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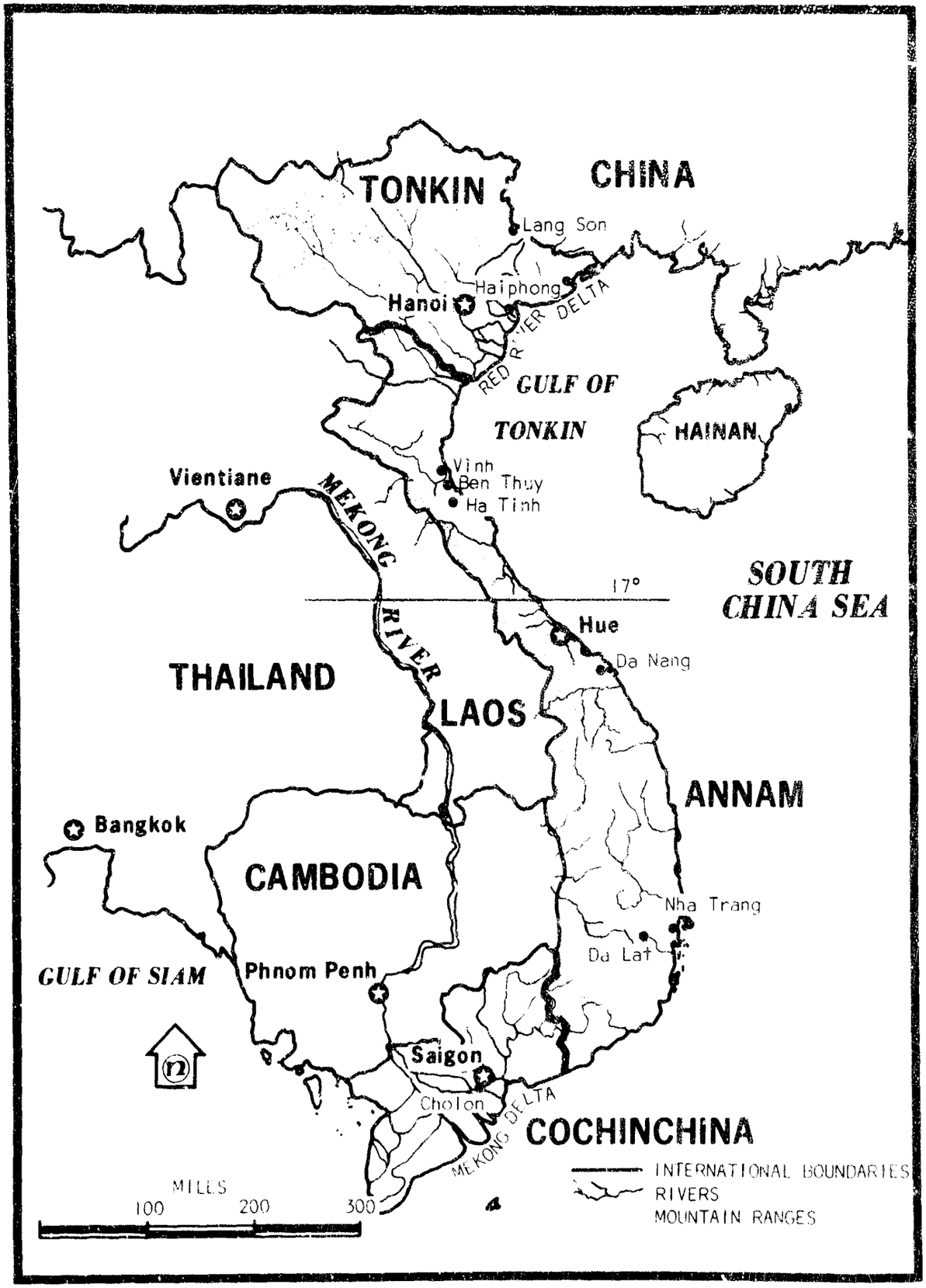
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VIET NAM

VIETNAM: THE ORIGINS OF REVOLUTION (1885-1946)

by John T. McAlister

November 1968

The American University
CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN SOCIAL SYSTEMS
5010 WISCONSIN AVENUE, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20016

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ABSTRACT

At the heart of the continuing controversy in Viet Nam is a revolutionary struggle for political order and unity which remains incomplete and has consumed the vitality of the Vietnamese for more than two decades. The fundamental changes in the structure of politics which have developed in Viet Nam over the past forty years are the essence of revolution. How and why this revolution occurred and the significance of the Vietnamese experience is germane to a more perceptive understanding of revolution in general. The historical analysis is carried only through the final years of World War II.

Research and writing
completed June 1967.

FOREWORD

This study was conducted under a program designed to encourage university interest in basic research in social science fields related to the responsibilities of the U.S. Army. The program is conducted under contract by The American University's Center for Research in Social Systems (CRESS), and CRESS in turn has entered into subcontracts supporting basic research in a number of major universities having a marked interest in one or more of these research fields.

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This report on the origins of the revolutionary forces appearing in Vietnam was prepared at Princeton University's Center of International Studies under subcontract between CRESS and the university.

Dr. McAlister's historical analysis focuses on the events of the 1930's and 1940's in Vietnam to identify the origins of the revolutionary forces involved, not only in decolonization but also in the restructuring of the Vietnamese social order. His study contributes to a better understanding of the nature and scope of the dislocations and difficulties experienced by the Vietnamese as they move toward rebuilding their society for participation in the modern world.

IMPORTANT NOTE

This manuscript is based on documents in the French Army Archives through a special waiver of governmental regulations. For scholarly purposes documents are not usually accessible until they are fifty years old. In acquiring the privilege of consulting the documents, the author had to agree not to make any direct citation of them in any publication; consequently, all direct citation to these materials has been eliminated.

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1. Map of Viet Nam . . . . . Frontispiece

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PROLOGUE

REVOLUTION IN VIET NAM IN PERSPECTIVE

Understanding the politics of Viet Nam requires an understanding of revolution. The reason is clear. For more than a generation Viet Nam has been convulsed by a protracted revolution which began in August 1945, amidst the chaotic collapse of Japan's wartime occupation of French Indochina, and is yet to be concluded. Revolutionary strife in Viet Nam was at first focused on the elimination of colonial rule though even during the first Indochina War, 1947-1954, the important point was not merely driving the French from the country, but deciding who would succeed to France's 80 years of political control. Tragically, the first Indochina War did not result in any decisive answer to this question of succession; instead, it ended in a standoff between those with opposing concepts of political rule. At the heart of their continuing controversy is a struggle for a political order which can unify the Vietnamese people—if they are to be unified at all. Here is a revolution which remains incomplete and which has consumed the vitality of the Vietnamese for more than two decades as they have tried to effect basic changes in the structure of their politics and achieve a unified political order.

By 1954, after seven years of revolutionary conflict, two competitor governments emerged, each claiming to be the sole legitimate government for all the Vietnamese people, yet each controlling only about half the territory of the country. When these two governments—the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam in Hanoi and the Republic of Viet Nam in Saigon—withdrew into separate territories divided at the seventeenth parallel by the Geneva Conference of 1954, the Western powers expected them to act like separate nation-states instead of adversaries in a revolutionary war . . . but this did not happen. Neither government has denied that "reunification" is its ultimate goal and there has been little reason to expect that they would.[1]

The war now raging in Viet Nam is a continuation of the pattern of conflict launched during the first Indochina War; it is not a war being fought between two separate nations but it is a revolutionary struggle within one nation. More conspicuously than in wars between nations, revolutionary war is a "continuation of politics by other means." It is a competition between two or more governments, each of which wants to become the sole legitimate government of a people. In wars between nations, political objectives are usually sought by destroying the military power of an adversary, but in revolutionary wars political goals are sought more directly. The focus of conflict is to eliminate the political structure of an opponent and replace it with a political structure of one's own.

With a viable political structure a government can lose much of its regular military strength, and even much of its territory, yet still continue to be a serious competitor in a revolutionary war. Without a viable political structure linking it to the people, a government may exist in name but not in fact. It cannot rally a people behind it because it will have no dependable means of showing power and influence with those who participate in its behalf. Since it will be unable to win the political commitment of the people and deny their support to the adversary, a government without this political structure will have missed the essence of victory in revolutionary conflict.

Before 1954, the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam (Hanoi) had established a very extensive political organization in areas south of the seventeenth parallel, and felt that this entitled it to influence there, despite its agreement to withdraw regular troops from the region. Hanoi had expected to recoup this influence through the elections called for in the final declaration of the Geneva Conference, but when they failed to materialize in 1956 the northern regime not only demonstrated its considerable strength in the south by guerrilla terrorism, but also began to expand it.[2] In response, the Republic of Viet Nam in the south has asserted, with accuracy, that it is under attack and that its sovereignty is threatened by a Communist government in northern Viet Nam. Behind these assertions, however, is the implicit admission that the southern republic cannot command the loyalties or mobilize the energies of enough of the population south of the seventeenth parallel to rule even that portion of Vietnamese territory.

This impotence of the southern republic has been attributed to subversion from the north, which over the years has grown into a large-scale military infiltration.[3] Yet, as has been made clear by U.S. efforts in clearing northern units from areas of the countryside, the Republic of Viet Nam has not had any really effective political institutions for uniting the rural population within a central government. Without such institutions it seems unlikely that purely military achievements can be consolidated into any viable political order in southern Viet Nam on other than Communist terms. Nor does it seem that anything more than a stalemate between the military force of the United States and the political-military potency of the Communists can be hoped for; on the contrary, a much less favorable outcome remains a distinct possibility.[4]

Since the war now being waged in southern Viet Nam is a continuation of the revolutionary war begun in 1945, the absence of effective political institutions there has been a decisive consideration. Indeed, revolutionary wars occur because a substantial portion of a population is alienated from the prevailing political structure and no longer accepts the legitimacy of an incumbent government. After World War II, such a war broke out in Viet Nam because a well-organized political movement, the Viet Minh, led a determined effort to block the reimposition of French colonial rule over the country. In launching the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam in 1945, the Viet Minh claimed that it was the legitimate government of the Vietnamese people. But not all Vietnamese accepted this claim. While those that opposed the Viet Minh were, initially, few and ineffectual, the majority of the Vietnamese were simply uncommitted to any political movement. In the vast rural areas of the country where more than 80 percent of the people lived, there were no political institutions through which they could participate in politics beyond their village or develop a commitment to a national government.

The French interpreted this lack of popular commitment to mean that they could easily crush the Viet Minh by force without having to accord it any long-term recognition as a legitimate political entity. Yet they did not calculate on the strength of the Viet Minh's political structure in the areas of the countryside under control, nor did the French try to eliminate this structure by replacing it with a more effective one of their own. As pressures of French and Viet Minh military operations mounted, it became increasingly necessary for the rural population to make a political commitment in order to secure protection from one side or the other. Since the Viet Minh's political structure was more immediately accessible and offered more predictable political rewards than that of the French, it was the chief beneficiary of the intensification of the conflict.

Despite their lack of success, the French were not unaware of the need to establish a political alternative to the Viet Minh. But since they had made no preparation before or during World War II for the eventual self-government of Viet Nam, the French had scant political resources to fall back upon. They had to base their political alternative not only on the

population in areas which were controlled by the French Army, especially in the cities and towns, but also the rural pockets inhabited by religious groups (Catholics in the north and adherents of folk religions in the south) opposed to the Viet Minh. Known as the State of Viet Nam and led by the vestigial Emperor Bao Dai, this political alternative had as its bedrock a small Vietnamese upper class which had been formed through French colonial institutions. Most of the Viet Minh leadership also was part of this upper class, but, unlike those who joined with the French, they had received fewer social and political rewards. Since these Viet Minh leaders saw French rule as a barrier to their aspirations, they were impatient for independence and sought it through revolution.

In building an alternative to the Viet Minh's revolutionary movement, the French found that the Vietnamese upper class provided a shaky foundation. This group did not have the coherence and strength of a well-established ruling class; internecine squabbles prevented it from providing effective political leadership, while its social and cultural status made it so distant from the mass of the people in the countryside that it could not communicate with them easily. But the greatest shortcoming of this French-oriented upper class lay in its restricted concept of politics. Its members seemed not to realize that they would have to forge new political links with the village population if the State of Viet Nam were to develop the power to become a serious competitor in revolutionary war instead of being just a dependency of France. They seemed to believe, along with the French, that force alone was sufficient to destroy the Viet Minh. Some, however, were conscious of the political dimension of the conflict, but they concluded that needed actions could not be taken unless the French gave the State of Viet Nam its full independence. Because they did not recognize that independence from France or dominance over the Viet Minh required them to develop superior political strength, these protesters simply withdrew from politics altogether and became attentistes or "those who waited" on the sidelines of the war.[5]

Though the State of Viet Nam was a government without a political structure with which to knit together the villages and towns and develop a widespread popular commitment in the countryside, it was not powerless. Its power lay in the superstructure of Vietnamese society, not in the village substructure. In the cities, where the small modern enclave created by the French gave the appearance of a government in action, there was power to be had from industry, commerce, education, social services, and trained personnel. But this power could not be projected into the countryside except as military force. So during the nights the world outside of the towns and cities became the domain of the Viet Minh—except for those areas controlled by the French Army and the slowly emerging army of the State of Viet Nam. These areas were not inconsiderable; they included the Mekong Delta in the south, the south central plateau inhabited by the montagnards and, until 1952-53, the Red River Delta in the north. Within these areas, participation in the politics of the State of Viet Nam was significant. About a million people registered to vote in the elections of 1953, and by 1954 there were more than 300,000 Vietnamese fighting alongside 70,000 regular French troops, and about 68,000 Legionnaires and Africans against approximately 400,000 in the Viet Minh ranks.[6]

Even with the aid of the United States, the power of the State of Viet Nam, together with that of France, was never sufficient to defeat the Viet Minh. Yet it was enough to prolong the war for seven years, until 1954; and then there was adequate strength to get a favorable partition of the country, including a substantial evacuation of Viet Minh forces from the south.[7] After a successful struggle to eject the French in 1955-56, the south became the domain of the Republic of Viet Nam—the successor to the State of Viet Nam. Now, nearly a decade and a half later, the revolutionary conflict continues along much the same lines as in earlier years. Like its predecessor, the Republic of Viet Nam is trying to stop the Communists' expansion of their revolutionary political structure by force. Even now there is little recognition that this

expansion of a new political structure throughout the countryside is effecting a revolution, although it is forming the basis for a more sustained military effort against the Republic of Viet Nam.

The Communists are not simply trying to eliminate their adversary by force. They are trying to win the political commitment of the mass of the people in the countryside and thereby deny legitimacy to the Republic of Viet Nam as a representative government of the Vietnamese people. To achieve this commitment, the Communists are not primarily concerned with increasing the welfare of the peasant villagers but are trying to forge them into a political community—one which commands loyalties because it rewards performance by fostering upward mobility in a hierarchical political structure. Through such mobility, the villager can find a more predictable access to the attributes of modernity (i.e., literacy, technical skills, organizational ability, and so forth) and the rewards of political power than through any other governmental structure in Viet Nam. From this mobilization of the potential power of the peasants and a sharing of governmental authority with them, changes have been occurring in Vietnamese politics which are the very substance of revolution.

Revolution in essence is change, but there is very little agreement as to how much and what kind of change constitutes revolution. Despite, or perhaps because of, their profound character, social and political changes in Viet Nam have not usually been described as revolutionary. Unfortunately, the vocabulary with which an understanding of revolution is expressed has not been closely identified with the characteristics of a protracted revolution in a developing society. Yet, because of its protractedness, the events of two decades of upheaval in Viet Nam have cast in bold relief many aspects of revolution often obscured in the faster moving revolutions of our time.

This conflict—first between the Viet Minh and the French-led State of Viet Nam and now between two Vietnamese republics—has shown once again that revolution is not merely the overthrowing of an old regime. It is a competition between opposing concepts of political community for a monopoly, or legitimacy, in holding power. And rarely can an alternative—revolutionary—government emerge as a competitor to the prevailing regime for political legitimacy unless it sets forth new ways of mobilizing and sharing power. In attempting to establish such a new legitimacy, the revolutionaries are changing the structure of politics to conform to a new concept of political community—a change in the way who gets what, when, and how.[8]

In this book, emphasis is placed on revolution as being a permanent change in the structure of politics which results in new ways of mobilizing and sharing power. These two qualitative changes in managing political power are intimately related in the revolutionary process; if revolutionaries are to mobilize the popular strength to supersede an incumbent regime, it seems clear that they must develop new forms for participation in politics. In order that a potent following may be won to the revolutionary cause, new types of political status, institutions, and ideology will be a necessity. Through new institutions—such as revolutionary committees and assemblies, as well as military units and mobilization groups—individuals will have an opportunity to achieve a greater share of power as their participation contributes to revolutionary goals. Only when such institutional links reach out into the society and create political opportunities that are qualitatively different from those of the incumbent regime can revolutionaries mobilize increasing amounts of political power. Sustained by an effective ideology which rationalizes this mobilization of power and which dramatizes the presumed injustices of the incumbent regime, a revolutionary government can establish its legitimacy and gain increasing compliance with its will.

A crucial measure of the extent to which changes in the structure of politics are likely to occur during a revolution is the amount of popular strength required to overthrow an incumbent. If these changes—in political status, institutions, and ideology—are not far-reaching enough to accommodate those alienated from an incumbent regime, the potential for revolution may still exist, even though a new revolutionary government has taken control of a country. From this perspective, revolutionary potential can be said to exist when there is a gap between the demands made upon a government and its performance to meet them. A possible shortcoming of this definition is its implication that all societies have some potential for revolution—an implication which nevertheless seems useful for analytical purposes, since it calls attention to the fact that incumbent governments usually try to establish political relationships which in some measure meet the demands placed upon them. When incumbents cannot respond with political changes that are extensive enough to satisfy popular demands, they will usually try to contain revolutionary potential by force and maintain themselves in power against the popular will.

Whatever its extent, revolutionary potential will not be translated into revolution unless it is specifically exploited by revolutionaries—those who are potential members of the prevailing political elite yet are denied or thwarted from participation in it and who excel in articulating demands left unfulfilled by the incumbents. In order to have political protests go beyond random events such as riots, strikes, demonstrations, or peasant revolts, the revolutionaries must establish an opposition political structure—a revolutionary structure—within the gap between demands and performance, which will be called revolutionary space. The term "revolutionary space" will be used here as an approximate synonym for revolutionary potential, except that it will indicate where the revolutionary potential lies in a society, i.e., in rural areas where demands for agrarian reform are going unheeded or among urban dwellers where protests for new policies have emerged, and so forth. Clearly, the goal of revolutionaries will be to exploit the gaps of revolutionary space by advancing their revolutionary structure until it undercuts the existing regime and becomes the legitimate government of a people.

Some observers believe that there has been no revolution in Viet Nam. They conclude that the country has undergone an anticolonial revolt which has now been followed by an international war between two distinct Vietnamese states. The thesis of this study rejects this opinion and maintains that fundamental changes in the structure of politics have occurred in Viet Nam over the past four decades which are the essence of revolution. Moreover, the book has been written in the belief that Viet Nam's experience has much to contribute to an understanding of revolution in general, because events there have challenged many commonly held assumptions about the revolutionary process. By a detailed study of the new ways of mobilizing and sharing power that developed in Viet Nam during the 1930's and 1940's, this book will try to explain how and why revolution occurred and what the significance of this Vietnamese experience is for an understanding of the origins of revolution. While there is no attempt to bring the story of revolution in Viet Nam beyond the year 1946, when large-scale revolutionary war broke out, a focus on the formative years should not only clarify the basic characteristics of revolutionary change in the country but also provide a needed perspective on subsequent events.

Such a perspective seems necessary, since the problems that Vietnamese revolutionaries have had to cope with include the legacy of Viet Nam's historic inability to achieve durable unity as a nation. They have had to confront age-old problems of disunity, even as they have been trying to lay the foundation of a new political order. These problems have stemmed from the fact that central political institutions reached their apogee in precolonial Viet Nam during the four centuries between 1009 and 1400 and, thereafter, the southward migration of

the Vietnamese people from their homeland in the Red River Delta produced pressures which resulted in a tradition of political disunity. Rule over a unified nation was undercut by regionally based groups whose competition in the early prior to French intervention led to political turmoil, rather than to the institutionalization of political power.

During 80 years of rule France did little that contributed to developing institutions in which the politics of Viet Nam could be conducted. Instead, the modernizing influences brought on by French colonial policies served to reenforce old antipathies and to ensure that once France's hegemony was ended traditional problems would be revived with an even stronger intensity. As Vietnamese revolutionaries began to organize themselves in the 1930's and 1940's, they found that regional pressures threatened to undercut their effectiveness in opposing French rule. In their attempts to unify a revolutionary movement, Vietnamese leaders had to do more than offer dependable political opportunities to those alienated from the colonial regime; they also had to overcome the antipathies which Vietnamese from various parts of the country and various social affiliations had toward each other as a result of their historical experience.

Even the goal of independence from France could not by itself bring unity and discipline to Vietnamese political life. On the contrary, these qualities had to be sought through techniques of mobilizing and sharing power that would result in political commitments surmounting traditional and parochial antagonisms. In forging such commitments, Vietnamese revolutionaries in the 1930's and 1940's were bringing about changes that would characterize revolution in Viet Nam for decades and would set examples challenging old assumptions about the nature of revolutionary politics. And for all its appearance as a mystifying, complicated web of contemporary politics interlaced with age-old conflict, there lies in Viet Nam a clear and unavoidable challenge to our understanding of revolution, as well as a promise of wider knowledge, if its complexities can be mastered.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF REVOLUTION IN VIET NAM

REVOLUTION: A LANDMARK IN VIETNAMESE HISTORY

For a people with a two-thousand-year heritage of occupation, rebellion, and a troubled search for order, the revolution launched in August 1945 represented a major landmark. It not only inaugurated a new approach to politics in Viet Nam, but it also marked a millennium of freedom from Chinese occupation. Before the year 939, when the Vietnamese threw off China's direct control over their affairs, they had been ruled as a Chinese province for a thousand years. Yet the history of the country predates Chinese control. The record goes back to 208 B.C., when the Vietnamese first appeared in official annals as a minority people in the Kingdom of Nam Viet, known in Chinese history as Nan-yüeh.[1]

Early History (208 B.C. - 220 A.D.)

Covering wide areas of present-day northern Viet Nam and southern China, the Kingdom of Nam Viet was created by a renegade Chinese warlord in 208 B.C. He had taken advantage of the decay of China's first imperial dynasty to assert his marginal power based on regional military occupation. His political creation, Nam Viet, remained autonomous for nearly a century, because the power of the emerging Han dynasty was restricted to north and central China where it was struggling to consolidate dynastic control. In the pattern that was to become familiar on China's southern periphery, when its imperial regimes were weak or preoccupied internally, Nam Viet was recognized as an autonomous kingdom over which the Han retained a nominal though unenforceable sovereignty. Within the loose structure of the kingdom the forebears of the Vietnamese were permitted their own administration. It consisted of fiefs governed by hereditary chiefs in the sort of feudal system that still exists among the mountain peoples of northern Viet Nam today. However, after 111 B.C., when the Han dynasty was strong enough to extend its power southward and absorb Nam Viet into the Chinese empire, the Vietnamese fiefs became provinces of China.[2]

Despite the deep imprint made on them by the Chinese culture of the Han and T'ang dynasties, these early Vietnamese possessed a zeal for political autonomy. Among the numerous peoples on the southern periphery of China, only the Vietnamese adopted Chinese culture without becoming a part of the Chinese political system. Only in Viet Nam "did the [Chinese] culture outpace the [Chinese] political unit. The Vietnamese speak a Sinitic language related to Chinese; they derived their higher culture from China; and they were for long periods under Chinese rule." Yet eventually they managed to establish their identity as a separate country within East Asian civilization.[3] Indeed, it may be that the adoption of Chinese culture made it possible for the Vietnamese to free themselves from political control by China. In the view of the noted scholar Henri Maspéro, Viet Nam was able to assert its autonomy because Chinese occupation, "by breaking the power of particularist institutions and local groups, and by introducing Chinese ideas and social organization, gave it a cohesion and formal structure which its

neighbors lacked."[4] Whether or not the imposition of Chinese culture was instrumental in enabling the Vietnamese to win their autonomy, it seems certain that the way in which the culture was imposed provided their motivation for seeking an end to rule by China.

