomatic mission in French Indochina

member of Meiji oligarchy; architect of Japan's modern army
supreme counselor to Emperor Bao Dai after Japanese coup

Japanese Ambassador to Indochina prior to 1945

large family-holding companies

36 ("ancient") streets of Hanoi

"Pacified South," colonial-era term for central Vietnam

Annam Communist Party

traditional Vietnamese woman's garment

Tonkin, literally "northern part"

province in northern Vietnam

Tonkin, literally "northern part"

southernmost province of Vietnam

district in Langson province near border with Thai Nguyen

Bắc Giang and Quảng Yên provinces

province in northern Vietnam

town in central Vietnam, northwest of Nha Trang

civil guard

Vietnamese emperor under French and Japanese

Bảo Đại's son

province in southern Vietnam

southern dialect

province in southern Vietnam

Glossary Vietnamese terms

Cần Vương	nineteenth century “loyalty to the king” resistance movement
Cao Bằng	province in northern Vietnam
Cao Đài	millenarian movement in southern Vietnam
<i>chiến khu</i>	revolutionary base
Chợ Chu	location of Japanese occupied fort in Thai Nguyen
Chợ Đồng Xuân	Dong Xuan market
Chợ Lớn 堤岸	ethnic Chinese enclave now part of Saigon
Chợ Quán	hospital French sent Hoa Hao leader for confinement
<i>chữ nôm</i> 字喃	“language of the Southerners”
Chu Văn Tấn	Nung national, Vietminh leader of the Bac Son-Vu Nhai base
<i>Cờ Giải Phóng</i>	<i>Liberation Banner</i>
Côn Lôn	Poulo Condore; location of an island prison
Côn Sơn (Poulo Condore)	colonial-era island prison off coast of southern Vietnam
Cung Bắc Bộ	The renamed palace of the Residence Superieure in Hanoi under the Vietnamese Provisional Government
Cường Để	descendant of Gia Long
<i>Cứu Quốc</i>	<i>National Salvation</i>
Cứu Quốc Quân	National Salvation Association
Đà Lạt	hill station in central Vietnam
Đà Nẵng (Tourane)	coastal town in central Vietnam
Đại Lộ Lê Duẩn	Le Duan Boulevard (formerly Norodom Square)
Đại Nam 大南	name of Viet Nam during the Nguyen Dynasty beginning with the reign of Minh Menh 1820-1840
Đại Nam Công Ty	(Dainan Kōshi 大南公司) Great South Company
Đại Việt 大越	name of Viet Nam during the Le Dynasty 1428-1788
Đại Việt Dân Chính Đảng	Dai Viet Democratic Party
Đại Việt Quốc Dân Đảng	Dai Viet Nationalist Party
Đảng Dân Chủ	Democratic Party
<i>Đảng Ta (D.T.)</i>	<i>Our Party</i>
Đặng Thái Mai	Dan Thai Mai
Đề Thám	turn of the century bandit-nationalist of northern Vietnam
Điện Biên Phủ	village in northern Vietnam near Laotian border
Định Tường	province in southern Vietnam
Đoàn Vệ Quốc	National Guard
Đồng Đăng	French fort in Langson province near border with China
Đồng Du	Exodus to the East movement led by Phan Boi Chau
Đông Dương Cộng Sản Đảng	Indochina Communist Party (ICP)
Đông Kinh	Tonkin
Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục	Tonkin Free School
Duy Tân (Vinh San)	Vietnamese Emperor exiled to Reunion
Gia Định	province in southern Vietnam
Gia Lâm	site of POW camp in northern Vietnam
<i>Giải Phóng</i>	<i>Liberate</i>
Hà Giang	province in northern Vietnam
Hạ Long Bay	body of water touching Haiphong
Hà Nội	principal commercial and political city in northern Vietnam
Hà Tĩnh	province in central Vietnam
Hải Bà Trưng	Trung sisters
Hải Dương	name of capital city and province in northern Vietnam