Efforts to absorb the Vietnamese into the Chinese Empire were carried on sporadically and haphazardly throughout a millennium of occupation. In fact, it seems that the Chinese overlords were concerned more with pacifying these peripheral minority peoples than with assimilating them. As the pressure of the Chinese occupation progressively curtailed the influence of Vietnamese feudal leaders, they were afforded virtually no compensating opportunities to join the broader political and cultural world of the Chinese Empire. Because the local aristocracy saw that a continuation of Chinese policy threatened to wipe them out, their hostility toward the occupation rose sharply until it culminated in a rebellion in 40 A.D. Crushed by an expedition of Chinese reinforcements, this desperate revolt by a decaying feudal regime was followed by one of the most thorough attempts ever undertaken to implant Chinese culture among the Vietnamese. Perhaps the most important result of this program was to speed the intermarriage of Vietnamese with Chinese settlers and functionaries. A new elite emerged with a commitment to Chinese language and culture that would have been difficult to obtain by coercion alone. Although this new, radically mixed, local elite enjoyed none of the privileges or influence of their feudal predecessors, they also were a hereditary aristocracy, but with family ties now based on Chinese customs.[5]

The emphasis on cultural assimilation which had produced a Chinese-oriented aristocracy among the Vietnamese was not matched by efforts to absorb them into Chinese politics. Only gradually and hesitantly was this local elite allowed to participate in the Chinese provincial administration over the Vietnamese. They had to qualify for appointment by mastering the same examinations in Chinese literature and philosophy that were required of Chinese administrative officials. But, as the Han dynasty was in decline, these administratively qualified Vietnamese demanded, and were granted, a status equal to that of any qualified Chinese, which entitled them to be assigned anywhere in the empire. Mixed-blood Vietnamese were actually appointed as subprefects in two Chinese provinces. But these promising beginnings in cultural and political integration came abruptly to an end with the fall of the Han dynasty in 220.[6]

Middle Period (220 - 1009)

Thereafter, China suffered several centuries of internal political disintegration. Not only did Chinese preoccupation with domestic politics reduce occupation pressures on the Vietnamese, but it also encouraged them to seek their own political identity separate from China. Significantly, the abortive attempts to establish an autonomous Vietnamese kingdom between 542 and 602 were led by the local racially mixed aristocracy. Their short-lived kingdom was an expression of the political consciousness and skills which they had acquired through Chinese culture but had been able to use only slightly within the Chinese Empire. Although their flimsy kingdom was easily destroyed by the Chinese, little was done to resolve the underlying causes of the uprising. When China was once again brought under centralized control in 618 by the T'ang dynasty, little effort was made to integrate the Vietnamese into Chinese political life. The T'ang simply used their burgeoning power to impose the most severe occupation the Vietnamese had ever known. But the power of the T'ang, like that of previous dynasties, had its limits and, when their power had run its course, the resultant weakness in China coincided with an increasing political strength among the Vietnamese. By 939 an autonomous Vietnamese kingdom was able to defend itself against direct Chinese control.[7]

This assertion of local strength did not mean complete independence for Viet Nam. Reimposition of Chinese rule, as was threatened during the Mongol invasion of 1285 and as

occurred briefly during the Ming dynasty (1414-37), was always a factor in Vietnamese politics. Instead of asserting their independence from China, which would have run the risk of frequent struggles over the reintroduction of Chinese military occupation, the Vietnamese had earlier become one of China's tributary states.[8] Until France gained control in 1885, the Vietnamese ritually acknowledged the supremacy of China and periodically sent missions bearing tribute. Moreover, these ritual ties contained a fiber of strength in the recognized prerogative of the Chinese court to invest the Vietnamese emperors with their legitimacy to rule. Rather than stimulating Chinese interference in Vietnamese affairs, this symbolic investiture contributed to stability because of the careful scrutiny given to new claimants of political legitimacy.

Once the Vietnamese had freed themselves of a millennium of Chinese domination, they struggled for another millennium, with the result that they finally secured their own autonomy. The ending of Chinese control did not mean that the Vietnamese had achieved political unity and stability. For nearly ten centuries they were to fight among themselves in attempting to institutionalize political power into a unified government having authority over all the Vietnamese. Significantly, the incipient dynasty that was instrumental in bolstering Vietnamese autonomy against China was unable to consolidate its power in Viet Nam. Persisting feudal groups thwarted the ephemeral Ngo dynasty (939-69) in its ambition to unify the Vietnamese. Even less durable regimes followed the Ngo, as competing families sought to subdue their rivals by military force and to impose their hereditary rule on the country. Not until 1009, nearly a century after Chinese rule had ended, did one group prevail over its rivals and consolidate political power into a durable regime.[9]

The Beginning of Institutionalism

The leaders of the resilient Ly dynasty (1009-1225) succeeded in institutionalizing their power by stages. First, they established a military administration to translate their predominant strength into territorial control. But the durability of the dynasty for over two centuries undoubtedly resulted from their capacity to transform coercive force into a governmental authority widely accepted as having the legitimate use of power. This institutionalized strength was achieved by sharing power more widely and making the access to power more orderly than under military control. Specifically, a civil administration was established with recruitment based on the Chinese examination system. From this procedure a bureaucracy was created that represented those most thoroughly knowledgeable in Chinese language and culture.[10]

Appointment to the bureaucracy or mandarinate, as the Europeans baptized this scholar administration, was theoretically open, without regard to social standing, to all who could satisfy the qualifications. Since education in Chinese culture became the primary criterion for political mobility some members of the mandarinate, called mandarins by the Europeans, did come from modest social origins. However, only those with extensive resources could afford the leisure of long years of preparation for these examinations; the bureaucracy in fact institutionalized the power of those families with the greatest wealth and cohesion. Instead of turning their resources into military power with which to compete for dynastic succession, the Vietnamese families gradually accepted competition for political power on a more orderly basis. But despite the rigor of the examinations, power in Viet Nam was still largely hereditary.[11]

For nearly 400 years, between the 11th and the 14th centuries, the mandarin system of bureaucracy provided relative internal order under conditions of almost constant threat of invasion by aggressive neighbors and dynastic usurpation at home. Domestic challenges to dynastic rule, often militant in character, were never sufficient to bring down the mandarin

system, at least not until other factors weakened internal order. Even when the long rule of the Ly dynasty came to an end in 1225 for lack of a male heir, there was no outbreak of internal war. The Tran dynasty (1225-1400) succeeded to dynastic rule by arranging a marriage with the female heir of the Ly family, but it was by preserving the mandarin system that they maintained the continuity of power. By such shrewd tactics the Tran perpetuated a period of political coherence—nearly four centuries long—that was in sharp contrast to the turmoil of both earlier and later epochs.[12]

Attack and Invasion

The institutionalization of power that the mandarinal system had helped to achieve was eventually undermined by critical requirements for external defense. While the threat of invasion presented a perennial dilemma, it was not until the late fourteenth century that a sustained external challenge appeared. Until then, China and the other bordering states periodically attacked the Vietnamese. But in the fourteenth century, as well as in earlier periods, the main threat came from Champa. A hostile kingdom founded about 192 A.D. on Hindu cultural traditions, Champa was located just south of the Red River Delta in present-day central Viet Nam. The great Vietnamese vulnerability to spoiling attacks by Champa was reduced only after autonomy from China had been won in 939 A.D. and the forces necessary for external defense had been mobilized. By the middle of the eleventh century the Vietnamese were able to sack Champa's capital and kill the king in retaliation against a Cham invasion. As a result of such military strength, in 1069 the Vietnamese acquired their first portion of Champa's territory in what was to become a steady southward expansion. By the twentieth century, under relentless pressure, the Chams were diminished to a minority status in a greatly enlarged Viet Nam.[13]

Ultimately, the Vietnamese had reacted to Cham invasions by a program of territorial expansion aimed at destroying the Kingdom of Champa and absorbing its domain. Yet this action was not without its political costs. They emerged when a series of Cham campaigns over a thirty year period, from 1360 to 1390, brought an unexpected military challenge to institutionalized political power in Viet Nam. The threat did not come from invaders, who were effectively repulsed, but from a trusted military leader Le Quy Ly. He had saved the Vietnamese kingdom from destruction and occupation, yet in the process his power had gone beyond the level that could be controlled by dynastic political authority; so had his ambitions. In 1400 he overthrew the Tran dynasty, proclaimed himself Emperor Ho Quy Ly, and in effect returned the country to a competition for political power through control of military force. His actions set in motion a sequence of events that increased Viet Nam's reliance on military might and made a return to institutionalized political power increasingly more difficult.[14]

After Ho Quy Ly's usurpation, the resulting turmoil among the Vietnamese weakened them internally and invited the intervention of China. The former overlords came ostensibly to restore the Tran, but in fact they wished to annex the country. For two decades, 1408-28, a fierce resistance against Chinese occupation was carried on through guerrilla warfare before Le Loi, a great hero of Vietnamese history and the founder of the Le dynasty (1428-1527) recaptured control over the country and obtained recognition of autonomy from China. Although his successors made great strides in restoring order to the war-ravaged country, their most enduring achievements were also in the field of military operations. An invasion of Champa succeeded in destroying the political viability of the rival kingdom in 1471. Severely diminished in territory, Champa lingered on for another 200 years before the Vietnamese finally occupied and settled the whole of their territory.[15] However, in the course of this occupation, the expansiveness of Vietnamese military power merely posed more sharply the challenge to Vietnamese political ingenuity. Could they consolidate their gains through resilient institutions?

Problems of Territorial Expansion

Southward migration (known as Nam tiên in Vietnamese), following in the wake of the conquest of Champa, altered Vietnamese life fundamentally. Vietnamese territory almost doubled its original size and the country's population, formerly concentrated into the Red River Delta, became scattered throughout areas more than 600 miles away. Challenged by the problems of increased scale which produced parochial pressures too great for traditional politics to manage, Viet Nam's central institutions gave way. Though these institutions were modeled on those of the Chinese Empire, within which the total area of Viet Nam would have been no more than a province or two, as their territory expanded the Vietnamese could not make these institutions work effectively. Even through military administration, the Le, unlike previous dynasties, could no longer maintain territorial control over the whole country. Regionalism had become the stronger force.[16]

By 1516, three families had emerged with a disproportionate amount of armed strength, while the ruling dynasty had virtually no power at all. The country fell into a state of anarchy, with rich agricultural areas being pillaged by mercenary troops hired by rival families; farming was interrupted and famine spread over the land. It seemed impossible to repeat the previously successful strategy in which the Ly dynasty (1009-1225) had achieved control over the whole country by force and then transformed military power into political institutions. With the expansion of Vietnamese territory, it had become easier for more numerous and formidable military groups to develop from fertile agricultural bases; regionalism was ascendant.[17]

In the midst of this breakdown of central authority, one of the three dominant families, the Mac, attempted to unify the country under its dynastic control in 1527. Instead of contributing to unity and stability, their bid for power precipitated a fratricidal internal war that continued spasmodically until just before the French intervened in Viet Nam—almost 300 years later. As the war became more protracted, the conflict was gradually stabilized by a partition of the country into defined territories controlled by the rival families. The beginning of this trend toward partition occurred in 1592, when the Mac were driven out of the Red River Delta by the force protecting the vestigial Le dynasty. Rather than restoring unity, the victory over the Mac merely aggravated an already strong spirit of enmity between the Trinh and the Nguyen. While they were united in opposing the Mac, these two families were divided by their desire to exercise unchallenged influence over the impotent Le rulers. They both regarded the Le as the only legitimate authority in the country and each of them accused the other of fomenting rebellion. On the outcome of this dynastic impasse rested the unity and stability of Viet Nam for more than two centuries.[18]

Lines between the two rival families hardened as the Nguyen steadily consolidated its strength in the areas south of the Red River Delta along the strategic coastal plain. Unable to reconcile their competition for dynastic influence and regional power, the two adversaries, in 1620, confronted each other in fierce combat that persisted tenaciously for 50 years until the conflict subsided into an armed stalemate. The disintegration of the country into two warring states was symbolized by a wall built across the narrow waist of Viet Nam at the eighteenth parallel near the town of Dong Hoi just north of Hue. Erected by the Nguyen, the wall of Dong Hoi rose to a height of eighteen feet, extended a distance of eleven miles, and in 1672 proved strong enough to withstand a major military test from the Trinh.[19] Thereafter the country remained divided for another century on almost the same territorial basis as it is today.

Besides stimulating divisive political tendencies, territorial expansion also brought to Viet Nam an unusual geographic shape—one especially conducive to regionalism and rebellion. The striking dimensions of the territory resulting from the relentless southward movement are its length of approximately 1,600 miles and its width of only 300 miles at its widest and about 45 miles at its narrowest point. Striking as they are, these dimensions do not reflect the fact that Viet Nam lacks geographic unity. Overall, it is an S-shaped country fragmented with mountain chains and held together by a thin coastal plain loosely connecting two deltas at extreme ends of the territory. Except for the generous extent of seacoast, with frequent harbors, few natural avenues of communication span the length of the country. Isolated areas, especially those in the narrow, central coastal plain, but also in the mountainous regions surrounding the deltas, have historically posed difficulties for central administration and have been a haven for rebels.[20]

Patterns of Settlement

Patterns of population settlement have also been influenced by the character of the terrain. If military conquest alone had been the instrument of Viet Nam's expansion, it is doubtful that the Vietnamese would occupy the territory they do today. Close behind the military forces were the settlers, ready to bring the land under cultivation. Yet the terrain, in addition to limiting communications, restricted the locations in which the Vietnamese population could settle. Only lands permitting the cultivation of rice under irrigation, the very foundation of the country's agricultural society, were suitable for Vietnamese migration. Such areas were extensive in the deltas located at either end of the territory. In the approximately 600 miles between, however, there were only small and frequently isolated fragments of land snatched from encroachment by the mountains on one side and by the sea on the other. Not only was it difficult to adapt the Vietnamese style of wet-rice agriculture to the surrounding mountains, but these highlands were infested with the malaria-carrying Anopheles mosquito.[21]

The overall limits imposed by these barriers upon Vietnamese settlement are best seen in the curious pattern of population distribution that has emerged as a result of southward migration. Today, roughly 30 million Vietnamese are crowded onto less than 20,000 of the country's approximately 128,000 square miles of territory. Thus, more than 90 percent of the population is concentrated on less than 20 percent of the land area, which results in some of the densest population clusters anywhere in the world. Because of their habitual rice agriculture and their vulnerability to upland malaria, the Vietnamese live in the fertile lowlands, while the remaining 100,000 or more square miles of plateau and mountains are sparsely populated by non-Vietnamese ethnic minorities, who are less advanced culturally than the lowlanders. Thus a major dichotomy between the upland and the lowland areas is reinforced by ethnic as well as by other cultural differences.[22]

A focus on this settlement pattern of the Vietnamese people—their reliance on irrigated rice agriculture and their history of territorial expansion—illuminates much that is complex and obscure in their past. Such a perspective sheds light on strengths and weaknesses of Vietnamese politics and society. A hypothesis of the geographer Pierre Gourou is that in a tropical country the cultivation of rice in flooded fields is what alone gives rise to the development of an advanced civilization, while at the same time this development is limited both culturally and geographically.[23]

Significance of the Village

In Viet Nam these strengths and limits of development are best seen through the prime module of social development—the village. It was due primarily to the cohesion and flexibility of the Vietnamese village that popular migration followed upon military conquest. The village was the institution that translated the potential of the newly occupied land into the reality of productive habitation.

A system of sponsored settlement developed in which established villages sent out pioneers. They were usually young people or others without land who were eager to get new fields and create new villages. Support from the parent villages continued until the offspring were self-sufficient. Then official recognition was requested from the emperor who bestowed a name, a communal seal, and a guardian spirit upon the new village. These imperial articles were traditionally centered in a communal house (known as the dinh) which was in effect the symbol of village unity, a place for religious ceremonies and public occasions, and in a sense a ritual link with the rest of the country.[24]

Through this process the Vietnamese village facilitated the southward territorial advance that simply went beyond the country's capacity to consolidate its gains through political centralization. The experience after 1500 of nearly three centuries of regionalism and disunity—trends never fully resolved before France assumed control over the country—raises several fundamental questions about traditional politics in Viet Nam. Perhaps the key question is, why was the village such an effective instrument of cultural expansion while central institutions were not? The answer seems to lie in the deeply rooted autonomy of the village which, though guaranteed by statute, had evolved through custom and practice. According to an old Vietnamese proverb, "the laws of the emperor yield to the customs of the village."[25]

The substance of this proverb had its roots in the restraint imposed by village institutions on the power of the central authorities. The development of these local institutions, it seems, predated those of the central administration; their origins are often traced to the period before China's occupation was overthrown. The most important of these local institutions was a council of notables which, among other things, was responsible for the external obligations of the village; the central administration did not deal directly with individual villagers. Members of the council were chosen from the small village oligarchy on the basis of age, education, family standing, and to a lesser extent wealth. They represented the cohesive ties of the village—family, Confucian learning,[26] and property. Only the council of notables could give the state information on village resources when collective obligations were levied for taxes, corvées, and contingents of soldiers for the national army, and this information was purposely falsified to lessen taxes. Because there was no compulsory registration of births and deaths, the village rolls were an inaccurate and incomplete indication of village population. Yet the state refrained from enforcing a greater surveillance over village productivity and population because of their respect for village autonomy. If this autonomy were violated, as the French learned later to their misfortune, then the bedrock upon which political stability might be founded would be destroyed. Vietnamese regimes treated this autonomy with respect in order that they might perfect a stable political superstructure for "

Functions of Villages vs. State Authority

The limits on centralized authority arising from the official anonymity of individual villagers and the prestige of the council of notables caused the village and not the state to have the largest executive role in Vietnamese politics. In general, the dynastic authorities attempted

to establish a balance between the strength of the village and the necessary requirements of power for political centralization.[28] A skillful division of labor evolved in which the state performed the military, judicial, and religious functions, while all public works and services were in the hands of the village authorities. They had the resources; they built the roads, dikes, and bridges—the state was essentially a coordinator. The state did all the countrywide planning and then issued directives for decentralized execution. In the face of frequent instability, the effectiveness of such a division of labor rested on the Confucian political tradition as well as on the common bond of self-interest. Villagers were brought up to believe that their survival and the success of their labors depended on ritualistic observances which the emperor—as the mediator between heaven and earth—prescribed, and in some cases performed. Through ritual observances similar to those performed by the emperor, the villagers won the favor of heaven and assured their harmony with nature.

Although the division of responsibility between an administrative superstructure and autonomous villages was skillful when in operation, it created profound weaknesses in Vietnamese political organization. With their autonomy and command over local resources, the villages could easily survive if cut off from the administrative superstructure. But a concern for peace and security caused the villages to seek the protection of the dynastic regime. Conflict or the threat of it would interfere with the steady routine required for rice farming; the very basis of village life would then be challenged. However, when the incumbents were unable to respond to village needs for security it was usually both convenient and advantageous for villages to come under the protection of political movements opposing the ruling dynasty.

While village resources made it relatively easy for rebels to develop support in localized areas, it was quite difficult for them to achieve legitimacy throughout the country. Faced with the same type of problems as those faced by the incumbent dynasty, the rebels had to institutionalize political power. If they failed to devise ways of assuring security, of mobilizing a population for political and military action, of regularizing the access to political power, and of sharing power among those who had obtained it, then the rebels would have little likelihood of overthrowing the existing dynasty. Moreover, they might find themselves subject to rebellion in their own ranks. The village character of Vietnamese society seemed to lend itself to rebellion while discouraging political consolidation. At least this was the nature of Vietnamese politics after the sixteenth century, the Trinh and the Nguyen regimes could neither defeat each other nor even consolidate their military power within political institutions.[29]

Tay Son Rebellion

By the end of the eighteenth century a stalemate had continued for a century between the northern (Trinh) and southern (Nguyen) regimes without there having been a major military engagement. But this lack of conflict did not indicate that the sources of rebellion had been eliminated. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Nguyen regime had expanded southward until it occupied the Mekong Delta over the opposition of its Cambodian inhabitants. Just as this expansion was reaching its apogee, a rebellion broke out in the Nguyen territory south of Hue in central Viet Nam. Breaking a century of stalemate, this uprising gave the northerners, the Trinh, an unexpected opportunity to extend their control over the whole of Viet Nam. Through ineptness, however, the Trinh alienated the southern rebels, known as the Tay Son, who turned on the Trinh while also fighting the Nguyen. Except for the male heir to their familial leadership, the Nguyen had been virtually eliminated by 1777, and less than a decade later Trinh rule in the north was defeated decisively by the Tay Son.[30]

Although rebellion had brought disunity in the sixteenth century, it was out of the Tay Son rebellion that Viet Nam found unity in the nineteenth century. At the conclusion of the Tay Son

rebellion in 1802, Vietnamese territory was united from the China border to the Gulf of Siam for the first time in history. But this historic achievement was not accomplished directly by the Tay Son. In an epic conflict, the surviving heir to the Nguyen regime capitalized on the Tay Son's preoccupation in the north to return from exile, to recapture the Mekong Delta, and, in 1788, to seize control over the strategic region around Saigon, and later to proclaim himself Emperor Gia Long. He might have been unable to consolidate these territorial gains and unify the country, however, had it not been for the arrival of substantial military and naval reinforcements from France. Arranged by the French missionary prelate, Bishop Pigneau de Béhaine, this vital aid marked the revival of a dormant interest in Viet Nam by the French church.[31]

Beginning of French Interests in Viet Nam

Opportunities for outside involvement in Viet Nam's internal conflict had existed since warfare divided the country in 1620. French interests in Viet Nam had stemmed from this earlier period in which the Nguyen regime had also been dependent on external aid. French priests had been in the country since the early seventeenth century when the Nguyens' initial weakness in the struggle against the Trinh had led them to seek sophisticated weaponry from the Portuguese. These French priests, part of a Portuguese Jesuit mission, were so successful in winning converts that they were expelled when the armed stalemate reduced the Nguyens' dependency on external aid. Not until the 1780's and the outbreak of the Tay Son rebellion did France's freedom from worldwide commitments coincide with an opportunity for influence in Viet Nam. But the French Revolution cut short the participation of the forces raised through the influence of the French clergy at Versailles. Once again France's interest in Viet Nam subsided.[32]

When Emperor Gia Long unified Viet Nam in 1802, the country's capacities for political centralization had reached a high-water mark. Realizing that this unity had been essentially a military achievement, the new emperor tried to overcome the regionalism that had divided the country for centuries. Institutions were created to promote the political integration of the Vietnamese people, but regional and parochial identities continued to exert stronger pressures. Beneath the surface of apparent political unity the governors of the various regions held the real power while formally acknowledging the sovereignty of the emperor. Unfortunately for the future of Vietnamese politics, even this promising trend toward unification was ended with Gia Long's death, and in 1820 an authoritarian and xenophobic policy was inaugurated by his heirs.[33]

Once again internal tensions created opportunities for outside intervention. The French were denied the influence in Vietnamese affairs that they had enjoyed during the fight for unification and had come to expect during the period of consolidation. Not surprisingly, it was the Catholic missionaries who were the hardest hit. Gia Long's successors saw Christianity as a threat to the Confucian traditions upon which Vietnamese politics were founded. They proscribed Christian missions and eventually put some of the French clergymen to death. Since protection of its missionaries by the Far Eastern fleet became a significant issue in France, the Vietnamese attacks on the church provided a convenient opportunity for Napoleon III to solidify the tenuous domestic position of the Second Empire.[34]

After initial setbacks the intervention in Viet Nam launched by Napoleon III in response to domestic religious sentiment became the special interest of the French Navy. More interested in acquiring territory than religious converts, the navy's enthusiasm resulted in the occupation of Viet Nam and the ethnic and culturally distinct areas of Cambodia and Laos. These

disparate countries were formed, in 1897, into a territory known thereafter as Indochina—a name chosen as a semantic compensation for French colonial failures in India and China at the hands of the British.[35]

CONTOURS OF FRENCH RULE IN VIET NAM

In administering their territorial acquisition, the French created a state in which colonial administration virtually supplanted indigenous politics. Obviously, the primary French concern was to prevent Vietnamese opposition from threatening their colonial rule. Although they could not stop rebellion entirely, the French did neutralize it through military and administrative control. Yet the effect of these preventives was to eliminate all but the most circumscribed and stylized political activity. In becoming the country's incumbent government, the French suppressed the energies that had gone into centuries of political conflict among the Vietnamese. Almost no legitimate channels for political expression existed; the politics of the Vietnamese became synonymous with sedition in French Indochina. Unintentionally, however, Vietnamese political energies were enlarged by the unexpected social consequences of colonial programs. Ultimately, when French strength wavered in the 1940's, pent-up political energies erupted in a revolution that no amount of French force could subdue.[36]

Partitionment as a Suppressive Measure

The suppression of Vietnamese political life was begun by the administrative partitioning of the country. It occurred initially through the uneven pattern of French military occupation. Viet Nam would have been occupied all at once but for the limits on French resources imposed by other foreign commitments. A combination of far-flung imperial ambitions and domestic counterpressures made the French occupation a piecemeal affair. By the treaty of June 1862, the southernmost portion of Viet Nam—called Cochinchina by its French occupiers—came under French control. The central and northern parts of the country, known to the French as Annam and Tonkin, did not become parts of the French Empire until more than twelve years after Cochinchina was occupied. Annam, the former Chinese name for Viet Nam—a term considered derogatory by the Vietnamese—and Tonkin were acquired through treaties of 1884-85 with the Vietnamese government at Hue and the Chinese at Peking.[37] The resulting fragmentation of the country was perpetuated by a colonial mythology which regarded Viet Nam not as one country but as three: Annam, Tonkin, and Cochinchina. Even the name Viet Nam, with which the country had been baptized by Gia Long in 1802, was outlawed and uttered only as a rallying cry of revolutionaries.[38]

Partitioning Viet Nam into three parts aided the security of France's colonial state against countrywide uprisings. Administrative barriers were imposed to discourage the Vietnamese from unifying their potential resources against the French. Such obstacles helped to perpetuate the traditional pressures of regionalism and parochialism that had previously limited Vietnamese political unity. Prior to French intervention administrative regions (known as ky in Vietnamese) had existed, and the tripartite subdivision roughly approximated the territories of the three ky. But under the Vietnamese these regions were apparently intended, especially in Gia Long's regime, to promote the unity of a disparate and difficult-to-administer country. With the French, however, the three countries, or pays in the French language, appeared as manifestations of the well-worn technique, "divide and rule."[39]

Of course, administrative subdivisions alone could not ensure political impotence among the Vietnamese. But new and more important bases for disunity were created through separate

French policies and programs for each administrative region. Perhaps the sharpest of these regional differences was between Cochinchina and the other two pays. Partly because it was occupied more than two decades before the rest of Viet Nam and partly because it was ruled as a colony of France with fewer treaty or legal restraints, Cochinchina developed after a distinctive pattern.

Patterns of Administration

A difference in public administration was one of the more significant aspects of this distinctiveness. In Viet Nam, as elsewhere, the selection and training of civil servants is a key political act indicating where power lies. Originally, the French Navy expected to govern Cochinchina through the existing mandarinal administration. But after the French occupation, local officials fled northward into central Viet Nam, leaving the French with the task of administering the territory directly. Because the number of French personnel was limited, it became necessary to recruit another cadre of Vietnamese to consolidate French colonial control. Chosen without regard to traditional criteria and trained in the French language and procedures, a totally new kind of Vietnamese official appeared. Enjoying a status of authority and prestige by virtue of their loyalty to the alien rule, these new Vietnamese officials were committed to France even before the whole of Viet Nam had come under French control.[40]

By contrast, when occupied two decades later, the other areas of Viet Nam were administered indirectly through the traditional bureaucracy, the mandarinate. Although some mandarins resisted the French, there existed no sanctuary where the majority of them could flee. Moreover, in Annam and Tonkin France's occupation was in theory a "protection" of Viet Nam's traditional government. In principle, the continuation of the mandarinate was sanctioned by treaty. Despite its treaty commitments, however, France actively interfered with the administration of these "protectorates" in order to insure the perpetuation of its colonial rule. Instead of abolishing the mandarinate outright, the French sought to decrease its continuity with traditional politics and to increase its bureaucratic capacities to fulfill colonial programs. Entrance examinations for the mandarinate which tested Confucian learning were discontinued in Tonkin in 1915 and in Annam in 1918. Classical knowledge also lost more of its relevance for social mobility as political opportunities developed, such as the ones offered by the University of Hanoi which opened in 1918 to train limited numbers of Vietnamese for technical specialties and administration. During the 25 years before revolution broke out, the distinction between direct and indirect rule became virtually meaningless except in a legal sense.[41]

Even though administrative personnel throughout Vietnam were eventually trained in essentially the same manner, definite regional differences persisted. By the time direct rule was considered for the whole of the country, Cochinchina already had more than half a century of experience with its effects. The French-oriented functionaries of Cochinchina contrasted with the curious mixture of administrative personnel in Tonkin and Annam. In these protectorates were the older mandarins, submissive to the French yet loyal to the traditional monarchy. Alongside them were the younger, Western-trained administrators whose loyalties were uncertain. When the revolution occurred, these administrative elites formed only a portion of the political leadership of the country, yet they had a substantial impact on the course of events through their attempts to lead the various regions in separate directions.[42] And until the revolution broke out, their diversity was a guarantee that they would not unite their energies against French rule.

Regional Differences

Differences in administration, despite their significance in shaping a potential political leadership along regional lines, were overshadowed by social and economic changes in creating new bases for regionalism. Rather than being randomly distributed, these changes were clustered regionally. Industrial development in the north and plantation agriculture, along with a vast increase in cultivatable land in the Mekong Delta in the south, produced conspicuous regional peculiarities in Vietnamese society. What industrial labor force there was in Viet Nam was concentrated in the north, while a previously nonexistent class of Vietnamese absentee landowners arose in Cochinchina as a result of land development.[43]

From these clustered changes came regional identities which were often stronger, especially in Cochinchina, than any lingering feelings for a unified and independent Viet Nam. Of all the regions, the south was more susceptible to such changes. It had been settled by the Vietnamese for less than a century before French occupation occurred. The Vietnamese people and their traditions had not yet been firmly implanted before they came under the forceful influence of France. Consequently, Cochinchina became known as the most Gallicized area of colonial Viet Nam, while Annam—which on the whole had had the least amount of social change—was known as the most traditional area of the country. Although Tonkin, the administrative and academic center of all Indochina, underwent substantial social change, it nonetheless retained a close identification with Vietnamese traditions.

Colonially induced regionalism that tended to reinforce cultural differences developed during the Vietnamese southward migration. Parochial characteristics have become convenient symbols of regional identity. One of the most easily noticed has been the difference in dialect and pronunciation in the Vietnamese language between north and south. The southern tongue is a less inflected, flatter, and softer way of speaking a language common to all Vietnamese,[44] but it is thought by northerners to be a less proper, provincial accent. In addition, village customs and family structure in the less densely populated Mekong Delta have been more informal and less rigid than traditional practices which originated in the thickly settled Red River Delta homeland of the Vietnamese.[45] These characteristics have made the southerners more amenable to change, yet have given them less stability during the uncertainty of social change. Speaking a parochial tongue and showing less respect for traditions, southerners have been looked down upon by northerners as being less cultivated. In turn, northerners have been thought by their more gregarious southern brethren to be overly formal and haughty. Eventually such popular conceptions limited the possibilities for cooperation among the Vietnamese and affected their potential for common action.

Symbolizing the changes that gave regionalism a new emphasis in Viet Nam were the superficial contrasts that developed between the regional centers of Hue, Hanoi, and Saigon. In Annam, Hue—the center of the country—remained virtually unchanged except for its increasing impotence and its irrelevance to the changes occurring elsewhere. It continued to be a small, sedate town where the archaic imperial court of Viet Nam periodically performed Confucian rituals amid the decaying monuments of the vestigial Nguyen dynasty. Court mandarins presided over a government that had been the first to unite Viet Nam, yet which, by the beginning of the twentieth century, lacked all but the anachronistic vestiges of power.

To the north, Hanoi became a mandarin-controlled, red brick administrative city, built on the ruins of an ancient Vietnamese capital. In the period after 1920, here were found the new men of Vietnamese politics; the recently trained administrators who, despite uncertain political loyalties, helped carry the burden of administering Indochina. In the little more than two decades between the beginning of their recruitment in the 1920's and the outbreak of revolution

in 1945, these administrators did not develop a close identification with French interests; their opportunities were too restricted for that. When the revolution arrived they went along, taking their administrative talents with them. At the other end of the country in Cochinchina were the Francophile Vietnamese who had found wider opportunities through French colonialism. It was they who supported France when the challenge came. Saigon—their "Paris of the Orient—emerged from a marsh, through an elaborate French construction program, to become a gleaming commercial port city which often reminded visitors of a provincial town in the south of France.

New Problems Emerge

Besides reinforcing old—mainly regional—tensions, French colonial policies created new ones. Although colonially sponsored social change became clustered regionally it was not planned that way. A reinforced regionalism was a byproduct of changes that resulted from programs directed toward other, primarily economic, purposes. In broad outline, these changes occurred from the creation of an export economy in primary products—mainly rice and rubber but some minerals—with a protected market for French-manufactured imports; the introduction of taxation in money to finance expenditures of the colonial budget; and the expansion of primary education. While these changes held out the promise of modernization, they were insufficient to achieve that goal. They left Viet Nam halfway between the traditional and modern worlds. Viet Nam's colonial economy was vulnerable to fluctuations in international commodity and monetary markets and did not possess the institutional structure for sustained economic growth. It lacked a self-generating industrial sector able to absorb the people drawn into the towns in the hope of gaining access to the monetary economy.[46]

Under the impetus of colonial programs, wide segments of Vietnamese society were moving away from traditional and toward modern ways of life. Such a movement has been described as a process of social mobilization. As an analytic concept, social mobilization is defined by Karl Deutsch "as the process in which major clusters of old social, economic, and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behavior."[47] Two distinct stages are implied in this process. The first stage involves "the uprooting or breaking away from old settings, habits, and commitments," while the second stage is concerned with "the induction of the mobilized persons into some relatively stable new patterns of group membership, organization, and commitment."[48] During the colonial era in Viet Nam the first stage was fairly widespread, but the second touched the mobilized population only slightly. The Vietnamese were only partially mobilized. They had moved away from traditional lives, but they had not been reintegrated into a new pattern, nor had the institutions for this reintegration been established.

Viet Nam's halfway house on the road to modernization was neither stable nor tension-free. Many Vietnamese were caught between the deterioration of old commitments—to the village and the clan—and the lack of or the uncertainty of new commitments to factory, foremen, teachers, work groups, classmates, and the like. Voluntary associations so closely identified with social integration in highly mobile, modern societies did not come easily to the Vietnamese. They fell back upon fictive or real kinship identities and secret societies. Moreover, there was little hope of reintegration through the institutions of the colonial state; it sought only to keep tensions arising out of the imbalances of Vietnamese society from erupting out of control.

Potential reintegration through economic growth was restricted by the mercantilist system of colonial trade in which the colonies were supposed to absorb the exports of French industry while supplying tropical products in return. Unfettered, indigenous economic development

would have reduced the need for French imports into Viet Nam, and therefore had to be controlled. Politics also could not play its potentially conciliatory role, much less act as a force for reintegration. The colonial bureaucracy absorbed most of the functions of Viet Nam's political life down to the village. The role that mandarinal recruitment had once played in institutionalizing political power, conciliating tensions, and integrating farflung villages into a centralized political system was neglected. The colonial administration could fulfill none of these functions; instead, it became a training ground for a new type of bureaucratically competent Vietnamese elite. In the uncertainty of the colonial world the understandable anxiety of these new bureaucrats for prestige and occupational mobility outweighed their concern for the problems of politics of the country and generated another set of tensions.

Destruction of Traditional Political System

The existence of unreconciled tensions was nothing new to Viet Nam. Prior to the French intervention the Vietnamese political capacity for resolving conflict was conspicuously poor; violence and internal warfare were endemic. Yet, on occasions when unity had been achieved, determined efforts were made to institutionalize political power. France was both capable of quelling violence and eager to do so, but she gave little attention to the long-range consequences of holding power by force rather than through institutionalized compliance. Political, as distinct from administrative, institutions were not a part of the French colonial state, except for high-level advisory councils composed of a small number of French and Vietnamese in each of the three pays of Viet Nam.[49] While the French administrative structure was suppressing a traditional system of politics with its own unique criteria for mobility and power based on Confucian concepts, it was establishing a system with little mobility and almost no power for indigenous participants. At the time that social change was occurring more rapidly than ever, no legitimate channels for expressing or reconciling social tension were permitted to a people with a long tradition of lively political life. In destroying the old structures of politics and neglecting to create new ones, France was undermining its own interests in Viet Nam.

The destabilizing effects of French colonialism had several important consequences in developing the potential for revolution in Viet Nam. At the lowest level of the institutional hierarchy, the Vietnamese village was no longer the vital cohesive force it had once been. These qualities were lost to it largely because the French had violated the anonymity of the villagers and the autonomy of the village. This occurred through three major reforms:

> (1) The institution of regular registration of births and deaths, which permitted the composition of more accurate tax rolls; (2) the imposition of tighter French control over the Council of Notables, particularly in tax and budgetary matters; and (3) the substitution of election for co-optation of council members. The first two of these reforms undermined the patriarchal system by curtailing the considerable administrative—and consequently financial—latitude with which the councils of notables had been accustomed to function. The third reform encouraged the taxpayers to look after their own affairs.[50]

By weakening traditional village leadership and promoting the legal autonomy of the individual villagers without establishing new forms of political organization to encompass these relationships, the French were inviting the disintegration of the Vietnamese social system.

Perhaps the most important change in creating the potential for revolution in Viet Nam was the formation of new sets of elites. These elites emerged from French colonial

institutions which were bringing Viet Nam into closer contact with the modern world. Besides the administrative cadre, this elite included people who were naturalized as French citizens, those who received French education, those who became commercial entrepreneurs and property owners, and finally those members of the traditional elite who adapted their talents to qualify for colorial elite status. Although by definition these elites had more opportunities than did the mass of the population, still, their social and occupational mobility was limited. Restrictions arose because the institutions into which they were mobilized were circumscribed by the confines of the colonial society. Moreover, most of the important positions in these institutions were held by Frenchmen. Vietnamese did not receive opportunities commensurate with their expectations, especially in having access to positions of authority.[51] For the French to have shared such power would have required the creation of a mutually beneficial relationship with the Vietnamese to protect France's colonial interests. Such a political relationship or community of interest the French conspicuously failed to create.

Under the impact of French colonialism Viet Nam became "a nation off balance."[52] Social changes had been induced by colonial programs, but there was hardly a harmonious relationship between the new society and the old Viet Nam. These changes had "dislocated the traditional mode of life and produced a poorly integrated society in which a small, urban-oriented Westernized elite was largely alienated from the bulk of the village based population."[53] Although harmony had been intermittent in traditional Viet Nam, it seems to have been a widely shared ideal, especially in the life of the villages. The basis for this harmony had been a structure of authority based on Confucian precepts and buttressed by strong patrilineal kinship ties. The social changes wrought during colonial rule were undoubtedly unnecessary if Viet Nam were to participate in the interdependent life of the modern world. However, too little attention was given to the effects of this process on the structure of authority or popular compliance. Since the village has been and continues to be the foundation of Vietnamese society, the deterioration of its resiliency was certain to have a strong impact on the stability of the society as a whole. Because the villages lay outside the modern sector that France was creating in the urban centers, this social instability was not apparent. French administration, commerce, and military force provided a veneer of stability on a society halfway between the traditional and the modern worlds.

Despite the instability emergent in Vietnamese society during colonial rule, revolution might never have occurred. Although rebellions broke out periodically, they were usually localized affairs and rarely threatened to overwhelm the colonial regime. Before 1940, a force of only 10,776 regular French troops, 16,218 men of the indigenous militia, and 507 French police agents were sufficient to keep order among 19 million Vietnamese.[54] In 1954, 200,000 French and African troops and 225,000 indigenous troops were forced to surrender after seven years of revolutionary war.[55] Initially, rebellions against French rule were led by men loyal to the imperial government at Hue; later rural uprisings became virtually leaderless protests of discontented peasants. However, in the early 1930's a new type of leadership appeared to take advantage of incipient rebellion. Paradoxically, the rural areas did not produce these leaders; they came from the French schools and bureaucracy in the urban centers. They were part of the modern elite that France had created to facilitate the development of a colonial economy and administration. Yet this elite had not been assimilated into the world they were being asked to create. Their lack of a stake in the colonially created world induced many French-trained Vietnamese to seek the fulfillment they had come to expect through rebellion against France.

Not surprisingly, the rebellions led by the new French-trained elites were no more successful than previous traditionalist uprisings. Gradually it became clear that the old-style Vietnamese rebellion could not affect French power. A more comprehensive, structured, and

enduring movement was required. When the Japanese wartime occupation broke the French hold on Viet Nam, a small but strategic portion of this frustrated elite went into action. They had learned that only a broad-scale revolution could achieve the objectives they sought.

CHAPTER 2

THE COLONIAL BACKGROUND TO THE VIETNAMESE REVOLUTION, 1885-1940

TRANSFORMATION OF VIETNAMESE POLITICS

The treaties of protection of 1883-84 imposed upon Viet Nam by the military force of France, did not mean the end of opposition to French rule. This opposition continued intermittently until France was finally forced to retreat from Viet Nam in 1954. In opposing France, Viet Nam's greatest weakness in the mid-nineteenth century was her greatest strength in the mid-twentieth: a political organization capable of mobilizing and directing a large body of men in military and political action; and a political appeal to sustain the functioning of this organization and to maintain the loyalty of the populace toward it. Throughout the 70 years between 1884 and 1954, Vietnamese opposition to French rule underwent a substantial transformation to achieve this position of strength. In order to understand more fully how the French were overthrown, it is necessary to trace the lines of the internal political transformation of Viet Nam back to the imposition of alien control over the country.

From this perspective it is possible to discern several general phases through which Vietnamese political development passed. The first of these broad phases was a transitional one, ranging from the militant, yet uncoordinated, and largely ineffectual protests of those identified with the traditional political structure, to the formation of the new political parties based on the ideologies of nationalism and communism in the year 1925. The second phase consisted of an assertion through countrywide political parties of nationalist and Communist identities and of their frustrated attempts to overthrow French rule. This era of unresolved political conflict was superseded in 1941 when the Communists and the nationalists organized political fronts against both the Japanese and the French occupations of Viet Nam. The third broad phase in the transformation of the politics of Viet Nam saw the emergence of a well-organized, Communist-dominated political movement which succeeded in channeling the aspirations and many of the adherents of Vietnamese nationalism and in forging the nucleus of an armed force.

The basis for this tripartite division of the anticolonial politics of Viet Nam has not been merely the organizational developments which these dates represent. These phases reflect the changes in the structure of Vietnamese political life brought on by the impact of French colonialism. The first of these phases reflects the destruction of the countrywide effectiveness of the traditional political system and the persistence of its uncoordinated fragments in militant protest against French occupation. This initial phase also reflects the attempt by leaders identified with traditional concepts of politics to find new bases of power with which to focus their protest against France. It saw the end of the imperial restoration movement as a meaningful political appeal and at the same time it witnessed the laying of the foundation for later political movements. What is perhaps most significant about this period is that it occurred before the major alteration of Vietnamese society and before the creation of a French-educated elite, an industrial labor force, and a landless peasantry with monetary debts.

These effects of colonialism were absorbed during the second phase of Vietnamese political development under French dominance. During this period, more broadly based political organizations were formed, although the limitations of regional political identities were not surmounted to a significant degree. Parochial affinities were equally as important an obstacle to countrywide political movements as were the surveillance and the repression by French authorities. After the Japanese coup de force of March 1945, which effectively ended French colonial sovereignty in Viet Nam, these centripetal forces in Vietnamese politics reappeared with vigor. The postwar experience showed that it was the Communists who had used the Japanese interregnum to build a cohesive political organization capable of overcoming at least some of the persisting parochial tendencies among the Vietnamese political elite.

Phan Boi Chau

The initial transition from traditional politics to movements based on imported ideologies is best personified by Phan Boi Chau, a well-known political leader born in the central Viet Nam province of Nghe An. Prepared for the mandarinal examinations by a classical education, Chau scored first place in the tests, but refused to accept an appointment in the French-dominated traditional bureaucracy.[1] Instead, Chau went into exile in Japan, taking with him the last representatives of the Can Vuong, the loyalists in the old regime. The most outstanding of these faithful was the 24-year-old Prince Cuong De, a direct descendant of Emperor Gia Long who had in 1802 reunified Viet Nam.[2] While in exile, Chau founded the Viet Nam Duy Tan Hoi (Association for the Modernization of Viet Nam) which was directed toward three main goals: national liberation, restoration of the monarchy, and the promulgation of a constitution based on the Japanese model.[3]

In addition to the obvious influence of his Japanese political supporters, Chau's efforts to give greater structure to the Vietnamese resistance was also affected by his early political experiences. It is reputed that Chau took part in the militant uprising in Nghe An and adjoining Ha Tinh provinces, which was led by one of Viet Nam's most outstanding scholars, Phan Dinh Phung.[4] Whether or not Chau was an active participant in this revolt from 1893-95, which breached French lines of communication across Central Viet Nam and into Laos, there is little doubt that he was impressed by its consequences.[5]

This Nghe An-Ha Tinh revolt was one of many localized protests led by the scholar-bureaucrats of Viet Nam against French occupation from 1885 to 1897. The protests broke out all the way from the mountainous Chinese border area to the Tonkin Delta to the lowlands of central Viet Nam. There was virtually no coordination between these rebellions although they were fought for ostensibly the same purposes and were led by men of similar backgrounds with probably close personal familiarity. Their shortcomings lay not only in failing to establish lines of communication and trust between each other but also in placing more emphasis on military action than on political preparation. Consequently there was no symbol of this protest, although it was directed toward the monarchical restoration and the expulsion of the French. On the local level there was no political organization to replenish the ranks of the traditionalist rebels, to provide supplies and information, and to ensure loyalty in the face of French occupation.