Glossary Vietnamese terms

Hải Phòng	principal port in northern Vietnam
Hàng Ngang	one of Hà Nội's "36 ancient streets"
Hồ Chí Minh	Ho Chi Minh (He who is "enlightened" or has "wisdom")
Hồ Ngọc Lâm	Vietnamese nationalist who established first Dong Minh Hoi
Hoa	Chinese
Hòa Hào	Buddhist reform movement and nationalist group
Hoàn Kiếm Lake	landmark in Hanoi
Hoàng Đình Ròng	Tay highland minority member of ICP
Hoàng Minh Giám	Provisional DRV Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs
Hoàng Quốc Việt (Hoang "Viet Nation")	member of the Standing Bureau of the ICP
Hoàng Trọng Phú	member of Vietnamese royalty related to the Meyniers
Hoàng Văn Hoan	helped Ho Chi Minh establish Cao-Bac-Lang base at Pac Bo
Hoàng Văn Thụ	Tay highland minority member of ICP
Hội Việt-Mỹ Thân Hữu	Vietnamese-American Friendship Association
Hội Việt Nam Cách Mệnh Thanh Niên	Vietnam Revolutionary Youth League
Hòn Gai	area noted for coal production in Quang Yen province
Huế	imperial city located in central Vietnam
Huỳnh Phú Sổ	Hoa Hao leader, sometimes called the "Mad Bonze"
Khâm Sai	the imperial delegate for Tonkin
Kiến An	village near Hai Phong; scene of French attack in Nov., 1946
Kim Lũng	Vietminh village base in northern Vietnam
Kinh	dominant ethnic group in lowland Vietnam
Kon Tum	site of prison camp with high death rate in central Vietnam
(Three) Kỳ	The three "parts" of Vietnam under French colonialism: Bac Ky Tonkin, Trung Ky Annam and Nam Ky Cochinchina
Lâm Đức Thụ	<i>surete</i> spy suspected of turning Phan Boi Chau in to French
Lạng Sơn	French border garrison in northern Vietnam
Lao Bảo	Lao Bo Penitentiary
Lào Cai	name of border town and province in northern Vietnam
Lê Tung Sơn	member of the Vietminh
Lê Văn Duyệt	Viceroy of southern Dai Nam under Minh Menh
Lê Văn Hoach	onetime President of Cochinchina Consultative Council
Lê Xuân	Vietminh founder of Vietnamese-American Friendship Assoc.
<i>Liên Hiệp</i>	<i>Coalition</i>
Lương Văn Chi	on of the leaders of a Vietminh base at Bac Son-Vu Nhai
Mạc	regional power holders during the Le Dynasty
Mán (Yeo)	highland nationality
Mán Tiên	highland nationality
Mán Tráng	highland nationality
Mặt Trận Quốc Gia Thống Nhất	United National Front
Móng Cái (Moncay)	coastal, border town in northern Vietnam
Mỹ Tho	province in southern Vietnam
Nam Bộ	Cochinchina, southern Vietnam, literally "southern part"
Nam Định	province in northern Vietnam
Nam Kỳ	Cochinchina, southern Vietnam, literally "southern part"
<i>nam tiến</i>	southward drive
Nghệ An	province in central Vietnam
Nghiêm Kế Tổ	member of original VNQDD, joined Dong Minh Hoi
Ngô Đình Diệm	Catholic nationalist, pro-Japanese supporter of Cuong De