Although modern weapons were available to them, the tactics and techniques employed by the Vietnamese neither employed innovations which these new circumstances required nor were they effective. It remained for the French through two of their most celebrated officers, General Galliéni and Marshal Lyautey, to develop a doctrine of pacification adapted to the exigencies of this political warfare in Viet Nam. This doctrine became a standard for French

colonial warfare from Madagascar to Morocco, but it ultimately failed through poor application in 1954 in the hills of Tonkin where it was first forged.[6] In the face of superior French forces and techniques, the regionally based scholar-bureaucrats did not have the chance to become warlords as occurred with the end of central traditional authority in China. Rather, the feeble protests of the traditional political leaders were as doomed as the Vendée Militaire whose Vietnamese counterpart it is often said to be.[7]

Although it had fairly extensive cultural activities, the Duy Tan Hoi never developed an active program of political operations to challenge French authority in Viet Nam. Brought into existence largely by overseas support, the Duy Tan Hoi was dissolved by the same influences. In July 1910, the Japanese, having agreed to respect the integrity of French colonies as one of the terms of a much needed loan from France, expelled both Phan Boi Chau and Cuong De and closed the special schools where Vietnamese students had come to be educated.[8] The two exiles sought temporary refuge in Thailand, but upon receiving news of the Chinese Revolution they proceeded to Canton, a city which was to become the most important center of Vietnamese exile politics over the following two decades.

Development of Political Groups

In Canton, Phan Boi Chau was to receive his most substantial support for political efforts in Viet Nam when he made contact with Hu Han-min, one of the leaders of the Nationalist Kuomintang. With this backing Chau reorganized his political forces in May 1912, when he launched the Viet Nam Quang Phuc Hoi (Association for the Restoration of Viet Nam). Induced perhaps by the financial assistance of the Kuomintang, the program of the Quang Phuc Hoi no longer spoke of an imperial restoration but now proclaimed the formation of a Vietnamese republican government. Prince Cuong De was no longer supported as a claimant to the throne of Viet Nam, but in the new government he was to become the Tong Dai Bieu, or the general representative of the Vietnamese people, a position similar to chief of state in a parliamentary form of government.[9]

The importance of this tie with the Kuomintang, however, was not merely reflected in a programmatic change. The relationship was to set a precedent for the conduct of Vietnamese anticolonial politics over the decades ahead. It was from among Vietnamese exiles attracted to Canton by Chau's political movement that Nguyen Ai Quoc (the early pseudonym of Ho Chi Minh who was also a native of Nghe An Province) was to found the antecedent to the Indochinese Communist Party in 1925. Vietnamese cadres were to be trained at the Whampoa Military Academy, the Chinese Nationalists were to provide assistance for the formation of the first Vietnamese Nationalist Party, and eventually China was to play a crucial role in the organization of wartime resistance groups against the Japanese occupation of 1940-45. Clearly, the fortunes of Vietnamese political groups were now linked with their counterparts in China.

Significance of Secret Societies

Although foreign support was the major strength of Phan Boi Chau's political movements he did have an extensive organization functioning inside Viet Nam. One measure of its strength under the Duy Tan Hoi was its ability to send more than 100 students to Japan to be educated in modern disciplines between 1906 and 1909.[10] But the character of this organization was more important than its strength for it, too, was to set a precedent in the methods of organization in Vietnamese politics. For both the Duy Tan Hoi and the Quang Phuc Hoi depended on a network of secret societies for their internal strength in Viet Nam.[11] The use of

this time-honored social institution for political purposes by the Quang Phuc Hoi was both an indication of its ties with traditional techniques and traditional leadership, and its lack of intellectual and material resources to recruit and train a political cadre indoctrinated in new organizational methods.

Secret societies have always played an important role in Viet Nam because of the lack of culturally integrative institutions and the absence of a coherent "great tradition."[12] This has meant the strong persistence of magic and superstition as widely accepted beliefs in the Vietnamese countryside. Taking advantage of this cultural residue, men who trained themselves as geomancers and magicians would organize secret societies and from them derive a comfortable income and a circle of influence. The adherents to a society would gain magic intercession with the implacable forces of nature as well as a group of friends for potential mutual assistance, in addition to personal identity and social status.[13]

Prior to French intervention, one of the principal means of discouraging secret societies was through the examinations for the mandarinate. This culturally integrative institution provided an avenue for the ambitions or the social mobility of the villager. It also provided him with a tangible incentive through exemption from the corvée, military service, and the head tax after passing the first of three qualifying examinations for an appointment to the traditional bureaucracy.[14] Until the French began to tamper with Vietnamese cultural institutions there was greater incentive to study the Chinese classics in the hope of passing an examination than to practice sorcery in a secret society.

Upon occupation of southern Viet Nam (Cochinchina) by the French, however, the bureaucracy fled, and the colonial masters, after discontinuing the traditional examinations, were unable to establish cultural integrative institutions except for a school for interpreters with a small student body. In 1903, a knowledge of French was made prerequisite for admission to the mandarinate in Annam and Tonkin when there were only the most limited opportunities to gain a Western education.[15] With the end of the tax exemption and the corresponding deterioration of established patterns of authority in the rural areas of Viet Nam, an environment was created for leadership which aspired to influence and income through secret societies because it was denied traditional recognition.

An exile political organization with countrywide aspirations like the Quang Phuc Hoi could make contact with existing secret societies or help to start new ones by issuing honorary quarters, commissions of rank in the new republican government to society members, paper money with emblems of the new government, and other means of creating a symbolic tie between the central organization and the local units.[16] In the absence of means to recruit and train political cadres, the Quang Phuc Hoi was using the best available resources for political organization. No estimate has been made of how extensive an organization was assembled, but some indication can be gained through an analysis of its militant demonstrations against French rule.

Early Demonstrations Against French Rule

On the night of the 23rd-24th of March 1913, the city of Saigon was bombed, with eight public buildings the specific objectives. The plot was discovered before the bombs exploded, but it was followed four days later by a nonviolent demonstration by 600 unarmed peasants who had come from the countryside in the hope of seeing Emperor Phan Xich Long descend from heaven and begin a war aginst the French in which he would be aided by supernatural powers.[17] On the 12th of April of the same year a provincial mandarin in the Tonkin province

of Thai Binh was assassinated, and on the 26th a bomb was thrown on the terrace of a hotel in Hanoi killing two French officers and a Vietnamese bystander. Retaliation for these acts was swift and forceful: 254 persons were arrested, 64 were brought before a court, 7 were executed, and both Phan Boi Chau and Cuong De were condemned to death in absentia.[18]

Facing the loss of the good will of their adherents, the Quang Phuc Hoi launched no violent incidents until 1916 when the city of Saigon was once again the target. During the night of the 14th of February a group of 300 armed men in three sections entered the city from sampans. There objective was the central jail, where they hoped to free some of their compatriots and then attack key administrative offices. Before reaching the jail they were discovered and were routed, losing numerous casualties in their flight.[19]

On the surface, these attacks were unimpressive by almost any criteria of political warfare. They dramatically pointed to the classic requirement for any realistic seizure of power: a trained and equipped armed force. In their amateurishness, however, these attacks did not obscure two solid accomplishments. Coordination of operational effort was demonstrated in the spring of 1916 in the planned, simultaneous uprising by the Quang Phuc Hoi in thirteen of the twenty provinces.[20] This did not mean that a general plan was drawn up by the central organization of the Quang Phuc Hoi in its Canton exile and passed down to its local units for execution, but it does show that the local leadership had the capability to launch a concerted attack. These, then, were the first steps away from the fragmented revolts of the scholar-bureaucrats.

More important for future operations, this internal strength of the Quang Phuc Hoi showed that a local-level leadership could make substantial progress in rural political organization under French dominance. This came not as a result of giving voice to social or economic discontent, but through political efforts where a traditional structure had been dissolved and no alternative for political expression had been provided by the conquering power. Moreover, the fact that a countrywide elite operating from exile could form a continuing political tie with a local leadership was significant evidence that the first steps in building a new Vietnamese political system had been taken. These political energies had not been motivated by new ideologies, or revolutionary theories, or as a result of economic calamity. They had originated from the lack of a structure which encouraged political participation and which had thwarted the mobility of those with traditional social and political skills. Their accomplishments, limited though they were, did indicate that they had adapted their skills to the exigencies of French dominance and thus had begun the transformation of Vietnamese politics.

The lack of a more potent opposition to France was due in part to the fact that the Quang Phuc Hoi and its leader, Phan Boi Chau, were in a real sense neither nationalist nor revolutionary. If we accept Hans Kohn's dictum that nationalism "recognizes the nation-state as the ideal form of political organization and nationality as the source of all creative cultural energy and economic well being,"[21] we cannot find extensive evidence that Chau was the first important articulator of Vietnamese nationalism. Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that Chau was more opportunistically motivated. In addition to altering his political program to fit the ideals of first his Japanese and then his Chinese supporters, Chau finally became a partisan of Franco-Vietnamese collaboration.[22]

Perhaps a partial explanation for the lack of vigor in Chau's leadership and the absence of a more dynamic development in Vietnamese politics at this period can be found by referring to Rupert Emerson's observation that,

> the greater the disruption of the old society under the impact of the intruding Western forces—assuming that that disruption takes the form of a

> development of modern enterprise and administration and not merely the suppression of the native population—the speedier and more complete the assertion of nationalism is likely to be.

Emerson's analysis continues that

> the elements of a population which have been most drastically divorced from the close-knit pattern of their traditional society are the most susceptible to the appeal of nationalism,

but this appeal awaits

> the appearance of a Westernized elite [which] is an indispensable part of the movement toward nationalism. It is this elite—the new intelligentsia and the professional men—which translates to the local scene the nationalist experience and ideology of the West and serves as the crystallizing center for the inchoate disaffections of the mass.[23]

Prior to the mid-1920's, Vietnamese politics did not have such an intelligentsia, nor had traditional patterns of life been so completely disrupted. What had been disrupted was the Vietnamese political system, and in its absence a clandestine structure of politics had developed to oppose French rule. It was only after France had launched a program of colonial development, including education and industrialization, that a more fundamental change in the structure of Vietnamese society occurred. When political groups reflecting these changes began to form, they found in the vague beginnings of the transition from traditional politics valuable forms of experience which were to be used in new ways and with new justification to oppose French domination.

TRANSFORMATION OF VIETNAMESE SOCIETY

The structural transformation of Vietnamese society resulted from the impact of World War I and the colonial development which followed. The period between the two wars saw changes from four principal sources: (1) the formation of an industrial labor force; (2) the emergency of an indigenous wealthy class whose holdings were in newly developed agricultural lands; (3) the creation of an educated elite whose instruction had been exclusively in the French language and which had consisted of an inculcation of French cultural values and training in technical specialties, with the promise of employment in the French sector of the colonial society, and finally, (4) the deterioration of cohesive social institutions in the rural areas.

The first three of these changes mobilized Vietnamese away from traditional pursuits to positions of greater physical and social mobility. However, the latter change accelerated the decline in vitality of those suprafamilial institutions which had given coherence to traditional society. A gap was thus established between what had become the mobilized sector and that which remained the peasant sector, but the latter was now without vital institutions and traditions to sustain it. The French did not attempt to bridge this gap by building institutions for the eventual self-generating mobilization of Vietnamese society. Instead, they stabilized this gap and thereby created a potential for social and, therefore, political instability. Having decided on this course, France could have avoided the political consequences of this social change only by absorbing the energies or gaining the loyalties of the elites it had created.

Extent of Labor Force in Viet Nam

France's demands upon her colonies fell most heavily upon Indochina, for it had to provide "more than half of the wartime loans and gifts made to France by her colonies, more raw materials than any other part of her empire except West Africa; and more than 43,000 Indochinese soldiers and almost 49,000 workers were sent to Europe."[24] The magnitude of this levy upon Viet Nam can be measured by the fact that the total prewar industrial labor force was only approximately 62,000 workers.[25] In addition to this exported manpower it was necessary to recruit increased numbers of workers for local production of raw material exports as well as to step up the output of manufactured goods which France could not supply. Therefore, a 33 percent wartime increase in the work force in the mining industry—from 12,000 in 1913 to 16,000 in 1918—was representative of growth in other fields.[26]

At the end of the war, expansion of the industrial labor force continued because of corresponding economic growth, resulting primarily from the monetary stability in Viet Nam (contrasted with inflation in France) and from the initial success in growing rubber in the red lands of southern Viet Nam. From 1913 this expansion was almost fourfold when it reached its pre-World War II maximum in 1929, estimated at more than 221,000 workers in all of Indochina. The distribution of these laborers was over three major fields of economic activity: commercial and industrial undertakings, plantation agriculture, and mining. The largest of these fields was the first, with 39.2 percent of the total, or 86,000 workers, while the other two consisted of 36.8 percent (81,000 workers) and 24.0 percent (55,000 workers), respectively.[27]

Although these figures indicate that the labor force of Viet Nam did not represent more than 1 percent of the population, they do not reflect the overall social mobility which resulted from industrialization.[28] Because of the high turnover in the labor force, there were more persons mobilized for the modern industrial sector of the economy than was indicated by the figures for the work force at any one time. For example, in order to maintain the work force on the rubber plantations in southern Viet Nam at a constant 22,000, it was necessary to recruit more than 75,000 laborers between 1925 and 1930.[29] There was substantial physical mobility involved here because the rubber plantation workers were recruited in the north, since suitable workers could not be found in the less populous southern region. The mining companies in the north of Viet Nam did not face the problem of recruiting at a distance because they were located adjacent to the densely populated Tonkin Delta. However, this proximity to the workers' homeland meant that mining companies would usually have to recruit new workers each year, because the miners would often not return from their lunar new year vacation. The importance of this rapid turnover was not in its addition to the numerical percentage of the work force of Viet Nam but because it "delayed the formation of a distinct, self-conscious working class and it postponed the establishment of a strict line of demarcation between the wage earner and the peasant. On the other hand, it extended the effects of the new way of life to a rather large portion of the population."[30]

Even though this labor force was loosely structured, it possessed the cohesiveness to stage labor protests and strikes. Between 1922 and 1934 there were more than a hundred strikes, the majority of which occurred in northern Viet Nam (Tonkin) where the industrial labor force was concentrated.[31] These disputes grew out of grievances over wages and working conditions. One demonstration resulted in the assassination of the French director of the firm engaged in recruiting agricultural labor for the plantations in the south. Problems of repatriating rubber workers were overcome by a savings plan to provide them with a sum to cushion their readjustments to life in their home areas.[32] But the most pervasive problem of labor readjustment occurred during the depression, when the total industrial labor force

declined from its 1929 high to an estimated 150,000—nearly 33 percent.[33] With few other alternatives, the unemployed either sought to be reabsorbed into their peasant villages, burdening already overtaxed institutions, or chose to remain idle in the cities. In both cases they contributed to social instability.

New Patterns of Landholding

The opening up of new land and the exigencies of credit are always crucial forces for change in agrarian societies. In Viet Nam these factors brought both quantitative and regional changes in the characteristics of landholding and production. Between 1880 and 1937, a French public works program of drainage and irrigation canals in south Viet Nam (Cochinchina) made 4.5 million acres of new land available for cultivation.[34] France was more interested in recouping the capital investment which this public works program had required than in the social consequences of the ownership of this newly developed land. Moreover, a program designed to establish small holders as owners of their land would have an administrative overhead and required an extension of credit to moneyless peasants, a program which the French did not wish to undertake. Instead, the land was sold in unlimited amounts to an emerging group of Vietnamese who had already learned the requirements for participating in a commercial environment.

The pattern of landholding which became effective in southern Viet Nam was therefore conspicuously different from that in other parts of the country. In the center and in the north (Annam and Tonkin) small holders continued to predominate. In the center, those who owned less than 1.5 acres constituted 68.5 percent of the area's landholders in 1930, while in the north this portion of the landholders was 61.6 percent of the total for the region. By contrast, in the south those with less than 2.5 acres composed only 33.6 percent of the total number of landholders. But the most startling development was that, out of 6,530 landowners in all of Indochina with more than 125 acres of land in 1930, 6,300 were located in south Viet Nam.[35] An even more dramatic statement of the landholding pattern is that, by 1930, 45 percent of the cultivatable area of the Mekong Delta was in the hands of 2 percent of all the landholders. Moreover, of the 244 landowners each having more than 1,500 acres of land all were located in the Mekong Delta.[36]

Along with the emergence of this landed upper class there was also the formation of a tenant class who, not having access to the easy purchase of property, actually worked these domains and provided income for the landlords. No accurate figures are readily available on landlessness and tenancy, but an estimate can be derived from existing statistics. In the south there were some 255,000 persons owning agricultural land in 1930. Of this number, only 165,000 cultivated their land directly, while the rest, or 25 percent, were absentee landlords.[37] By estimating an average of ten in a family, there is the indication that out of a rural population of 4 million in southern Viet Nam in 1930, more than half, or 2.4 million, were tenants or landless agricultural laborers. This would mean that the tenant class in the Mekong Delta alone constituted nearly 14 percent of the total population of Viet Nam in 1930. By comparison, in the Tonkin Delta in the north there were 964,000 individual property owners in 1930 of whom only 12,000, or slightly more than 1 percent, were absentee landlords.[38]

The emergence of this landowning upper class in southern Viet Nam as a distinct social grouping can be given another dimension by analyzing the naturalization of the Vietnamese as French citizens.[39] In 1937 there were 2,555 Vietnamese who had received French citizenship and more than half, or 1,474, were from southern Viet Nam. The north had the next largest number, a third of the total, and the center, a continuing stronghold of traditional values, had

less than 10 percent of the naturalized Vietnamese.[40] Some allowance must be made for the fact that there were more naturalized Vietnamese women, which leads to the assumption that these women had become the wives of Frenchmen. Since there was a certain uniformity in this pattern throughout Viet Nam, it does not detract from another assumption. Based on the fact that southern Viet Nam had only 20 percent of the population of the whole country but more than half of the naturalized French citizens, it appears that the landowning class, which had already been favored by French policies in land development, was becoming more closely identified with French rule by adopting the citizenship of France.

The Social Structure Created by Colonialism

These statistics lend substance to the rather arbitrary analysis of the effects of colonialism on Vietnamese social structure made by the French economist Paul Bernard. In 1934 he divided Vietnamese society into three general categories based on income.[41] The wealthy were those who received an average annual income of 6,000 piasters or more in 1931 (about U.S. $5,500 in 1957 prices). The middle income group received an average of from 160 piasters in the north and center to 180 in the south (about U.S. $145-165 in 1957 prices), and the lowest income group received the remainder of the money income of the country, which averaged 49 piasters (about U.S. $44 in 1957 prices). Numerically, these categories indicated sharp divisions in Vietnamese society, with the wealthy consisting of 8,600 persons, the middle income group of 1.6 million, and the low income group 14.9 million.[42]

Of greater interest than these aggregates are the regional variations which Bernard's figures reflect. Among the top income group, 8,000 out of the total 8,600 were residents of southern Viet Nam. Based on our statistics of 6,300 wealthy landowners, there appears to be some justification for this number. Of equal interest is that central Viet Nam, traditionalist in outlook, had just slightly more than 1 percent (100 persons) in this upper income category, while the north had about 6 percent or 500 persons. In the middle income group the regional positions were reversed. It was in the north where almost 45 percent of the middle income receivers lived, while the center actually had a larger portion—some 400,000 to 500,000—than did the south's middle income group, which made up only 25 percent of the countrywide total.

Even though these estimates are not based on thorough documentation, it appears that when compared with statistical information on the labor force and land ownership they present certain possibilities for generalizations. In the south an extremely small and wealthy (in comparison with other Vietnamese and with the incomes of French administrators) upper class was emerging under French aegis, identified with France, whose members were adopting French citizenship. At the same time a small middle class of about 10 percent of the regional population was taking form, consisting of the population of the one metropolitan center, Saigon-Cholon, and about a dozen provincial centers. At the bottom of this southern hierarchy was a tenant class of recent origin representing about half of the regional population and approximately 14 percent of the countryside population.

In the north, the upper income group was of less importance both regionally and countrywide. A relatively large middle income group, however, reflected an industrial work force devoted to mining, cement manufacture, and textiles; an indigenous administrative cadre at the seat of the colonial government in Hanoi; and a group of commercial assistants handling foreign and domestic trade. At the foundation of the society in the north, and indeed in the country as a whole, were approximately 7.5 million peasant proprietors, representing 45 percent of the population of Viet Nam, living in the densely populated Tonkin Delta.

The foundation of society in central Viet Nam consisted largely of peasant farmers who tilled their own land and who composed 25 percent of the population of the entire country. An almost minutely small upper class in the center, with a persisting traditional outlook, reflected a lack of involvement in commerce and vast landholdings. The 100 persons whom Bernard indicates formed this upper class in the center were probably affiliated with the vestigial administration at the Court of Hue. Rounding out the social categories in central Viet Nam there was a middle income group with almost 10 percent of the regional population, which lived in the provincial towns, worked in the few industrial plants, such as the match factory at Vinh, and in the only major port city in the center, Da Nang.

There emerges from these estimates the following social profile of the transformation, through the effects of colonialism, of Vietnamese society up to 1931. See Table 1.

Table 1. Social Profile of Viet Nam, 1931

Description of Social Category	Approximate Numerical Portion of Population (in millions)	Approximate Percentage of Population
Mobilized into participation in the monetary sector of the colonial economy; living in towns with some degree of access to urban facilities for health, education, and information.	1.6	9
Tenant farmer class located on newly developed land in Mekong Delta producing about .5 of all the rice exported from Indochina, which at its prewar (1929) high was 1.5 million metric tons; another source of exportable rice was Cambodia, since the north and center of Viet Nam did not have surpluses and often had to import to meet needs; tenants exceedingly vulnerable to 70 percent drop in price of rice between 1929 and 1934.[43]	2.4	14
Peasant proprietors in southern Viet Nam also having advantage of new land, which resulted in their average holdings being almost nine times larger than the average in Tonkin Delta.[44]	1.5	7
Peasant farmers in central Viet Nam, most tilling their own land, but with local concentrations of tenancy and a regional absentee landlord group of about 10 percent of the total number of property owners.	4.6	25
Peasant farmers in north Viet Nam located in densely populated Tonkin Delta with an average holding of roughly .2 of an acre. Some localized tenancy but a minute part of total producers.[45]	7.5	45
	17.6	100

From this social profile it would appear that the impact of colonialism had little effect on the 70 percent of the population who were peasant villagers in the north and center of Viet Nam. This was clearly not the case, however. The impact of colonialism on the peasantry was undoubtedly as pervasive an influence on the future of Viet Nam as was the mobilization of a small elite. In establishing, under the regime of Governor General Paul Doumer (1897-1902), the principle that taxes gathered in Indochina not only had to support the superstructure of the French administration, but also had to supply funds to the metropolitan budget for France's military forces in the colony, the localized subsistence economy of the peasant villager was rendered obsolete.

Formerly the peasant had produced, or attempted to produce, enough food for his family's consumption plus a surplus to barter for staples and to provide for taxes in kind. Under the colonial regime both taxes and staples required cash. However, the monetary sector of the economy was neither large enough nor efficient enough to permit extensive peasant employment for wages or a market for an agricultural surplus at stable prices. This situation produced two important results: a decline in peasant welfare, and, because communal institutions had been superseded in administration and tax collection, the absence of meaningful mutual assistance beyond the extended family. Both of these results led to a deterioration in social cohesion and offered a potential for political instability.

The sharpness of the dichotomy between the peasant sector and the modern sector is demonstrated by the extent of the inequality in income distribution. In 1931 the peasantry, which made up 90 percent of the population, was receiving only 63 percent of the money income of the colony, while the French administrative class and the Vietnamese wealthy class, which together represented less than 1 percent of the population, were receiving almost 17 percent of the income.[46] Although the income distribution was not a fair measure of peasant welfare because of income from subsistence agriculture, it did indicate taxpaying capacity. The portion of total income devoted to governmental expenditures during the 1930's was about 15 percent,[47] but there are no readily available statistics of the burden borne by either sector of the economy. Assuming that there was an equality of tax burden based on the share of income received, this would suggest that the peasantry paid 9 percent of its total annual income in taxes, thereby reducing its net income to 57 percent of the total income for a year comparable to 1931.

It is highly unlikely that the tax burden was either equal or progressive, because, in addition to capitation and land taxes, a substantial portion of colonial revenue came from French monopolies on salt, tobacco, rice alcohol, and opium. However, another perspective—a microcosmic one—of the demands of peasant taxation can be derived from a survey of 1939 in which,

> the annual budget of a peasant family with eleven members was found to be 32 piastres—a sum indicative of a static economy. Of this total, direct taxes took 6 piastres, or 19%. Yet in certain areas it was customary to pay but one cent for a whole day's work. For a workman to receive one cent for a day's work and to have to pay six piastres as an annual personal tax makes no sense whatsoever. The first figure reflects the monetary value of labor in the traditional society; the second expresses its value in the modern economy. Such a state of affairs, in which the people's livelihood is calculated in terms of one world and their taxes in another, cannot endure.[48]

As this observation emphasizes, it was not the harshness of the taxes themselves which posed the burden for the peasant but the duality of the economy which had developed under colonialism. The real impact in transforming Vietnamese society into duality with a double standard of economic and social values was that the French,

introduced an economy based on exchange without being sufficiently aware of the need to adjust it to the whole country. It was necessary to bear with the economy already in operation (an economy based on autonomous villages) for a time, but the object should have been to eliminate it by gradually educating the people for something else. . . . Instead of that progressive policy, the French chose to maintain an old order, with the laudable motive of avoiding any shock to the local social structure, but with the practical result that in the country the economy continued to be based on little trade and on local consumption while the cities developed a modern commercial economy based on world-wide exchange. Those who organized trade maintained and paid the worker on the level of the traditional economy but sold the product of that work on the international level of the city economy. The difference between the two went into their own pockets.[49]

The economy remained divided because there were no institutions for integration. The end to the duality could have been approached by mobilizing peasants into commercial occupations at a rate greater than the increase in population and by transforming agriculture from subsistence into market-oriented production. This would have required institutions to mobilize indigenous capital, to convert peasants by technical training into a commercial work force, and to increase the capital equipment in agriculture by a generous program of agrarian credit. None of these institutions was established and thus the dichotomization of Vietnamese society persisted.

Establishment of a New Educational System

The dichotomization of Viet Nam's society was accentuated by a comprehensive education program launched by the French administration at the close of World War I. This trained a few Vietnamese to a level of sophistication far beyond their peers. The purpose of this program, as set forth in the Règlement Général de l'Enseignement Supérieur of December 25, 1918, was to train an indigenous cadre for both governmental and commercial administration.[50] Ironically, the inauguration of this French-language education program for Viet Nam coincided with the total decline of the traditional education system. The last purely indigenous schools were theoretically abolished by an imperial decree of July 14, 1919, and the last classical mandarin examinations were given in central Viet Nam in 1918 and in the north in 1919. The end of those last vestiges of education in the Confucian classics had been preceded by another radical change, the gradual adoption of quoc ngu, the romanized script displacing the ideographic characters, for primary instruction and public notices.[51]

The Western system of instruction established for the Vietnamese was never intended to offer wide educational opportunities. However, during its existence, it did experience a significant expansion. The number of students receiving primary instruction in all of Indochina increased from approximately 164,000 in 1921-22, to 373,000 in 1930, to 731,000 in 1942. But the 1930 level of primary school attendance represented only 1.7 percent of the total population of Indochina, and at the high point of the primary education expansion in 1942 the school population formed only 3 percent of the entire population of the three countries. The ratio for Viet Nam was somewhat higher than for all of Indochina, but it never exceeded 4 percent.[52]

The results of the French policy in creating a Westernized elite through education can be seen in the number of persons who passed the degree examinations which were set up at the various levels of the academic hierarchy. The lowest degree given by the French colonial educational system was the Certificat d'Études Primaires Élémentaires which was given after

three to five years' instruction. Because this degree was a prerequisite for all subsequent education, the number receiving it—a total of 149,452 between 1919 and 1944—was a reliable indication of the size of this new elite.[53]

However, the holders of this degree could only expect to get employment in clerical or other minor administrative positions, while advancement to the next academic degree marked a difficult obstacle in educational opportunity. Only 14,397 persons were able to complete primary education and receive the Diplôme d'Études Primaires Supérieures in all of Indochina before the end of World War II. From this group came persons qualified for primary school teaching as well as for more responsible nonclerical jobs in commerce and public administration. Finally, to round out the preuniversity educational opportunities, there was the handful of students who got to one of the four lycées in Indochina (three in Viet Nam) and were among the 827 persons who qualified for the baccalauréat in the interwar period.[54]

The University of Hanoi did not become an institutional reality until 1918; up until 1931 it consisted of a group of higher level technical schools which met the personnel needs of the French administration and the professional requirements of the newly urbanized Vietnamese. The university underwent a major change in character during the worldwide depression. In 1931 it eliminated its technical schools and concentrated on law and medicine, while at the same time it brought the quality of these schools up to the standards of instruction in France. There was always a minimum of about 400 students at the university from its opening and its maximum enrollment came in 1943-44 when it had 1,222 students. During 25 years, the university had enrolled an estimated 3,000 students and had trained some 408 lawyers and 229 doctors, and, before discontinuing the programs in 1930, approximately 337 public works engineers and 160 teachers for secondary schools.[55]

From this general information, the impact of the newly educated elite on Vietnamese politics can best be assessed on the basis of its numerical profile in 1931. By the time the depression had made its full imprint on Viet Nam and the discontent of segments of the population from this and other causes had been shown, the elite was still a very tiny fraction of the population. Avoiding double counting of those with higher degrees, it can be concluded that a little more than 39,000 persons had received some form of instruction under the French educational superstructure in Indochina. Not only was this elite characterized by its small size but the sharp divisions within this group were equally as striking as its distinctiveness from the population as a whole. See Table 2.

Table 2. Educated Elite in 1931[56]

Opportunity for some form of technical or professional training at University of Hanoi.	1,200 (approx.)
Received baccalauréat from one of the four lycées (three in Viet Nam, one in Cambodia).	305
Received diploma after successfully completing approximately nine years of primary education.	4,146
Received certificate after successfully completing approximately five years of primary education.	39,223

The impact of this educated elite on political leadership in Vietnamese independence movements has been viewed from several perspectives. The origin of political discontent from lack of status and intellectual unemployment, however, has been a perennial question. On a quantitative basis it seems that there was enough employment for those Vietnamese trained in the new educational system. The number of indigenous persons serving in the French administration in all of Indochina rose from 12,249 in 1914 to 16,915 in 1922, to 22,570 in 1937.[57] This did not include those persons serving permanently with the Garde Indigène, a militia force which was an auxiliary to the French military establishment in Indochina that consisted of 11,536 men in 1914 and had grown to 16,218 in 1937.[58] On the basis of these statistics the estimate that there were 40,000 indigenous employees of the French administration by 1929 seems reasonable,[59] and also appears adequate to have absorbed the approximately 39,000 persons who had received some Western education. While one could not expect Viet Nam to have had an educated militia, the government also could not be expected to be the only employer of the educated.

A more understandable source of personal dissatisfaction and latent political discontent within this newly educated elite was the lack of advancement to positions of authority. But even among the French administrators power was held in very few hands. Those with authority were about 10 percent of all French personnel—a number varying from 309 in 1914 to 292 in 1937.[60] This compared favorably with the 286 Vietnamese who had reached responsible positions in colonial administration by 1934; the majority of whom (157) were located in southern Viet Nam where they were provincial chiefs of administration.[61] However, this favored group represented only slightly over 1 percent of all the indigenous personnel working in the French civil administration in Indochina.

Although it would appear that the professionally trained university graduates enjoyed good prospects for advancement, the fortunes of the primary school graduates seem to have been less bright. The principal employment for this middle elite was teaching in the lower section of the primary education system. In 1937, however, there were only 1,559 men and 217 women holding these teaching positions in Viet Nam, while the total number of primary school degree holders in Indochina had risen to 7,122. Although figures on employment or the lack of it cannot be conclusive, it appears that if a case is to be made for political leadership in the independence movement resulting from the thwarted mobility of the new educated elite it is best founded on the situation of those in the middle level. Here were those who had not only received a substantial knowledge of French culture but had frequently passed on this learning to other Vietnamese by teaching in the French language. Blocked from higher teaching positions because of the higher degree requirements, and prevented from getting the degree because of the lack of educational facilities, this group was caught between the decay of traditional avenues of mobility and the insufficiency of those avenues created by the French.

The structural transformation of Vietnamese society brought on by the French in the years following World War I thus created a potential for political instability. The potential resulted from the creation of a small, modern social sector without establishing institutions for the eventual mobilization of the whole society into a modern framework. The exploitation of this potential awaited a political leadership which the French had in a large measure helped to create.

GENESIS OF VIETNAMESE NATIONALISM

When Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi Minh) arrived in Canton in June 1925 as an agent for the Comintern—disguised as an interpreter in the mission of Mikhail Borodin—his first task had

been to effect the arrest of Phan Boi Chau, the living symbol of the traditionalist protest against French rule.[62] The irony of this act was that Quoc, the future leader of Communist Viet Nam, was displacing a man from his own native province of Nghe An who for twenty years had led the movement for Vietnamese independence. In a development that contained strong elements of both continuity and change, this Moscow-trained Communist, absent from his country's politics for almost fifteen years, was asserting his control over the small Vietnamese exile group that had congregated in this south China city. Within days Quoc had gathered about him six political exiles, all from his native province, whom he had found in Canton. With them he organized the Viet Nam Cach Menh Thanh Nien Chi Hoi (Viet Nam Revolutionary Youth League), popularly known as the Thanh Nien.[63]

Formation of Parties

These events were to mark the beginning of a second phase in the transformation of Vietnamese politics. Over the next six years parties based partially on ideological programs, but more substantially on particularistic loyalties, would be formed. These political groups were representative of the efforts of the new colonial elites who had received training abroad or who had been mobilized into some segment of the French educational and administrative systems. In their attempts to establish a framework of support for their political ambitions, these elites, out of convenience and necessity, utilized the persisting fragments of the traditionalist structure of politics. Thus there developed a struggle for control over existing political organizations as a means of gaining immediate strength in the independence movement. While this shift in the elite control over existing groups provided continuity, the degree of success of these new leaders was achieved only by bringing changes of deep significance for the transformation of Vietnamese politics. These developments included the organization of more extensive political structures and the rephrasing of political communications so as to attract the widest possible support.

Obviously, these efforts were an attempt to take advantage of the opportunities for political organization among that portion of the population that had been mobilized away from traditional social patterns. But the transition of Vietnamese revolutionary politics to encompass the recently mobilized, or Westernized, portion of the population was not a smooth one. A conflict soon developed, masked by an almost continuing controversy over ideology, between those whose power stemmed from more traditional loyalties and those who attempted to represent identities appealing to the mobilized population. The dilemma of Vietnamese colonial politics lay in attempting to build an organizational structure that would bridge the parochial political segments and thereby mobilize an amount of strength sufficient to drive the French from the country. Such a basis for Vietnamese politics was not developed in this second phase. But the new groups did gain enough strength to pose several militant challenges to colonial rule before they were eclipsed for more than a decade by the counterthrusts of the French.

The arrest of Phan Boi Chau produced changes inside Viet Nam among political activists who recognized his titular leadership. These changes were a corollary to those which the Canton exile group had undergone. In Viet Nam a new generation of political activists had emerged which recognized Chau's leadership only in the organizational sense. With his arrest and the end of the moribund phase of the exile movement, a different category of political leadership emerged in Viet Nam. Resulting from the impetus contributed by minor officials in the colonial government and urban groups in provincial towns, a party later known as the Tan Viet (a short form for Tan Viet Nam Cach Menh Dang or New Viet Nam Revolutionary Party) was formed from among secret societies allied with the Quang Phuc Hoi in north-central Viet Nam.[64]

For the little more than four years of its existence, this party underwent rapid modifications and endured internal strains in an attempt to preserve its autonomy. All the while it was hoping to negotiate an alliance with the Comintern-backed exile group, the Thanh Nien. The party's leadership became fragmented because some of its members were attracted to the more appealing ideology of Marxism and wanted to lead the Tan Viet in its direction. This position was refuted by Dao Duy Anh in one of the first important theoretical works of modern Vietnamese politics entitled, "Study of the Vietnamese Revolution," in which he argued that the party's program ought to be nationalist in emphasis in order to avoid antagonizing diverse social groups.[65] This effort did not overcome the divisiveness of the leaders and, as a consequence, the Tan Viet succumbed to the influence of the Thanh Nien, but its local level structure, which had been the object of the exile's thrust, remained intact.

In searching for an indigenous organizational foundation, the Thanh Nien had hoped to capitalize on the provincial support of this loosely knit party made up of minor administrative personnel and the Fonctionnaires de l'Enseignement or primary teachers. However, the Tan Viet organizational structure was not widespread but was concentrated in the contiguous provinces of Nghe An, Ha Tinh, and Thanh Hoa, where, by 1928, 24 of its 42 cells were located.[66] Its strength tapered off rapidly in other areas, for there were only seven cells in all of south Viet Nam and five in the north. Yet, until 1927, the Tan Viet was the only significant indigenous political organization. Moreover, the weakness of the Tan Viet in both north and south reflected the identity of the founders of the party with their native province of Nghe An and the sedentary nature of their occupations; being primarily teachers and functionaries, these part-time political activists in the Tan Viet could not easily move from their jobs in broad organizational programs.[67] But enjoying the vestigial respect toward these occupations, the Tan Viet members could develop strength in depth in provincial areas.[68] This strength gave the party its unique place in Vietnamese politics, but it also focused sharply on its weaknesses. Significantly, the Tan Viet contained no workers in its membership and, although it had an elaborately written nationalist program, the specific mold of the party and its organizational limitations prevented it from winning more than several hundred adherents.[69]

In the face of menacing attempts by the Thanh Nien to take over the Tan Viet organization the only real alternative open to this central Viet Nam party was, after 1927, to join forces with the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (Viet Nam Nationalist Party [VNQDD]). Formed in Hanoi in November 1927 like the Tan Viet, this party was a regionally based political group concentrated in the north.[70] For these two parties, founded on particularistic identities, to have united into a countrywide, instead of a regional, nationalist movement would have required the formation of loyalties and the sharing of organizational responsibilities on a supraparochial basis which did not then exist. Although nationalism was beginning to emerge as an ideal in Viet Nam, practically, it was able to give coherence and structure only to parochial and not to universal political organizations. In their incapacity or unwillingness to seek a wider basis for political activity, the leaders of the Tan Viet preferred to rely on provincial loyalties, even when this meant the loss of their personal political power. For in 1930, the Thanh Nien exile group—principally from Nghe An province and now relocated in Hong Kong—founded the Indochinese Communist Party which succeeded in having the Tan Viet leaders arrested and then assumed control of their provincial organization.

Perhaps the expansion of the VNQDD in north Viet Nam was due to the assemblage of the labor force there, the presence of the University of Hanoi, and its location as the center of the colonial administration. The concentration of nearly half of the population of Viet Nam in and around Hanoi[71] also facilitated the organizational efforts of the nationalist party, for it was possible to contact a great number of potential adherents within the area. In addition, the diversity of the northern population favored the development of a political party with a

broader social foundation. But while these factors, combined with the organization techniques of the VNQDD, resulted in a strong Vietnamese political group with approximately 1,500 persons affiliated with 120 cells by 1929, it still remained a force localized in north Viet Nam.[72] It was primarily from a realization of this limitation that the VNQDD decided on an overt militancy to demonstrate what power it had and to win wider support by proving itself to be the vanguard party in overthrowing the French.[73]

Beginnings of Political Action

Acting to assert itself in Vietnamese politics, the VNQDD launched its first overt attack against the French administration in February 1929. On the night of the 9th, the director of an enterprise which recruited laborers for employment in the rubber plantations in the south and in New Caledonia, M. Bazin, was assassinated in a public place in Hanoi.[74] By this dramatic event the VNQDD hoped to provide a symbol of the readjustment problems and discontent of the workers returning from the south and to win their support. But the quick response of the French authorities led to the capture of party documents and then to the arrest of 229 members of the VNQDD.[75] These arrests provide detailed information on some of the strengths and weaknesses of the party and indicate some of the reasons prompting its choice of political action.

In the table below it can be seen that, although there was a fair occupational distribution among the arrested party members, more than 50 percent of them were in the service of the French administration and almost all of them were of an educated or intellectual background. Moreover, all but about 15 percent of those arrested were in urban occupations and were therefore best prepared to sustain this essentially urban form of revolt in assassinating a prominent Frenchman. As subsequent events were to show, the VNQDD did not lack strength in the rural areas of north Viet Nam, but this support was obviously subordinate and was there as a backstop when its bolder moves in the city failed. Clearly, the VNQDD leadership was aware that its best opportunity for seizing power lay in organizing the urban educated classes, especially those in the French administration.[76] See Table 3.

Table 3. Occupations of VNQDD Members Arrested February 1929

Secretaries to the French administration	36
Agents of indigenous administration	13
Primary public school teachers	36
Teachers of Chinese characters	4
Students	6
Primary private school teachers	4
Publicists	4
Employees of commerce and industry	10
Shopkeepers and artisans	39
Property owners, cultivators, and traditional medicine men	37
Militiamen	40
	229

Although these arrests led to several convictions, the majority were released and rejoined the party where the way had now been opened for Nguyen Thai Hoc, who created the VNQDD in 1927, to assume a more predominant position of leadership. A graduate of the École Normale of the University of Hanoi, Hoc received a degree entitling him to be one of the few Vietnamese secondary school teachers.[77] Undeterred by the French reprisals for the Bazin assassination, Hoc now spurred the VNQDD on to a more ambitious plan. A general uprising at key points throughout north Viet Nam was set for the lunar New Year holiday which came during the first week of February 1930. Taking advantage of the more than 120 VNQDD members who were in the French colonial army or the indigenous, French-led militia, Hoc planned mutinies in remote outposts to occur simultaneously with demonstrations in Hanoi.[78]

Reacting to a last-minute compromise of his communications network, Hoc ordered the uprising delayed for five days. At this point the discipline of the VNQDD command structure—a loosely united group of geographically dispersed lieutenants—broke down. The followers of Nguyen Khac Nhu, a VNQDD leader, located at military outposts and in administrative positions in the mountains and foothills northwest of Hanoi were ordered by their chief to proceed with their original plans.[79] Thus, on the night of the first anniversary of the Bazin assassination, February 9-10, 1930, two companies of Vietnamese troops garrisoned at the hill town of Yen Bay revolted, killing three French officers, two NCO's, and five loyal Vietnamese before they were overwhelmed by loyal troops aided by French reinforcements.[80] Of course, this precipitous move prejudiced the general uprising which Hoc now canceled.

Sensing the immediate danger of capture and still hoping to provoke an uprising, Nguyen Thai Hoc and his principal lieutenants in Hanoi quickly fled the city and relocated in the delta village of Co Am in Hai Duong province due east of Hanoi. From this rural base they hoped for a peasant uprising, but after staging demonstrations in two provincial towns the VNQDD followers were dispersed by the militia and the village of Co Am was bombed by French aircraft.[81] Finally, on February 18, 1930, while the party leaders were launching an attack on the town of Sept Pagodes, they were captured. After the execution of the top thirteen men of the VNQDD, the party became moribund and the remnants fell into the hands of Le Huu Canh, who had opposed the tactics of Nguyen Thai Hoc and had advocated a longer period of revolutionary preparation.[82]

The final blow was administered to the party in October 1932, when 74 party affiliates were arrested in Hai Duong province. The influence of the VNQDD then ceased to exist inside Viet Nam and the remaining members escaped to Yunnan where they joined other party exiles. A gradual impoverishment caused this Yunnan exile group to join with a hollow vestige of Phan Boi Chau's old forces in Canton under the aegis of the Kuomintang, which also called themselves the VNQDD.[83] After a decade of inaction, the VNQDD came to life again during the wartime 1940's as a part of the Kuomintang-sponsored liberation front for Viet Nam, but it never again completely recaptured its internal autonomy. It remains one of the ironies of the Vietnamese revolutionary war that, in the late 1940's, when the French were attempting to block the Communists they vainly sought for a nationalist alternative, the roots of which they had destroyed almost two decades before.

With the demise of the VNQDD, the center stage of Vietnamese politics was assumed by the Communist movement which Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi Minh) had set in motion before he was forced to flee Canton in April 1927, following the Kuomintang crackdown. Masked as a nationalist revolutionary force in the formation of the Thanh Nien in June 1925, the Communist

effort made rapid strides, and by May 1929 a minimum of 250 persons had been given revolutionary training outside Viet Nam and at least 200 of them had been reinfiltrated. Moreover, the Thanh Nien's membership had risen to approximately 1,000 and, while this was less than the VNQDD, at that time it was probably a more disciplined and widespread group with regional committees in every area of Viet Nam.[84] However, after Nguyen Ai Quoc's retreat to Russia, schisms began to develop in the absence of a strong party leader to enforce a working consensus. Before January 1930, when Quoc reappeared to reunite the party, the principal issues dividing its members were those of nationalism versus communism or proletarian internationalism.[85]

Party Growth and Conflict

The first major confrontation of the contending forces centering around the Thanh Nien occurred at the first Party Congress in May 1929, when the conflict of communism with nationalism emerged in the appeal of members from north Viet Nam to change the party name to the Indochinese Communist Party.[86] Although the motion was voted down, it led to a schism within the party which followed regional lines. In north Viet Nam the party affiliates adopted the title of Indochinese Communist Party and those in the south chose Viet Nam Communist Party, while dissidents from the Tan Viet opted for Indochinese Communist Federation.[87] To add to the dilemma, the exile group now driven to Hong Kong by the wrath of the Kuomintang retained the title of Thanh Nien in an effort to preserve unity. But beyond the controversy concerning the party's title was a struggle for control over the Vietnamese revolutionary movement by a multiplicity of factions within the regionally oriented groups and the exiles. In the move to redesignate the party title, "Indochinese Communist," lay the claim for a Communist successor state for the whole French colony rather than an emphasis on a program for nation-states based on the historic cultural identities of the peoples of Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Laos.

While a nationalist program seemed to offer the greatest long-range potential for overcoming the divisive parochial tendencies in Vietnamese politics, the immediate support of the mobilized population appeared best obtained by Communist appeals directed toward the interests of the new social strata. This controversy was not resolved by a careful assessment of the potential of the political alternatives, but through a test of the political influence of the party leaders. After three years without contact with the Vietnamese revolutionary movement, Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi Minh) returned to Hong Kong in order to restore unity among the quarreling factions. Acting in the name of the Comintern, Quoc imposed unity on the fragmented movement and set forth its program for a "bourgeois democratic revolution led by the Vietnamese working class, aimed at overthrowing imperialism and feudalism and securing national independence and freedom."[88] Probably the Comintern was hoping to avoid the complications it had encountered with nationalism in China, and undoubtedly Quoc saw that without the allegiance of the mobilized population his goals for Viet Nam would be unfulfilled.

The urgency for the reunification of the Communist sponsored revolutionary movement was underscored by both the numerical strength of the VNQDD and the audacity of their political demonstrations. Realizing that the north Viet Nam nationalists were making an attempt to establish themselves as the leaders of the anti-French independence movement inside the country, the Communists decided to act. But in the virtual elimination of the VNQDD by the reprisals of the colonial authorities, the serious internal competition for the Communists was withdrawn while French surveillance remained alert against revolutionary activity in the north. Aware that the potential for attracting widespread support depended on a successful demonstration of strength, the Communists sought to launch an operation where French forces were weakest and their own resources most potent.