Glossary Vietnamese terms

Nguyễn Ái Quốc	Nguyen “the patriot”; one of the most prolific pseudonyms used by Nguyen Tat Thanh
Nguyễn Bình	town in northern Vietnam south of Pac Bo
Nguyễn Văn Cừ	Secretary General of ICP arrested in 1940
Nguyễn Hải Thần	follower of Phan Boi Chau who later led Dong Minh Hoi
Nguyễn Phúc Ánh	Nguyen Phuc Anh
Nguyễn Sinh Cung	birth name of Ho Chi Minh
Nguyễn Tất Thành	Ho Chi Minh’s name at adolescence
Nguyễn Thế Truyện	participant in drafting of “Demands of the Annamite People”
Nguyễn Thị Minh Khai	Vo Nguyen Giap’s sister-in-law; ICP Central Committee
Nguyễn Thị Quang Thái	Vo Nguyen Giap’s wife, suicide/killed under French detention
Nguyễn Thường Huyền	Phan Boi Chau’s secretary, may have turned him in to French
Nguyễn Tường Tam	member of VNQDD; briefly Foreign Minister of Prov. DRV
Nguyễn Văn Sâm	nationalist sent by Japanese to Singapore for protection
Nguyễn Văn Tâm	Huynh Phu So’s psychiatrist, converted to Hoa Hao
Nguyễn Văn Thinh	President of Cochinchina Consult. Council; committed suicide
Nguyễn Vĩnh Thụy	Bao Dai’s common name
Nhà Hát Lớn	Opera House (formerly the Municipal Theatre)
Nha Trang	coastal town in central Vietnam
Nùng	highland nationality living in Cao Bang and Guangxi
Pác Bó	Vietminh base under Ho Chi Minh during early 1940s
Phạm Công Tắc	leader of Cao Dai, exiled to Comoros Islands
Phạm Ngọc Thạch	leader of Vanguard Youth; Southern Prov. Admin. Comm.
Phạm Văn Bạch	member of Southern Provisional Administrative Committee
Phạm Văn Đồng	Vietminh leader, close associate of Ho Chi Minh
Phạm Việt Tử (Pham “son of Vietnam”)	member of Vietminh in Kunming
Phan Anh	Minister of Youth under Tran Trong Kim Government
Phan Bội Châu	Vietnamese resistance/nationalist leader
Phan Chu Trinh	leader of reform movement in the early twentieth century
<i>phân đội</i>	a section in the Vietnamese Army
Phan Hồng Thái	attempted assassination of Governor General Henri Merlin
Phan Thiết	town in central Vietnam (Binh Thuan province)
Phan Văn Trương	Vietnamese nationalist, associate of Nguyen Ai Quoc in Paris
Phong Trào Bình Dân Nam Kỳ	Popular Movement of Nam Ky
Phủ Bình	town and district in Thai Nguyen province
Phủ Thọ	province in northern Vietnam
Phúc Thọ	district in Ha Tay province, northern Vietnam
Phúc Yên	town and province (now Vinh Phuc province) in no. Vietnam
Phùng Chí Kiên	one of the leaders of a Viet Minh base at Bac Son-Vu Nhai
Quân Đội Giải Phóng Nhân Dân	People’s Liberation Army (PLA)
Quân Ủy Trung Ương	Central Military Affairs Committee
Quảng Trường Ba Đình	Ba Dinh Square (formerly Rue Puginier)
Quốc Dân Đại Hội	Constituent Assembly
<i>quốc ngữ</i> 國語	national language
Quỹ Độc Lập	Independence Fund
Sài Gòn (Hồ Chí Minh City)	principal commercial and political city in southern Vietnam
Sóc Trăng	province in southern Vietnam
Sông Hồng	Red River
Sơn La	province in northwestern Vietnam
<i>Sự Thật</i>	<i>Truth</i>

Glossary Vietnamese terms

Tà Lài	colonial-era penal camp
<i>tam giáo</i> 三教	three schools of thought or religions
Tam Đảo	resort village in Thai Nguyen attacked by Vietminh
Tâm Tâm Xã	Society of Like Hearts
Tân An	province in southern Vietnam
Tân Trào	“New Tide”; name Vietminh rechristened base at Kim Lũng
Tay	highland nationality
Tay Nguyen (Mois Plateau)	“Central Highlands”
Tây Ninh	town in southern Vietnam
Tết	Festival celebrating the beginning of the Lunar New Year
Thái Nguyên	name of town and province in northern Vietnam
Thanh Hoá	town in central Vietnam
<i>Thanh Niên</i>	<i>Youth</i>
Thanh Niên Cộng Sản Đảng	Communist Youth
Thanh Niên Tiền Phong	Vanguard Youth
<i>Thiệt Thực</i>	<i>Realism</i>
Thố	term, sometimes derogatory, for highland nationality(ies)
Thống Nhất Palace	formerly Norodom Palace
Tiền Tuyến Thanh Niên	Front Line Youth
Tiên Yên	district in Quảng Ninh province, northern Vietnam
Tổng Bộ	Vietminh General Headquarters or Direction Committee
Tổng Hội Cứu Tế	General Relief Association
Tổng Minh Phương	member of the Vietminh at Kunming
<i>trại</i>	Rubber plantation housing for coolies
Trần Huy Liệu	journalist, member of the Vietminh, Minister of Propaganda
Trần Phú	Vietminh Secretary General who was captured in 1931
Trần Trọng Kim	Premier of Vietnamese government from March-August 1945
Trần Văn Ân	Vietnamese nationalist whom Japanese sent to Formosa
Trần Văn Giàu (Dran van Giàu)	Viet Minh who seized control of Saigon in August Revolution
Trung Bộ	Annam, literally “central part”
Trung Kỳ	Annam, literally “central part”
Trương Bội Công	former VNQDD who joined the Guomindang army
Trường Chinh	Secretary General of the ICP during the early 1940s
<i>tự vệ</i>	self-defense corps
<i>tự vệ chiến đấu</i>	fighting self-defense corps
Tuần Lễ Vàng	“Gold Week”
<i>Tương Lai</i>	<i>Future</i>
Tuyên Quang	province in northern Vietnam
Ủy Ban Dân Chúng Giải Phóng Việt Nam	Peoples’ Committee to Liberate Vietnam
Ủy Ban Hành Chánh Lâm Thời Nam Bộ	Southern Provisional Administrative Committee
Ủy Ban Nhân Dân Cách Mệnh	Revolutionary People’s Committees
Vệ Quốc Đoàn	National Guard
<i>Việt-Mỹ Tap Chí</i>	<i>Vietnamese-American Friendship Association Review</i>
Việt Bắc	the region of Vietnam bordering China
Việt kiều	generic term for Vietnamese living abroad
<i>Việt Lập</i>	abbrev. <i>Vietnam Doc Lap</i> , or <i>Independent Vietnam</i>
Việt Nam 越南	Vietnam
Việt Nam Cách Mệnh Đồng Minh Hội	Vietnam Revolutionary League
Việt Nam Cách Mệnh Thanh Niên	Vietnam Revolutionary Youth
Việt Nam Công Hiến Hội	Vietnam Constitutional Association