A combined peasants' and workers' uprising in the provinces of Nghe An and Ha Tinh seemed to provide the best opportunity to embarrass the French administration and to demonstrate Communist strength. Such an operation drew upon the local organizational resources of the now absorbed Tan Viet party which were concentrated in these provinces. The predominance of men from this area on the central committee of the party, the close ties between workers of the province and their relatives in the peasant villages, and the deterioration of the welfare of the rural population because of the failure of several harvests were also significant factors in the operation.[89] However, this provincial movement merely served to emphasize the reliance of the Communists on the vestiges of traditionalist political structures and their lack of strength in the north where the mobilized population was concentrated. For these reasons it appears that Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi Minh), as a confirmed Communist, was against the Nghe An-Ha Tinh uprising, but he lacked the control over the party to prevent it.[90]

Communist Efforts Toward Organization

The Communists commenced their organizational effort in late February 1930, coinciding with the capture of Nguyen Thai Hoc of the VNQDD in north Viet Nam. At that time a member of the central committee, Nguyen Phong Sac, was sent to Nghe An to begin organizing workers in the match factory and railway repair shop in the provincial center of Vinh and the adjoining port town of Ben Thuy.[91] Overt demonstrations were launched in the form of protest marches on May 1, 1930, and political manifestations continued throughout the two-province Nghe An-Ha Tinh area for over a year until they subsided in August 1931 and ceased in October. During this period the French administration has recorded 231 separate incidents occurring throughout all Viet Nam which it has attributed to the Indochinese Communist Party. The distribution of these acts of political violence provides an important index in the regional variation in strength of the party, for only 7 of these incidents occurred in the north and only 58 in the south. Of the 166 manifestations in central Viet Nam all but 17 took place in the Nghe An-Ha Tinh provincial area.[92]

Within these provinces a distinct pattern can be seen in the 149 acts of political protest and violence during this period. The turning point in the two distinguishable phases within this year and a half came on September 12, 1930, when bands of peasants gathered at scattered points to march on district administrative centers, passing from them to the ultimate goal of the provincial center of Vinh. When this town was reached, the crowd numbered about 6,000 persons, although segments of the original bands had been dispersed.[93] According to Communist sources, the protesters were spread out over four kilometers as they entered Vinh where the column was taken under fire by French aircraft, resulting in 216 persons killed and 126 wounded.[94]

This march on the province center marked the climax of four and a half months of mass public demonstrations, which included demands for an augmentation in the price paid for locally made salt by the government monopoly, the destruction of district tax rolls, and workers' demands for increases in wages. Undoubtedly reflecting the vulnerability of large, essentially unarmed public groups, the Communist-sponsored political manifestations next entered a phase of political organization and terrorism. In this second phase the incidents were of smaller proportion but they occurred more frequently and in more remote rural areas. They usually consisted of assassinations of persons who informed on or refused to join the Communist Party or one of its adjunct political organizations. Therefore it is not surprising that of the 149 incidents which occurred during the period of the Nghe An-Ha Tinh soviets 126 took place after September 1930 and consisted almost entirely of murders by beating or stabbing, but rarely from shooting.[95]

Establishment of Village Soviets

The change in the form of political manifestations in Nghe An-Ha Tinh is indicative of a more fundamental transition in the Communists' operation. Up until the September 12 march on Vinh the party tactics had emphasized giving momentum and form to an apparent popular responsiveness for mass public demonstrations. A well-structured and widespread organization was not even begun until after the spectacular march on Vinh when the village soviets were formed in Vo Liet and other locations in the Song Ca River valley of Nghe An.[95] These organizations gradually spread to Ha Tinh province and before the elimination of the Communist influence in Nghe An-Ha Tinh there were sixteen village soviets in operation.[97] The purpose of these village organizations was not just to lay the groundwork of a clandestine party structure, but to assume wide governmental and social functions and thereby become the sole institution of authority in rural areas. The ultimate goal of this system of village soviets was the mobilization of the populace through structures of participation to overthrow the French and establish a countrywide government. The Nghe An-Ha Tinh village base was too weak a framework for such a task, but its leaders hoped it would generate a widespread revolutionary movement. Their schemes were smashed, but the experience of the Nghe An-Ha Tinh soviets went beyond the previous forms of rural political organization in the secret societies and the Tan Viet party cells to develop techniques of popular mobilization which were direct antecedents of the "parallel hierarchies" that were so successfully used in the period after 1945.[98]

Where the Communist Party succeeded in establishing soviets in Nghe An-Ha Tinh it was largely because of the deterioration of village institutions and the unresponsiveness of both the French administration and of the vestigial traditional bureaucracy. With the soviets they attempted to gain political power by meeting village needs through an administrative committee formed by the party cell and its adjunct mass participation organizations: The Peasants Association, The Youth Organization, and the Women's Association. These committees superseded the traditional Council of Notables and took into their hands all of the affairs of the village. The mass participation organizations provided roots in the village population through which the party cadre could enforce its control and from which it could receive recruits for political action. Both this popular control and support were strengthened by nightly propaganda sessions held in the village hall where party newspapers were read aloud. More direct action occurred through the organization in each hamlet of the village soviet of autodefense units armed with sticks, knives, and other primitive weapons. Rounding out the schemes to capture village political power, the Communists sought the adherence of the heads of extended family groups through whom there was a more natural structure of communications and control.[99]

The village soviets were to become more tightly structured institutions for holding political power than their predecessors had been and they gave more potential mobility for the external participation of the villagers. For this potential to have been realized, a more thoroughly structured national organization would have had to have been established, but this second stage in the [illegible] of a revolutionary political system was not achieved in the days of the Nghe An-Ha Tinh soviets.

The Communists' attempt to establish a revolutionary base in north-central Viet Nam in 1930-31 was ultimately thwarted by the intensive and eventually successful efforts to capture party leaders and to eliminate their rural organizational foundation. The first important results of the drive against the party by the French Sûreté came with the arrest of the top-level leaders outside the Nghe An-Ha Tinh operating area in December 1930 and in April 1931.[100] But this led almost immediately to the capture of the directors of the provincial movement such as Nguyen Thong Sac, a special envoy of the central committee, and Nguyen Duc Canh, a member of the regional committee for central Viet Nam. With the arrest of Nguyen Ai Quoc

(Ho Chi Minh) in Hong Kong in June 1931, followed by the apprehension of the South Viet Nam regional committee, the Communist movement became a body without a head.[101]

Overt Communist Revolution Defeat

In Nghe An-Ha Tinh the French accelerated their pacification program aimed at restoring their administrative control. They established a network of security posts—68 in Nghe An, 54 in Ha Tinh—manned by the militia. They brought in officials of the traditional bureaucracy who were natives of Nghe An-Ha Tinh in order to establish firmer contact with those potentially loyal to the old regime, formed paramilitary groups, and even tried to create a local political party called the Ly Nhan or Party of the People with Good Hearts.[102] This combination of counterrevolutionary measures brought an end to the Nghe An-Ha Tinh soviets by late September and early October 1931, and with it a cessation in overt revolutionary activity for almost fourteen years.

Despite their defeat, the Communists had given the French their most serious challenge to continued sovereignty in Viet Nam. At its apogee in January 1931, the Communist Party had a strength estimated by the French Sûreté at 1,500 members, with about 100,000 peasants affiliated with it through mass participation organizations.[103] The Communists claimed to have had 1,300 members in Nghe An-Ha Tinh alone with about 10,000 followers in the affiliated organizations there.[104] While these figures do not correspond, they do emphasize the success of Communist efforts in proportion to their real strength. Even with their organizational limitations these successes could have been greater had the Communists not committed several crucial tactical errors during their turbulent operation in Nghe An-Ha Tinh.

Perhaps the most fundamental mistake was that the Communist terrorism was directed almost exclusively at lower echelon Vietnamese officials who were exercising authority for the French administration, rather than at the French themselves. For as one observer has noted, "Even at the height of the disturbances, Europeans could circulate freely and unarmed in these provinces.[105] The Communists attributed this misstep to the shortcomings of the "Theses on the Bourgeois Democratic Revolution in Viet Nam" adopted by the Indochinese Communist Party in October 1930 and written by its Secretary General Tran Phu.[106] As one Vietnamese Communist critic has seen it, this program

> committed the error of advocating the overthrow of the national bourgeoisie at the same time as the French colonialists and the indigenous feudalists . . . [for] this bourgeoisie had interests which were in conflict with the imperialists . . . [and] they ought to have been drawn into the ranks of the bourgeois democratic republic and not systematically separated.[107]

The meaning of these criticisms seems clear. The Communists found a smoldering antagonism born of a rapid decline in welfare in a rural area which was focused not on the colonial power but on the most immediate object of discontent, the low-level indigenous officials and local social leaders. Because of its ties with Nghe An-Ha Tinh through the Tan Viet and the native origins of its top level leaders, the Communists were in a good position to give form and encouragement to this discontent. But their inability to make this protest something more than a workers' and peasants' rebellion was largely due to limitations of organization and political ideology. Moreover, the Nghe An-Ha Tinh soviets demonstrated that particularistic issues were still the lifeblood of Vietnamese politics and that neither communism nor any other ideological force had come to grips with a program broad enough to incorporate the variety of these interests into a larger political whole. However, the Communists had succeeded

in giving more structure and momentum to one set of particular interests than had any previous political movement. They developed more extensive organizational techniques in rural areas than the secret societies had and they united village soviets together in a viable, if only temporary, system of politics.

Ironically, the extensiveness of the Communists' success was attributed by a French journalist to their cleverness in using the "nationalist movement to their advantage. We therefore see this paradoxical situation: in Indo-China, Communism, the primary principle of which is internationalism, is based on nationalism."[108] The paradox here is indeed far more subtle. The Communists had not been able to articulate widely a national myth that they were attempting to mobilize in a revolutionary cause which would be meaningful to both mobilized colonial elites and the peasantry of Nghe An-Ha Tinh, and potentially of other areas.[109]

The Communists were trying to establish new and different structures of political communications where the bases of parallel or corresponding means of social communications did not already exist. The framework of traditional society had been disrupted, but a reintegration of that which was modern and mobilized and that which was vestigial and stagnant had not occurred.[110] In short, Viet Nam was not, in the terminology of Karl W. Deutsch, a nationality, and the fragmentation of its politics reflected its divisiveness and parochialism as a people.[111] More effectively than any other cultural force, at a later date politics was able to contribute to the reintegration of Vietnamese society because, in the eventual revolutionary war against France, both elite mobilization and mass mobilization were successfully undertaken in the cause of national independence. Clearly, the Vietnamese Communists did not have the capacity for such a movement at the beginning of the 1930's, but the contours of their failure provide important criteria for measuring the magnitude of the revolutionary problem and the efforts which would be required for success.

COLONIAL BACKGROUND TO THE VIETNAMESE REVOLUTION

For any Vietnamese revolutionary movement to have been successful prior to the military intervention of Japan, it would have been necessary, theoretically at least, for them to have overcome the opposition of only 10,779 regular French troops, 16,218 men of the indigenous militia, and 507 French police agents.[112] In the era before World War II the whole of Indochina was controlled for France by a commercial and official population of 42,000, of which a little more than half were wives and children.[113] To the potential advantage of the revolutionaries was the dispersement of French forces throughout the states of Indochina with the greatest concentration of strength being in the mountains of north Viet Nam along the China border. Moreover, the Communists and the nationalists of north and central Viet Nam were not the only revolutionaries leading movements to overthrow the French regime. Besides other exile and northern splinter groups there were in south Viet Nam several significant political associations.

Anti-French Revolutionary Groups

The most important of these was the group known by the name of its newspaper, La Lutte ("The Struggle"). Perhaps reacting to the forceful repression of the VNQDD and the Nghe An-Ha Tinh soviets, after 1932 it became a legal political movement. Led by the Trotskyite Ta Thu Thau, The Struggle group entered candidates for the Saigon city council and the Cochinchina colonial council in 1933, 1935, 1937, and 1939.[114] During the course of the 1930's it was joined by both a moderate evolutionary political group, the Constitutionalists, which had been

formed at Saigon in 1929, and by the Communists led by Moscow-trained Duong Bach Mai.[115] Success at the polls held this diverse group together, but internal frictions developed before both the Communists and Trotskyite organizations were destroyed in late 1939 by the French police in the wake of the collapse of the Popular Front and the outlawing of the Communist Party in France.[116]

With the exception of the Communists, none of these groups staged any overt political demonstrations, nor did they have any organizational links with the countryside. While the Communists had enough organizational resources to launch 58 demonstrations in south Viet Nam between May 1, 1930, and December 31, 1931, they did not succeed in establishing a system of village soviets. Nor did any of their manifestations even approach the proportions of the Nghe An-Ha Tinh soviet until the protest against the Japanese occupation, which lasted for only a few days in November 1940 and resulted in the elimination of the party structure in the south.[117] By contrast, the most successful of the rural movements anywhere in Viet Nam had almost no numerical strength in urban areas except for its leadership elite who were former officials of the French administration. This movement was the occult syncretic religion known as Cao Dai, which started in south Viet Nam in 1926 and which had won at least 100,000 adherents by 1930, although its leaders claimed five times that many.[118] Even though Cao Dai attempted no overt political strategy it was formed by the traditional techniques of the secret societies, and consciously developed a structure of influence, apparent after 1945 when its own armed force emerged.

Until World War II, the political experience of Vietnamese revolutionaries in widespread portions of the country had displayed a marked similarity. Although the beginnings of clandestine systems of politics had been launched, they had not developed to a point where opposition to French sovereignty could be sustained. The limitations to revolutionary activity did not all lie with the French colonial regime in arresting party leaders and smashing peasant demonstrations. But, as was obvious when the French regime was displaced, the revolutionaries themselves had obstacles of organization and ideology to overcome. However, the revolutionaries had demonstrated the existence of a potential for political protest and violence. This potential had resulted from the unresponsiveness of the colonial administration to the disequilibrium in the peasant society and the absence of social reintegration for those mobilized away from traditional life. Attempts to translate this potential into revolutionary war had been unsuccessful because various political groups had done little more than give expression to parochial interests. Without the creation of a viable, countrywide revolutionary structure and the formation of at least paramilitary units, there could be little hope for taking advantage of the vulnerabilities of the relatively small and dispersed French forces.

Crucial Years: 1940-45

The five wartime years 1940-45 were crucial for Viet Nam. They brought three major developments in the germination of revolutionary war. As a result of the isolation from France and the sharp curtailment of external trade, the colonial society in Viet Nam developed along autarkic lines, mobilizing greater numbers of Vietnamese into the educational, administrative, and economic systems of the colony.[119] At the same time, the French were concerned that the Japanese overlords would capture the sympathies of these mobilized Vietnamese so they established an extensive sports and youth program to try to hold the loyalties of the young people of the country.[120] But this program merely heightened the consciousness of those who were to become the political activists in the postwar period and gave them experience in organization and self-discipline. This program to check the authority of the Japanese had derived from the predominant wartime concern of the French in Indochina for maintaining as much of their sovereignty as possible.[121]

Suspension of French Sovereignty

The motivation for this attitude was a determination that France alone would make whatever postwar settlement might occur involving the future of Indochina. However, there took place on March 9, 1945, the event which the French had labored to avoid: the suspension of French sovereignty by the Japanese and the encouragement of Vietnamese independence movements. Into this gap came the group best prepared to take advantage of it: the Communist-led Viet Minh (short for the Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi) which had been formed in May 1941 by Nguyen Ai Quoc.[122] During the war it had developed a broadly nationalist liberation program but it had functioned primarily as an intelligence network for elements of the wartime Chinese coalition. The Viet Minh had preserved its autonomy and strength over its rivals, principally the Kuomintang-backed Dong Minh Hoi, by establishing armed liberation units. Starting in December 1944 with 34 men and growing to 1,000 men by the time of the Japanese coup de force the following March, the Viet Minh units had reached approximately 5,000 when Hanoi was occupied in late August 1945.[123]

Summary

Without the interaction of the two major wartime events, the weakness of France both in the metropole and in Indochina and from this advantage the growing strength of the Communist-led Viet Minh, the Vietnamese revolutionary war might have been delayed or avoided. However, these wartime developments provided an opportunity for a segment of the political elite formed by the unbalanced growth of colonial society to seize power. In the absence of French postwar weaknesses this elite might never have been able to seize power so swiftly and so dramatically. But without the exploitable political discontent stemming from the social problems of the colonial period and the effects of the Japanese occupation they would not have been able to maintain power and sustain a seven-year war which humbled French military might. What the colonial background to the Vietnamese revolutionary war has to show are the origins and the general outlines of that political discontent and some of the techniques which had been used to exploit it and mobilize the populace in the revolutionary cause. Finally, these colonial antecedents have their value in providing criteria with which to measure the significance of later events and to gain a perspective on attempts to deal with them.

CHAPTER 3

THE WARTIME CATALYST OF REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS: THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION OF INDOCHINA, 1940-45

STRATEGIC ASPECTS OF THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION

The occupation of Indochina by Japan came not as a sudden sneak attack as did the capture of the Philippines or Malaya. It was a gradual process achieved largely without violence but through blunt diplomatic measures in response to specific strategic needs. The slow paralysis of French sovereignty came in a series of Japanese ultimatums demanding the right to station increasingly large numbers of troops and the development of air and naval bases. In the period after June 1940, the fall of metropolitan France left Indochina isolated and vulnerable to such external pressure. The French had felt that the lack of firm material and diplomatic support from the United States in the summer of 1940, and the absence of any anti-Japanese Far Eastern power, left them with only two alternatives: either to fight the obviously futile battle to maintain their colonial sovereignty against overwhelming Japanese military power or to meet Japanese demands and thereby preserve what autonomy they could.[1]

French Colonialism Remains Intact

Thus, out of a strict regard for self-interest, an anomalous situation arose. The Japanese, despite their commitment to the independence of the peoples of Asia, confirmed French colonialism in Indochina, the only place that a European regime remained in the Far East. Conversely, France, now under the control of the puppet administration at Vichy, was giving support and advantage to the enemy of the Allied powers in the Far East. Bases in Indochina were especially useful for attacks on European possessions in Burma, Malaya, and Indonesia, a condition which could only incur the wrath of the Allies and suggest potential postwar consequences.

Initially this anomaly took the form of the French colonial administration and military presence being left intact side by side with the Japanese offensive forces. This occurred because the Japanese did not have the administrative personnel to supplant the French and were apprehensive over the possibility of internal disorder which might result from such a change. Since the principal wartime utility of Indochina to the Japanese was as a base for their operations in Southeast Asia, their military forces varied greatly in size from month to month and a good portion of them remained in a transient status. There was no effort to match France's military strength, because French obedience was insured not only by the proven docile attitude of the colonial administration but also by the certainty of substantial Japanese forces available in neighboring areas.

A total of 99,000 armed men were under French command during the occupation, of whom a little more than 74,000 were regulars, including 19,371 Europeans in three services, together with 54,649 indigenous troops. The remaining forces consisted of a local militia of 24,680 men with a cadre of 362 Europeans. By contrast, the largest contingent of Japanese troops in

Indochina during the occupation seems to have been in February 1945, when 61,775, of whom 7,000 were in a transient status, were located there and the lowest number was around 25,000—about a third of the French regulars—in August 1943. Their average troop strength appears to have been about 35,000 men.

If force were only incidental to the maintenance of this unusual relationship, the heart of the guarantee was the attitude of the French governor-general in Indochina, Adm. Jean Decoux. He was firmly committed to the Vichy government as long as it lasted and was under no illusions about the interests of the Japanese who he knew would keep their part of the bargain only so long as it was convenient to them. As Admiral Decoux was believed to have seen it, his duty was,

> to resist the Japanese as far as he dared and yield to their demands where he must, playing the one good card he held—the desire of the Japanese to avoid destroying his administration—to the utmost of its value. Thereby he hoped to maintain the Government-General until such time as the Japanese should meet with defeat in the war, when it might be possible to arrange for a peaceful evacuation of their forces and in this way preserve the colony for France. He knew that if the Japanese were provoked into sweeping away his administration and setting up Annamite and Cambodian regimes there would be a small chance of the peaceful restoration of French authority, and in this judgment events were to prove him correct.[2]

Since the circumstances which had sustained this anomalous wartime situation in Indochina were of an international character, it was to be expected that the establishment of the de Gaulle government in metropolitan France and the American landings in the Philippines would bring fundamental changes. With these two developments the ability of Admiral Decoux to maintain even nominal French sovereignty was severely reduced. The Japanese were understandably apprehensive over a possible Allied landing in Indochina. At the same time, the de Gaulle government—especially its military and intelligence representatives in south China—was suspicious and publicly noncommittal in its relations with the Vichy holdovers inside the colony. Moreover, de Gaulle's hypersensitivity was heightened even further by his awareness that President Roosevelt was prepared to make an effort after the war to place Indochina under an international trusteeship.[3] This feeling took form in a memorandum of January 14, 1944, to Secretary of State Cordell Hull in which Roosevelt made his now famous assessment of Indochina: "France has had the country—thirty million inhabitants—for nearly one hundred years and the people are worse off than they were in the beginning."[4]

While Roosevelt considered the support of Chiang Kai-shek and Marshal Stalin for the trusteeship as certain, the British were incredulous and probably would have blocked it. However, de Gaulle understood clearly that unless France took some active part in the liberation of Indochina the reoccupation of the territory might be prevented. As events developed, the Gallic fear proved unnecessary, for the end of the international trusteeship plan came with the death of Roosevelt in April 1945. But in the interim, the French, lacking any available troops to dispatch to the Far East, decided to encourage resistance movements to undermine the Japanese position despite Admiral Decoux's warnings against such steps. Paradoxically, the implementation of this decision benefited those Vietnamese who were not only resisting the Japanese, but were seeking the independence of Viet Nam. With equally unhappy effects for the French, the resulting action added substance to Japanese apprehensions and therefore gave them the justification they sought for eliminating the colonial administration.

French Civil Administration Ends

In his memoirs Admiral Decoux charges that the essential cause of the Japanese coup de force of March 9, 1945, which eliminated the French civil administration and military presence, was the imprudence of the resistance which de Gaulle sponsored in Indochina, beginning as early as the summer of 1944.[5] According to the governor general, the main source of the lack of discretion was the rivalry of interests and political divergences within the French colonial army and administration, which were supposed to be the principal resistance force in Indochina. These cadres developed an autonomy of their own by authority of secret instructions of the de Gaulle government which undercut Decoux's discipline over them almost completely. Repeatedly, Decoux asked to be relieved of his position but was told by Paris to remain at his post and exercise his "nominal power." De Gaulle obviously felt that the departure of Decoux, more than any indiscretion of his resistance subordinates, would alarm the Japanese.[6]

While General Sabattier, the French military commander in North Viet Nam during the occupation, tended to support Admiral Decoux's charges that the indiscretion of the resistance, and especially the Free French radio broadcasts asserting that an Allied landing was to be made in Indochina, alarmed the Japanese, he believed that the coup de force was in response to broader considerations. In his view, the decision to eliminate the French presence in Indochina was made in Tokyo in the autumn of 1944 out of a recognition of the inevitability of the Japanese defeat and the desire to have as strong a position as possible either for negotiation or for fanatical resistance.[7] This analysis is in general accord with the revelation of postwar investigations. By Supreme War Council Decision #6 of February 1, 1945, the Japanese determined to extract greater assistance from the French and, in the event of a noncooperative response, their forces in Indochina were authorized to "elevate and support the independent position of Annam."[8]

In tactical terms, the coup de force of March 9, 1945, meant that approximately 60,000 Japanese troops in Indochina had the task of eliminating the more numerous French civil and military structure. The French presence consisted of about 50,000 French men, women, and children in addition to approximately 80,000 indigenous personnel in the military and administration.[9] Despite the intensive intelligence gathering and preparation of the resistance, as is carefully documented by General Sabattier, it seems that the French forces were caught off their guard and were unable to react against the Japanese in time to preserve themselves. Of the 74,000 regulars of the colonial army only about 6,000 were able to escape to south China, and of these only 2,150 were French.[10] Although, of the Vietnamese serving with the colonial army the fate of those who did not escape is unclear, their French superiors, along with their civilian counterparts, were placed under confinement in a few concentrated locations.

New Reins of Government

Upon this colonial cadre of businessmen, administrators, and soldiers, plus their indigenous subordinates, had rested French sovereignty in Indochina. With the elimination of the cadre that had put down the peasant revolts, kept a constant surveillance over the local political movements, filled the jails with the recent graduates of the freshly constructed French schools, broken the strikes at the new French factories, and arrested the assassins of the indentured labor contractors, a new era arrived. In short, with the demise of both those who had created the tensions in the colonial society and those who had prevented their violent expression, a new environment for the politics of Viet Nam had been created. Unquestionably the disappearance of its colonial authority in Indochina in the space of a few short days in

early March 1945, was for France the gravest consequence of the Japanese intervention. Once broken, their administrative control over all of Indochina was never reestablished. But this was more than just a problem of discontinuity in administration. In the absence of colonial restraint the latent political forces in Viet Nam, which had been blocked or had provided only narrow channels of expression before the war, now received new opportunities for protest.

In a real sense the sovereignty of France in Indochina had not been founded on 50,000 French men and women plus their native auxiliaries but on the compliance and passivity of the people who inhabited the territory. Before the Japanese war, French sovereignty over 24 million people could be maintained by approximately 11,000 French soldiers plus half again as many native troops, assisted by a very efficient security police. This was all the force needed to contain those who did not comply. In the postwar reoccupation, compliance progressively decreased and the need for armed forces to maintain colonial sovereignty increased until an extensive military establishment was insufficient.

It was this consequence of the coup de force which Paul Mus, a clandestine envoy of the de Gaulle government and a scholar who already had twenty years' experience in Indochina, was able to observe. Amidst the popular reactions of the Vietnamese peasants who concealed him from capture by the Japanese there was a definite change of attitude. He felt that the events of March 9, 1945, liberated feelings which had remained masked by the Vietnamese personality. Since Viet Nam society is one in which misfortune does not evoke sympathy but, on the contrary, a denunciation of the hidden faults for which the misfortune is a punishment, opportunities were present for a reorientation of attitudes toward compliance. As Professor Mus has related it:

> The continuance of French sovereignty had been in France's favor, but the sudden eviction of France had incited the Vietnamese to play another card. They thought it a punishment of heaven and justified in their eyes a re-examination of the situation. Moreover, they were ready to believe anything bad about the French.[11]

While the urban population was probably more sophisticated than M. Mus's peasant protectors, the city people were the ones who had most felt the French impact and had the most to gain in preventing the reimposition of colonialism.

Given the policies that the Japanese were pursuing elsewhere in Southeast Asia in encouraging nationalist independence movements, a similar pattern might logically have been expected following the coup de force in Indochina. Yet the Japanese did not install a well-cultivated client political group that had been waiting in the wings since the beginning of the occupation. Here again larger strategic considerations were guiding the policies of Japan in Indochina. Paradoxically, such reins of government as were then handed over to Vietnamese immediately after March 9, 1945, went to a francophile group of scholars and bureaucrats identified with the traditional monarchy and with their home area of central Viet Nam. They did not enjoy a wide popular appeal, had no articulated goals of nationalist independence, had played no significant political role other than as members of the colonial administration, and had not been allied with the Japanese until the late summer of 1944.

The paradox was not only that the "independent" government the Japanese were sponsoring had greater continuity with the French than with the prewar nationalist parties, but also that it was theoretically sovereign only in central and northern Viet Nam. It also excluded the groups to which the Japanese had given more long-standing assistance and encouragement. These political factions were concentrated in the south where the occupation continued to rule in name

as well as fact until capitulation six months later. This curious and discontinuous pattern of Japanese political action in Viet Nam suggests that assistance to local political groups resulted not so much from a coherent plan as from particular interests and unsanctioned maneuvers of bureaucratic cliques within the occupation forces. It also suggests that the "independent" government was formed more in response to Japanese strategic needs for continuity and stability in Viet Nam than for considerations of internal political influence.

The random and largely uncoordinated political action of the occupation only served to intensify already existing regional and parochial tendencies in Vietnamese politics. They therefore promoted limitations to Vietnamese nationalism rather than encourage efforts to overcome barriers to a countrywide political identity, as was being done under Japanese auspices elsewhere. While this ill-defined Japanese dabbling in the politics of Viet Nam can explain much about the internecine conflict that erupted with the August Revolution (see Chapter IV), especially in the south, the overall impact of the occupation set loose a chain reaction which affected the whole fragmented mosaic of Vietnamese political life. These reactions had occurred almost simultaneously with the arrival of Japanese troops in Indochina in the autumn of 1940, and quickly reflected both the indecisiveness of the political programs of the occupation and their potential consequences for the development of revolutionary movements in Viet Nam.

SEMINAL CHARACTER OF TWO UPRISINGS SPARKED BY JAPANESE OCCUPATION

Lang Son Attack

After the signing of a general military accord between Vichy and Tokyo in August 1940 an agreement was reached for the entry of Japanese troops into Indochina. Ostensibly for the purpose of facilitating Japanese operations against China, this arrangement was concluded on September 22, 1940, by Governor General Decoux and the Japanese military representative General Nishihara.[12] By the terms of the agreement the Japanese forces were to cross into north Viet Nam from south China at the frontier town of Lang Son. Since it had been agreed that this maneuver was to be regulated by specific terms, the French were unprepared for the attack on their border positions which the Japanese forces launched as they penetrated the frontier of Viet Nam. Although this might have been a deliberate attack to underscore their determination to dominate the French, the units involved were later punished by the Japanese High Command for what were termed arbitrary actions.[13] It seems rather that this was the first instance of a Japanese military clique using its occupation advantage without the sanction of higher authority to assist a Vietnamese political group in obtaining a foothold inside the country.

The Japanese attack on Lang Son was carefully coordinated with a revolt staged in the surrounding mountainous frontier region adjacent to China by cadres of the Phuc Quoc movement, who had come in the vanguard of the occupying force. The Phuc Quoc was a vestige of the Viet Nam Quang Phuc Hoi or Restoration Association which Phan Boi Chau had organized in China before World War I. Its adherents were traditionalist in political orientation and still held hopes of restoring Prince Cuong De to the leadership of a new Viet Nam. Through the generosity of the Japanese the Phuc Quoc cadres had equipment estimated at 5,000 rifles, 20 automatic weapons, along with 25,000 rounds of ammunition and 3,000 grenades available to them. Backed by this firepower, these cadres were able to recruit around 3,000 men from the Vietnamese troops serving with the French who had been captured by the Japanese at Lang Son. In addition to these trained men they also got the services of exiles, border pirates, and members of several mountain ethnic minorities inhabiting the border area. The Japanese role in this revolt, it seems clear, was to divert the attention of the French frontier forces

and weaken their capacity to crush the insurgent challenge. But after several days of rampage the Japanese may have found the disruption of communications no longer in their interest, or higher echelons of command may have reacted swiftly to what they considered insubordination. In any event, through negotiation with the local French commander, the Japanese ceased their armed opposition to the colonial army and withdrew their support from the revolt.

Bac Son Uprising

The momentum created by this pocket uprising, however, did not come to an end with the flight of the Phuc Quoc cadres to the safety of Japanese protection in China's Kwangtung Province. The revolt continued to manifest itself against isolated militia posts and elements of the French Army retreating from Lang Son through the mountain passes and defiles of the border territory inhabited by the Tho minority peoples. Because of their antipathies toward the French, these highland minority people had sought avenues of protest which had prompted them to act as guides for the invading Japanese, to follow the Phuc Quoc cadres in purposeless revolt and, beginning around September 27, 1940, to accept the leadership of Communist cadres in ambushes on fragments of the French frontier forces. Springing from the mountain-enclosed upland valley known as Bac Son, the uprising of the Tho people was solidified by Communist cadres led by Tran Dang Ninh who organized guerrilla units among them.[14] Lacking any more fundamental military preparation, the Tho insurgents were dispersed by hastily dispatched French reinforcements. In spite of the French regaining their defensive posture, the spasmodic outbursts of Tho insurgency continued. With 5,000 weapons scattered throughout the mountains along the northeastern frontier of Viet Nam it was impossible to restore order to its pre-occupation state.

From the perspective of the Japanese impact on Vietnamese politics, the Lang Son attack and the resulting Bac Son uprising were significant initial examples of the random character of forthcoming political activities of the occupation. Since the Phuc Quoc movement was the principal Vietnamese political group with which the Japanese had had extensive relations before the Pacific war, it is not surprising that their first foray into politics in Viet Nam would be through their best known local contact. These ties had developed from the exile of Prince Cuong De who, with his political tutor Phan Boi Chau, had sought refuge in Japan where, shortly after the turn of the century, they attempted to establish a reform movement in the style of the Chinese exiles Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and K'ang Yu-wei. Despite the convulsive changes in the structure of Vietnamese society over the ensuing four decades and the growing irrelevancy to these changes, the Phuc Quoc movement still nourished the hope of eventual political power. While they received more tangible assistance from the Japanese during the occupation than at any other period in their political life, just as their expectations had reason to rise the Phuc Quoc had to content themselves with limited and short-term aid. This seems to have been opportunistically garnered from subordinate Japanese military men rather than a fulfillment of their grandiose scheme to place Prince Cuong De on the throne of Viet Nam as a constitutional monarch. Such a broad design clashed with the overriding concern of the Japanese for stability and order. Indochina was important to Japan as a base and support point against the complexities of colonial resistance elsewhere in Southeast Asia. They had no intention, at least not initially, of making Viet Nam a laboratory for political experimentation and reform.[15] But the assistance garnered from the lack of Japanese interests and command organization by the Phuc Quoc in the Lang Son encounter was not unique. It was the opening note of a minor and antithetical theme of the occupation. Ironically, this opportunity was quickly turned into an advantage by the adversaries of the restoration movement.

Establishment of Guerrilla Forces

To the Vietnamese Communists these events in the autumn of 1940 had a seminal character. As their party's official history chronicles:

> The Bac Son insurrection opened a new historical page of armed struggle for the Vietnamese people. It broke out while the people throughout the country were not yet prepared. But the lesson drawn from the Bac Son insurrection was very useful and served as a basis for preparation for the August general insurrection later.[16]

Of more tangible importance than the lessons drawn from the insurrection of Bac Son was the opportunity it afforded the Communists in establishing the first "people's armed force" under party control and extending their organizational network into a strategic area of Viet Nam. In sharp contrast to the Phuc Quoc cadres, who lacked any indigenous political organization of substance, the Communists launched a systematic consolidation of the guerrilla bases which had been hastily formed in the intensity of the Bac Son fighting.

Decisions concerning the creation of a guerrilla zone were reached at the pivotal 8th Session of the Central Committee of the Indochinese Communist Party, which was convened by Ho Chi Minh on May 10, 1941, after his return from a decade of foreign activity. Although this historic meeting had far-reaching consequences in refashioning the fundamental approach of Communist revolutionary strategy in Viet Nam, one of its most quickly implemented results was the appointment of a command committee for the guerrilla units in the Bac Son area. This included Phung Chi Kien, Le Van Chi, and Chu Van Tan. The latter was a Tho leader who had organized the "first platoon of national salvation" in January 1941, and whose subsequent crucial contributions to the revolution were to make him the minister of defense in the first government formed by Ho Chi Minh in August 1945.[17]

By the autumn of 1941, the Viet Nam National Salvation Army, as the guerrilla force became known, was large enough to be organized into two sections. Chu Van Tan led the one located in Thai Nguyen Province, the nearest to the heartland of the Vietnamese population in the Red River Delta. The other section, operating further to the north under the command of Phung Chi Kien, fell into an ambush in the vicinity of Bac Kan some time in late 1942 and suffered such heavy losses that it ceased to exist as an organized formation. Meantime, Chu Van Tan's southern force continued to wage guerrilla warfare by successfully maintaining its own force while wearing down the French-led Vietnamese militia. However, in February 1942, after eight months of compaigning, difficulties in obtaining arms and ammunition forced the unit to scatter into lightly armed groups carrying out propaganda and agitation among the Tho.[18]

From this effort revolutionary political-military bases were created in wide areas over four mountainous provinces adjacent to the China border. After less than a year's operation, at the beginning of 1943, Chu Van Tan had been able to establish more than 19 assault sections comprising more than 100 armed propaganda cadres which permitted the work of organizing a revolutionary structure to be intensified. By the time the Japanese eliminated French control in Indochina in March 1945, the Communists had succeeded in perfecting a network of mountain bases. With the aid of airdrops of arms into these bases in the spring of 1945, the Communists developed a revolutionary armed force which was to play a key role in the August Revolution.

The insurgency growing out of the Bac Son uprising was virtually the first genuine experience of the Vietnamese Communists with systematic guerrilla warfare, even in its most

rudimentary form. It indicated to the party that protracted guerrilla warfare could wear down a stronger adversary but that broad mass bases were needed for the support and development of guerrilla units. In this form of armed struggle the Communists were learning the hard way that the absence of extensive political organization was one of the sharpest limitations to widespread guerrilla operations. They also saw the need for continual growth, extreme mobility, and constant adaptation for guerrilla forces, as well as for precaution against precipitous action for,

> if guerrilla units stand on the defensive and coil themselves up, divorcing themselves from the masses they will be crushed. When the situation requires it, they must disperse, be able to stick to the masses, and build bases, and when the situation is favourable, gather again and wage the struggle.[19]

The Tho's Strategic Role

Despite this more systematic approach of the Communists to the task of revolutionary war, their advantage resulted from a chance combination of factors producing the Bac Son insurrection. This gave them the opportunity to assume the leadership of a parochial protest among a highland ethnic minority and through it to gain a strategic foothold in Viet Nam. The scattering of Japanese weapons by the Phuc Quoc cadres fed like inflammable drops upon the smoldering Tho antipathies. The origin of their discontent lay in the antagonism which a mountain people might be expected to feel against the lowland representatives of central authority who had tried to force cultural conformity upon them. Yet because of their strategic location across the major routes of communication between south China and the Red River Delta the Tho played an unenviable role during the twenty centuries in which Viet Nam had fought against the court at Peking to maintain its autonomy. Like other areas of the Sino-Vietnamese border region, the Tho homeland had served as both a battleground and a buffer, with the Tho shifting their loyalties to their own advantage. However, it was also because of their location that the Tho became more Vietnamized than any other highland group, despite the fact that they shared the same fierce desire of other mountain peoples to maintain their autonomy.

Besides its frontier aspect, the northern highlands area has also been used historically as a base for fractional groups in internal fights for political power in Viet Nam. One of the major antagonists to central authority during the seventeenth century was the Mac family who lodged themselves in the border area of Cao Bang Province from where, with Chinese aid, they harassed the mountain region.[20] Through military campaigns to eliminate the Mac and pacify the mountain people, the Vietnamese developed a long-range program for Vietnamizing the Tho who had served the insurgent family. One of the important aspects of this program was sending Vietnamese mandarins to the Tho country where they intermarried locally. The mixed-blood descendants of these mandarins came to be known as Tho-Ti and were recognized as local aristocracy which the rest of the Tho tended to imitate in their style of speaking and dressing as Vietnamese.[21] As new Tho leaders emerged they also adopted the Tho-Ti style of life, so that a continuing mechanism of social regulation came to be accepted. This pattern tended to fulfill the Vietnamese objective of bringing stability and control by lowlanders over the Tho country.

The pressures which helped spur the Bac Son insurrection had their source in the fact that, in addition to their position of social prestige, the Tho-Ti had been the leaders of the loose and decentralized political system among the Tho. This had been a curious mixture of

the Vietnamese mandarinal administrative system with the bureaucratic positions filled not by rigorous examinations but by the hereditary prerogatives of the Tho-Ti. These prerogatives also stemmed from the ritualistic role which the Tho-Ti performed in the Confucian ritual that had been introduced by the Vietnamese and mixed over the years with the preexisting cult of the God of the Soil.[22] Tensions were created in this synthesized social system in the late nineteenth century when the French decided to suppress the traditional leaders among the Tho, by colonial regulations which made political offices randomly appointive or elective so that many non-Tho-Ti were placed in positions of authority.[23] While this French policy successfully destroyed the political prerogatives of the Tho-Ti, the Tho-Ti's prestige and influence persisted among the Tho because of their ritualistic role and distinctive cultural traditions.[24]

Although extensive and detailed information on the political reaction of the Tho-Ti is lacking, especially regarding the Bac Son uprising, it is of underlying significance that, in organizing a revolutionary base among the Tho, the Communists found its success concentrated in areas where the Tho-Ti were influential. Since the position of the Tho-Ti was such a vital characteristic of the Tho society, and because their status had been the special object of French opposition, it seems reasonable to suppose that it was the Tho-Ti who led the Tho in insurrection against the colonial administration and then into the mutually advantageous union with the Communist Party. But whatever specific pressures may ultimately be verified as having caused the Bac Son revolt, it appears clear that the Tho were actively seeking some means of opposing the French. In providing the outlet for such a manifestation of feelings, the Japanese impact on Vietnamese politics was twofold. It not only contributed to a heightened political consciousness within the country but also the weakening of the colonial administration's capacity to control these developments. By decreasing the established authority and backing its antagonists the occupation was advancing the time when the accumulation of relative changes in capacity would tip the balance toward the violent outburst of the revolution.

Geographic and Ethnic Factors of the Revolution

It is of far-reaching importance for an understanding of revolution in Viet Nam to note that this initial occasion for the establishment of a Communist revolutionary base did not occur in the lowland deltas densely populated with Vietnamese. The ensuing revolutionary war for Vietnamese independence was largely fought and was won in the thinly inhabited northern mountain areas predominantly settled by a people known generically as Tai. Sharing the same cultural qualities as the people who settled the lowlands of the Menam River and created the foundation for the modern state of Thailand, these minority people of northern Viet Nam were part of a larger move of Tai-speaking people out of southern China.[25] Unlike their lowland relatives, the highland Tai settled in upland valleys where they, too, became wet-rice cultivators. Because of their mountainous habitat and the difficulty of communications, separate cultural groupings developed, although certain basic characteristics remained. Thus the upland Tai of Viet Nam are part of a mosaic of Tai peoples stretching across Laos, northern Thailand, and into the Shan States of upper Burma, as well as extending into the southern border regions in China. Their social communications, such as they are, have been more within the loose cultural unity across international boundaries than with the lowland Vietnamese. Because of the necessity of economic and administrative relations, contacts were developed between the uplanders and the lowlanders in the lowlanders' attempts to "pacify" the peoples of the mountainous areas.

A microcosm of this broad mosaic is formed in northern Viet Nam by three distinct groupings of Tai peoples: the Tho, the Black Tai, and the White Tai. The White Tai and the Black Tai are concentrated to the northwest of the Red River Delta in the area of the Black

River valley. Their numbers spill over into Laos where they have close contacts with similarly labeled Tai groups. To the northeast of the Red River is the homeland of the Tho, the largest of the Tai groups in Viet Nam with a population of approximately 400,000. Interspersed among these groups are the Man, Meo, Muong, and Nung, who have characteristics widely dissimilar to those of the Tai as well as among themselves. These other groups provide tension and variety in the mountainous ethnic mosaic whose major theme is the scattered fragments of the Tai.

The Communists' success in establishing a base area among the Tho enabled them to prepare and sustain their bold occupation of Hanoi and the Red River Delta when the opportunity for the August Revolution of 1945 occurred. Moreover, it assured them of a refuge when the French pushed them out of the cities of North Viet Nam in early 1947. It was not only the Tho's long-desired autonomy and the fortuitous incorporation of the Tho uprising into the Communist revolutionary movement that led eventually to the formation of the base area. It was also the geographic characteristics of the region itself. The advantage from these characteristics is best demonstrated in the sharp population differential between the mountains and the lowlands.

Out of an estimated population of 9.8 million people in northern Viet Nam (Tonkin) in 1943, two-thirds were concentrated on the 10 percent of the land area of the region in the fertile Red River Delta.[26] There, population density was an average of 430 persons per square kilometer, making it one of the most thickly inhabited areas of the world.[27] This meant, of course, that approximately 90 percent of the land area of North Viet Nam contained only 10 percent of the population of the region. While a portion of this sparse population was Vietnamese the bulk of the inhabitants outside of the delta consisted of mountain ethnic minorities. This Vietnamese portion of the population was located in the midlands which bordered the triangular-shaped delta on its two inland sides. This midland area formed the geographic transition to the mountainous arc which separated the lowland Vietnamese from the Mekong valley to the west and the Chinese to the north. Perhaps a single example of the disparity in population distribution can serve to underscore the suitability of the terrain for guerrilla bases. Lai Chau Province in the northwest, homeland of both the Black and the White Tai, had 30 percent greater surface than the entire Red River Delta. Yet it contained only an estimated 67,000 persons as starkly contrasted with the seven million peasant farmers of the delta.[28] The sparsity of population was an indication that Vietnamese settlement patterns depended on easily irrigated lowlands for wet-rice agriculture. The Tai peoples were wet-rice cultivators, too, but this meant that they could live only in the small number of upland valleys. This factor limited the growth of their population, while the mountain barriers circumscribed their communications. The mountain ranges in the northwest rise from plateaus of from 1,800 to 3,000 feet to peaks of 10,000 feet. By comparison, those in the northeast are less rugged and rarely extend beyond 6,000 feet.[29] Since these mountain pockets of ethnic minorities were in close proximity to the Red River Delta, the protection their areas afforded for guerrilla bases did not require an isolation from potential targets.