Glossary Vietnamese terms

Việt Nam Cộng Sản Đảng	Vietnam Communist Party
Việt Nam Dân Chủ Cộng Hòa	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
Việt Nam Dân Chủ Đảng	Vietnam Democratic Party
Việt Nam Độc Lập Đồng Minh (Hội)	Vietminh or Vietnam Independence Alliance
<i>Việt Nam Mới</i>	<i>New Vietnam</i>
Việt Nam Phục Quốc Đảng	Vietnam National Restoration Party
Việt Nam Phục Quốc Đồng Minh Hội	League for the National Restoration of Vietnam
Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng	VNQDD, Vietnam Nationalist Party
Việt Trì	town on Red River northwest of Hanoi, Phu Tho province
Vinh	town in Nghe An province, central Vietnam
Vĩnh Long	province in southern Vietnam
Vĩnh Sơn (Duy Tân)	Vietnamese Emperor exiled to Reunion
Vĩnh Yên	province in northern Vietnam
Võ Nguyên Giáp	Vietminh leader, close associate of Ho Chi Minh
Vũ Anh	member of the Vietminh; associate of Ho Chi Minh
Vũ Hồng Khanh	member of original VNQDD; leader of reconstituted VNQDD
Vũ Nhai	district in Thai Nguyen near border with Langson
Vũng Tàu	Caps St. Jacques; port in southern Vietnam
<i>vùng tự do</i>	liberated zone
Vương Minh Phương	member of the Vietminh at Kunming
Yên Bái	name of town, French garrison, and province in no. Vietnam
Yên Bình	district in Yen Bai province, northern Vietnam

Appendix A Letter from Ho Chi Minh to the President of the U.S.

VIỆT-NAM DÂN CHỦ CỘNG HÒA

CHÍNH PHỦ LÂM THỜI

BỘ NGOẠI GIAO

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HANOI FEBRUARY 28 1946

TELEGRAM

MAR 11 1946

PRESIDENT HOCHIMINH VIETNAM DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC HANOI
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA WASHINGTON D.C.

ON BEHALF OF VIETNAM GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE I BEG TO INFORM YOU THAT IN COURSE OF CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN VIETNAM GOVERNMENT AND FRENCH REPRESENTATIVES THE LATTER REQUIRE THE SECESSION OF COCHINCHINA AND THE RETURN OF FRENCH TROOPS IN HANOI STOP MEANWHILE FRENCH POPULATION AND TROOPS ARE MAKING ACTIVE PREPARATIONS FOR A COUP DE MAIN IN HANOI AND FOR MILITARY AGGRESSION STOP I THEREFORE MOST EARNESTLY APPEAL TO YOU PERSONALLY AND TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TO INTERFERE URGENTLY IN SUPPORT OF OUR INDEPENDENCE AND HELP MAKING THE NEGOTIATIONS MORE IN KEEPING WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF THE ATLANTIC AND SAN FRANCISCO CHARTERS

RESPECTFULLY

HOCHIMINH