Partly because of its extreme geographic characteristics, which other areas of Indochina shared only as an approximate pattern, northern Viet Nam became the major area of conflict in the seven years of the Indochina War. There were other determining factors in making the north the central theater of combat, but the geographical context did the most to set the pattern and pace of the combat once it had begun. Although the Tho provided the Vietnamese Communists with their initial opportunity to establish bases in the highlands, this did not give them control over all the minority peoples. The same cooperative attitude was absent from the other less Vietnamized groups of the mountains. This indifference was notable among the White and the Black Tai of the northwest region who were antipathetic to all Vietnamese,

Communist or not. Ironically, their homeland was ultimately to be a major target of the enemies of the French whose protection the two Tai groups happily accepted.[30]

That the French made their last stand of the Indochina War in the Tai country of Dien Bien Phu is not without its larger significance. For with the exception of a series of battles in the winter and spring of 1951, in which the Communists hurled themselves at the formidable French fortifications in the Red River Delta, all of the major battles of the Indochina War were fought in the highlands of north Viet Nam and adjacent areas of Laos.[31] It was eventually the tension created by the Communists' increasingly successful guerrilla infiltration and base area organization within the Red River Delta and their simultaneous wide-ranging war of movement in the mountains that brought the French military effort to its end. Paradoxically, it had been in these mountains of Tonkin that the French had perfected their concepts of colonial warfare in their campaigns from 1884 to 1896 to carry out the pacification of the area. Battles that Marshals Lyautey and Galliéni had fought when they were colonels at Thai Nguyen and Cao Bang were to be repeated 60 years later, but with less favorable results.[32]

Uprising in Cochinchina

If the events of the Bac Son insurrection in the mountains of Tonkin were to have a seminal effect on the August Revolution and the course of the Indochina War there occurred almost simultaneously in south Viet Nam (Cochinchina) an uprising which had another impact. By its complete contrast with the Communist reaction to the revolt among the Tho, this battle illustrates the sharp regional differences then present in the party and gives some explanation for the striking dissimilarities in the character of the August Revolution in north and south Viet Nam. This southern uprising was also sparked by the Japanese occupation of Indochina but not, like the Lang Son attack, sponsored by them. When the Japanese troops entered Tonkin from China, Thailand (or Siam as the country was then called) took this occasion to threaten to attack the western border of the Indochina state of Cambodia when the French were faced with a challenge in the north, an act which they carried out in January 1941.[33] The French had anticipated this second-front threat by mobilizing civilian Vietnamese in Cochinchina and Cambodia for military action. The Communists in south Viet Nam felt that these circumstances would permit them to capitalize upon popular discontent to launch a revolutionary uprising. At that moment, however, several key Central Committee members, including Le Duan and Le Hong Phong, were arrested, depriving the party of leadership vitally needed for any successful armed venture.[34]

Before any action was taken, in October 1940 a party representative from the south, Phan Dang Luu, was sent to seek directives on the projected revolt from the Central Committee which was then meeting at Bac Ninh, a provincial town to the northeast of Hanoi. Because of the failure of the Bac Son insurrection and because the preconditions for an effective insurrection throughout the country had not been met, it was concluded that a revolutionary uprising should not be launched in the south. As the party leaders assessed the situation:

> It was necessary to prepare the conditions, and wait for a favorable opportunity when conditions were ripe throughout the country, to launch an armed insurrection to defeat the French and the Japanese. If the insurrection were launched it would be isolated and annihilated by the joint French-Japanese Army.[35]

According to the party's official history, when Phan Dang Luu returned to the south with the assessment of the Central Committee members, he found that the order for the insurrection

had already been issued. Supposedly it could not be withdrawn.[36] There is some discrepancy as to what day in November 1940 the uprising actually broke out, but there has been no disagreement on its consequences. By the middle of December 1940, 3 Frenchmen and 30 Vietnamese soldiers serving with the French Army or local Vietnamese notables had been killed and 6 Frenchmen and 30 Vietnamese had been wounded.[37] At the price of rendering their party in the south almost nonexistent by the resulting repression, the Communists were able to block the highways leading from Saigon into the Mekong Delta and to attack and hold public facilities in provincial areas. The repression that followed included more than 6,000 arrests and several dozen executions in addition to those lost in combat.[38]

This precipitous action was almost exclusively the responsibility of Tran Van Giau who was reportedly severely condemned by the central party organs.[39] The reprimand seems to have had little effect, for much of the same sort of compulsiveness was demonstrated later on by the party in the south during the tense days of the August Revolution. Since it was the Communists who were to benefit the most from the Japanese occupation and who were to benefit the most in north Viet Nam, it is ironical that at the outset of the occupation their party organization was the strongest in the south and its strength was primarily due to the work of Tran Van Giau. The southern Communists had taken advantage of the Popular Front era in France, which had allowed them to consolidate their urban political organization. In 1939, when the Communist Party was outlawed at the outbreak of the European War, the Communists moved their cadres and many followers to the countryside. There they extended their organizational structure, established popular participation groups tied to the party, and formed paramilitary units located in the strategically positioned swamp area southwest of Saigon, the Plaine des Joncs.

Before the beginning of the Japanese occupation the strength of the Communist Party in the south was estimated at 800 effective cadres, 700 well-indoctrinated members, and about 1,000 persons in associated popular participation groups. After four years of rebuilding, following the repression in the autumn of 1940, the party was believed to have had less than 200 members and only about 600 participants in popular associations tied to the party.[40] Yet this heavy toll did not seem to dissuade the leadership group around Tran Van Giau from taking further uncalculated, compulsive steps during the August Revolution. Indeed, these self-defeating acts following the capitulation of Japan were undoubtedly attributable to the narrowed range of alternatives which the unpreparedness of the southern Communists for the seizure of power made almost inevitable. Thus the severe penalties of the Mekong Delta uprising of 1940 appears to betray in the Nam Bo (southern area) leadership of the occupation a fetish for momentary advantage and a corresponding inability to cope with the fundamentals of revolutionary political organization in the more diffuse social context of south Viet Nam.

Defining Future Revolutionary Strategy

The experience of the Bac Son and Nam Bo uprisings had, in addition to the organizational consequences it held for the course of the Communist revolution, a transforming impact on the party's approach to the task of obtaining political power. The lessons which the party drew from the two spasmodic challenges to continued French dominance were, as set forth in its official history, structured around three general categories of guidelines. In abbreviated form these may be stated: (1) the importance of appropriate timing for success in seizing power; (2) that in an agricultural colony the most exposed places to be seized and occupied as bases are in the countryside, and from there the towns can be seized when conditions have matured; (3) that a successful insurrection must rely on the force of the masses of the population, as well as on propaganda among the ranks of the enemy, to win them to the revolutionary side.[41]

While these principles may not appear startling or novel from the perspective of subsequent Communist operational doctrine, they chronicled the initial steps in an eventual comprehensive definition of revolutionary strategy.

They also marked a distinguishable departure from the random acts of political protest before the Japanese occupation. Then, in response to specific opportunities present in the erratic course of colonial politics, the revolutionary structure of the Vietnamese Communists had been variously located among students and exiles in south China in the 1920's, among the peasants in north central Viet Nam in the early 1930's, and in Saigon and the southern provincial towns during the Popular Front period of 1936-39. Now that more fundamental changes were occurring to reduce French power, the party realized that it was in the countryside,

> where the enemy's machinery of rule was relatively weak, that the party had more opportunity to come into close contact with the peasant masses to make propaganda, organize them, and transform the countryside into a revolutionary base.[42]

The significance of this assessment was not its discovery of a recent radical change in French power. French rule had always been relatively weaker in the countryside than in the more easily controlled towns. It was the recognition of this fact by the Communists that was an important revolutionary milestone. While the impact of the occupation was overburdening the capacity of the French to control developments in Indochina this was only reinforcing an already existing gap between the colonial administration and the countryside. Most of the 3,800 French administrators and their military colleagues had always been concentrated in the cities and provincial towns.[43] In the absence of a political structure to secure indigenous political loyalty, the French had been able to put down any threats of noncompliance with their efficient security police and military forces. But with the Japanese intervention diverting the attention of the French forces from their compliance mission and sponsoring indigenous threats to French control, the gap—the revolutionary space—was increasing. Yet this accentuation was overall less significant than the fact that some Vietnamese, led by the Indochinese Communist Party as it was still officially known, were making more deliberate and comprehensive plans for exploiting this gap than they had ever before considered.

ORGANIZATION OF VIETNAMESE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS FROM CHINESE EXILE

When the 8th Session of the Central Committee was held from May 10 to 19, 1941, the organizational strategy conceived at the meeting indicated the Communists' realization that the Japanese occupation had created a new potential for revolution in Viet Nam. This meeting brought Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi Minh) together with the party leaders for the first time that is recorded in the party's official history since the founding meeting in January 1930. It seems reasonable to assume that the basic results of this session were due in large measure to the impact of the returned leader's personality.[44] The keystone of these strategic decisions grew out of the belief that the occupation had profoundly changed political conditions in Viet Nam and consequently the nature of the party's task. As the Central Committee's resolution analyzed the situation it required that:

> For the moment the partial and class interests must be subordinated to the national problem. If the independence and freedom of the whole nation could not be recovered, not only the whole nation would be further condemned to slavery but the partial and class interests would be lost forever.[45]

Through its intervention, Japan had further complicated the colonial aspect of Vietnamese politics. Another layer of foreign control had been introduced; another actor had entered the Vietnamese political scene. This increased external pressure seems to have induced a broader national identity among Vietnamese and to have heightened expectations that independence might be secured through Japanese support. Yet what appears of greatest significance is not these factors of the occupation in themselves but the response to them. For if the analysis of the Central Committee resolution was valid at all it should have been equally true before the occupation. In that prewar period, how could the independence of the nation have been recovered by emphasizing class interests over broader nationalist ones? This question seems especially pertinent when the lack of widespread political consciousness is taken into account. But during the 1920's and 1930's, the Communists had neglected wider nationalist appeals to take advantage of random and particular political opportunities. They had evoked the parochial interests of peasant discontent, exile anxiety, and elite alienation without attempting to integrate them into a larger ideological whole. In this period, the opportunities for political action outweighed the Vietnamese Communists' doctrinal capacity to translate these events into challenges with broader revolutionary impact. As has been seen, this was primarily a limitation in organizational abilities. The wider political focus adopted by the Vietnamese Communists in May 1941, however, was not merely a change in idiom and perspective, but a definite change in substance manifested in new organizational forms and operational doctrine.

Founding of the Viet Minh

The shift of the Communists' attention away from a class revolution against indigenous feudalism to a national revolution against imperialism was symbolized in the decision of the 8th Session of the Party's Central Committee to found the Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi, The Viet Nam Independence League known as the Viet Minh. The purpose of this new organization was to facilitate "the mobilization of the masses' national spirit."[46] In theory the Indochinese Communist Party became a member of the Viet Minh Front, but in practice the two were indistinguishable. The term Viet Minh became a virtual synonym for the Communist Party, for the government it was to found in August 1945, and, because of the Communists' successes, for the whole anticolonial nationalist movement. Although the Indochinese Communist Party was publicly dissolved in a shrewd tactical move in October 1945, and the Viet Minh was formally dispensed with in May 1951, with the founding of the Viet Nam Lao Dong Dang, Viet Nam Labor Party, there has been no misunderstanding by the Communists themselves that there has been a firm line of organizational continuity since the founding of the party in 1930. Thus the title of their party's history published in 1960, Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party.[47]

The launching of the Viet Minh was not simply a change in facade. The change in tactics it heralded was fundamental. These included the formation of mass associations for "national salvation," Viet Nam Cuu Quoc Hoi, known as the Cuu Quoc Associations, for the purpose of extending throughout the country a network of complementary organizations for popular participation. This important new departure in Communist tactics committed the party in principle to establishing widely diffused structures for political mobilization—a significant contrast to their pre-occupation policy in which virtually all recruiting resulted in party membership. These subsidiary Cuu Quoc Associations gave the party organization a flexibility it could not have had if it had maintained its requirements for discipline and ideological control within the heart of the party ranks.

While the results of this popular participation organization during the Japanese occupation are almost impossible to assess, its long-range importance to revolution in Viet Nam was

definitely more qualitative than quantitative. The small number of participants in the August Revolution was balanced by the effectiveness with which a few well-trained activists were able to establish themselves in authority in the Communist success in 1945. Besides these qualities of flexibility and decisiveness in action, the organization which the Viet Minh evolved during the Japanese occupation was distinguished by its capacity to mobilize large numbers of Vietnamese for political participation. This was a long-term development closely related to the intensity of the ensuing revolutionary war with France, the requirements for military personnel, and the extent to which combat operations affected the civilian population. The reasons for the eventual effectiveness of this structure of political mobilization can be traced back to its initial framework which was formed at the 8th Session of the Central Committee of the Party in May 1941.

The basis for this whole structure of revolutionary organization was the chi bo or the cell, made up of a relatively few persons whose leader was the only one to have contact with superiors. These groups shared many of the characteristics of secret societies and thus the Communists capitalized on the appeal of such organizations to the Vietnamese, as well as their experience in utilizing its institutional form. This made use of native organizational capacity just as had the earlier Tan Viet party. Cells were to be established on the basis of the limited social differentiation that existed in colonial Viet Nam. Thus there appeared cells of women, youth, laborers, military men, and whatever homogeneous groups might be found.[48] Cells based on these functional distinctions in Vietnamese society had already been attempted as part of the Communists' operational procedure during the Nghe An-Ha Tinh soviet. Their meager success had in part been due to the lack of coordination in organizational effort, and it was therefore above the level of the chi bo that the real ingenuity of the Viet Minh displayed itself.

This superstructure was to be formed by functionally distinctive horizontal and vertical dimensions. The vertical dimension was to be the countrywide structures for each Cuu Quoc association, the Communist Party, and the future military command. Through this vertical structure there was to be a unity of effort in long-range policies for organizational growth determined by the top-level leadership of each of these groups. The horizontal dimension was to be a territorial unification of all the vertical structures: the popular participation associations, the party, and the military into an operational agency. This territorial unification would begin at the level immediately above the village and continue through the district and province levels in a pyramidal form until the ultimate level of revolutionary decision-making was reached. At each territorial echelon there was an operational control over each of the vertical structures of the revolutionary organization. The functioning of these two organizational dimensions permitted operational decentralization by the unification of all the vertical elements on a territorial base together with centralized control through horizontal hierarchies. The matrix thus formed was manipulated by the party through territorial representatives at each echelon. They monitored the activities of the Cuu Quoc at their level and controlled the selection of the leaders of each functional group. In its later refinements this structural form came to be known as the "parallel hierarchies" which described the parallel horizontal lines tying together the territorial structures into a pyramidal apex of centralized control.[49]

It was through this matrix that the party expected to mobilize a people who had not had any structured opportunity for political participation beyond their locale since the discontinuation of the mandarinal examinations in 1917. Yet this mobilization could not follow immediately from the 8th Session of the Central Committee, but developed gradually as the Communists were able to train more cadres and to expand their foothold from the mountainous area of North Viet Nam. The most significant conclusion reached at this seminal party meeting was that nationalism offered the best formula for a Communist revolution in Viet Nam and

that this nationalist identity was not widespread in the country but had to be "mobilized" through organization and propaganda.

Land Policy

Another area of doctrinal importance to Communist revolutionary strategy which was reviewed at this session of the Central Committee in the spring of 1941 was the question of land policy. Attitude toward land reform was always a key indicator of the general Communist policy line as well as party strength. It suggested how pressing the need was for compromise with and support of landed interests. Therefore, it was of strategic significance that the Central Committee decided to put aside their "land to the tillers" program. This was replaced with an emphasis on confiscating the land of "traitors" and "imperialists" which seems to have meant absentee landlords who could not control their holdings under wartime conditions.[50]

A more pervasive and "revolutionary" land policy initiated at this time was the decision to divide communal lands. This struck at the very heart of Vietnamese rural social structure and cohesion since communal lands were maintained by villages, family groups, and a multitude of private associations, such as former students of the same teacher. These communal lands are a Vietnamese rural equivalent to the modern-day trust funds, and their rents supported the welfare and philanthropic purposes of the sponsoring groups. By 1938 communal land represented as much as 20 percent of all cultivated land in north Viet Nam (Tonkin) and 25 percent in the center (Annam).

In areas of heavy population concentration where intense bidding on rent prices for communal land might have made these lands the domain of the rich, they were made available only to those who owned no land or had amounts too small to support their families.[51] Thus the Communists' policy decision to divide communal lands was not so much a means to win the support of landless elements of Vietnamese society as to break down existing structural relationships at the village level so as to facilitate new forms of organization there. Because of the solid implantation of the French and the Japanese at the time these land policy decisions were made, however, they did not have an immediate impact. Since the few Communist cadres available were at work in the Tho country, where communal land was not a social characteristic, its effects were delayed.

Truong Chinh

The various themes running through the meeting of the 8th Session of the Central Committee of the party and reorienting its revolutionary doctrine were perhaps best reflected in the election of Truong Chinh as the party's secretary-general in 1941 at the age of about 32. The significance of this development lay in the fact that through his subsequent writings Truong Chinh was to become the chief political theoretician of the party (a role Ho Chi Minh in his pedestrian publications never attempted) and the presumed leader of the pro-Chinese sentiment within Vietnamese Communism.[52] The Chinese affinity is in part substantiated by the name Truong Chinh, an alias for its bearer, whose real name is Dang Xuan Khu, which means "Long March." This was an obvious identification with the most celebrated chapter in Chinese revolutionary history up until that time—the 6,000-mile march of the Chinese Communists from Kiangsi in south China to the northwest in Shensi Province, covering more than a year between late 1934 and late 1935 and depleting their forces from over 100,000 to less than 20,000. Although attempts have been made to identify Truong Chinh as trained by the Chinese Communists, there is no positive documentation for it. There is only the information that in

December 1939, following the crackdown on the Vietnamese Communists by the colonial administration, he escaped into Yunnan Province where he joined other members of the Central Committee of the party. While in the ensuing year and a half it would have been possible for Truong Chinh to have been a student at Yenan or a comparable training center, the available data suggests that he led missions back into north Viet Nam for the party.

Whatever the ultimate explanation of Truong Chinh's actual experience with the Chinese Communists, it seems unmistakable that the decisions of the 8th Session of the Central Committee bore an identifiable relationship to the thrust of Mao Tse-tung's wartime reorientation of revolutionary strategy known as "New Democracy," and defined in a pamphlet of the same name published in January 1940. The Vietnamese obviously shared Mao's goal of a broader base for the Chinese revolutionary movement. Yet it is impossible to relate directly the sources of the Viet Minh's operational and organizational decisions of 1941 to these doctrinal developments in China. It is true that by 1943, the Vietnamese party had committed itself "To develop the culture of new democracy in Indochina," and had incorporated much of the idiom of Mao's program into their public statements.[53] However, it seems that the Vietnamese Communists were elaborating their own distinctive strategy which involved a deep commitment to nationalism. As they saw it, the main purpose of their Viet Minh Front was, "To rally the different strata of the people and the national revolutionary forces in the struggle against the main enemy of the nation, that is the French and Japanese fascist imperialists . . ."[54] This emphasis on nationalism in Viet Nam was probably a reflection of the wide difference in level of revolutionary development compared with China where the recent history of internecine warfare dated back at least 80 years to the Taiping rebellion. Although internal conflict among Vietnamese had not been lacking, it remained more an elite affair without the mass involvement that had resulted from the revolutionary warfare in China. Moreover, opposition to continued French dominance was a unifying theme which tended to overcome many of the regional and parochial tendencies in Vietnamese politics. There seemed more potential power to be derived from a nationalist program in Viet Nam than one which championed a more particular program.

Despite the features distinguishing the revolutionary situation in China from that in Viet Nam, Truong Chinh's election was an indication of a more pronounced Chinese Communist influence than the Vietnamese party had until then experienced. From the founding of the Thanh Nien in 1925, to the establishment of the Indochinese Communist Party in 1930, until the 8th Session of the Central Committee, Vietnamese communism had been the reflection of the Soviet training of its founder-leader, Ho Chi Minh. Unquestionably, the Chinese experience during the 1930's had great relevance for Vietnamese communism from the perspective of operational effectiveness. For reasons of their own autonomy and flexibility, the Vietnamese probably wished to adopt the relevant and immediately useful substance of the Maoist innovations without a close public and ideological identification with Chinese communism. It was such a role that Truong Chinh was able to fulfill with unusual effectiveness. He was to become the virtual embodiment of the principles and techniques of political mobilization upon which subsequent Communist success in Viet Nam has been based.

Relations Between Chinese and Vietnamese Communist Parties

Some of the reasons why the Vietnamese party did not wish to identify itself closely with the Chinese Communists became clear after the Central Committee session of May 1941. Its relations with politics in China were much more subtle and complex than might be suggested by the incorporation into Viet Minh operational doctrine of many recent innovations adopted from their Chinese counterparts. The Chinese Communists were in no position to give any

direct assistance, material or otherwise, to the Viet Minh. Their bases of strength lay outside the south China border area which was still the domain of autonomy-seeking warlords, despite the wartime proximity of their adversary Chiang Kai-shek in Chungking and the deep inroads of the Japanese occupation. These Chinese warlords were in a position to exert some influence in Viet Nam because of the significant number of Vietnamese political exiles who had sought refuge in south China from the French during the 1930's. As a result of their presence, there was established in Kwangsi Province in October 1942, the Viet Nam Cach Menh Dong Minh Hoi (Viet Nam Revolutionary League), known as the Dong Minh Hoi. This group, which was subsequently to play a significant role in the August Revolution, was formed under the sponsorship of the south China warlord and Commander of the Fourth War Zone, Chang Fa-k'wei.[55]

This association brought together five groups of Vietnamese exiles, two of which were based in Yunnan Province and the othere in Kwangsi. Included were remnants of the Phuc Quoc group, still faithful to Cuong De and led by an exile named Hoang Luong. After the failure of their attack on Lang Son, the Phuc Quoc sought political opportunities along the Vietnamese border in Kwangsi. Also located there was a group centering around Nguyen Tuong Tam, who had a long career as an exile politician and who had organized a student political group in Hanoi in 1940, only to flee the city the following year. Contrasted with these Kwangsi groups, the exiles in Yunnan had been based in south China a longer time and had firmer contacts among the Vietnamese community as well as with the local authorities. Of greatest prominence was Vu Hong Khanh, who was the titular leader of the VNQDD and who since 1933 had attempted to revitalize the nationalist party from the blows of the French which had driven it into exile. Just before the beginning of the Japanese war the VNQDD had been reorganized by Nghiem Ke To, a lieutenant of Khanh's, but there was sharp competition for membership in Yunnan between the nationalists and the Dong Duong Cach Menh Dang (Indochina Revolutionary Party). Having Marxist tendencies, this group had been formed among the Vietnamese employees of the international rail link between China and Viet Nam—known as the Yunnan Railway—who had traditionally been affiliated with the VNQDD. In addition, problems between the VNQDD elements in Yunnan and those scattered in other frontier areas of China had been left unresolved and remained a potential area of discord for the faction-ridden nationalist exiles.[56]

In order to eliminate opportunities for external exploitation which this exile competition presented, Chang Fa-k'wei had enforced unity upon them by establishing the Dong Minh Hoi. This tenuous unification was achieved by utilizing a fifth and older group of exiles who had no continuing party affiliations and were in reality political anachronisms. Principally this involved Nguyen Hai Thanh, who became head of the Dong Minh Hoi in 1942, and Trung Boi Cong, who became president of the provisional Vietnamese government which Chang Fa-k'wei sponsored in 1944. Nguyen Hai Thanh, born in 1878 in north Viet Nam, had participated in the original Phuc Quoc renovation movement of Phan Boi Chau. With the nationalist leader he had gone into exile in China in 1912, where in Canton he had tried to regroup young Vietnamese, but without any significant success. Growing old, long out of touch with Vietnamese politics, and even rumored to have forgotten his native language, Nguyen Hai Thanh seemed an improbable figure to give purpose or coherence to political exiles in China. But Thanh had come into close contact with Chang Fa-k'wei who had convinced himself that this was the personality who might bring unity to the squabbling factions. Aided by the weight of Chang's personal influence and a monthly stipend of $100,000 (Chinese), the Dong Minh Hoi became a reality. However, the qualities that commended Nguyen Hai Thanh for this figurehead role among Vietnamese exiles was in turn his greatest weakness in fulfilling a more fundamental purpose the Chinese had in creating the Dong Minh Hoi.[57]

Because of the relatively small numbers of Japanese troops in Indochina, there was the potential that developments there could affect the pressures on the China front through shifts in military contingents. Such a shift did in fact occur but not until the last year of the war when, in January 1945, the Japanese 37th Infantry Division was relocated from Kwangsi to north Viet Nam.[58] In anticipation of events of this kind, information on trends and events in Viet Nam was obviously of great concern, not only to the border warlords and Chungking but to the Allies as well. Therefore, the effort to create the Dong Minh Hoi was not merely to get control over Vietnamese exiles in China, or to establish political authority in Viet Nam—although some Chinese were anxious for such advantage—but to fill the pressing needs for wartime intelligence from that region. The aging exile Nguyen Hai Thanh could not demand this of the Dong Minh Hoi, for none of its member groups had any such organizational ties in Viet Nam. Chang Fa-k'wei was aware that the only organizational network of any effectiveness throughout Viet Nam was that of the Communists, which extended from the strategic mountain base in the Tho country to include informational contacts with the party in the south.[59]

According to the party's official history, however, a major obstacle in utilizing the Communist organization was that their leader, Ho Chi Minh, had been arrested on orders from the Chungking government and was not released until September 16, 1943, presumably to enable him to be used for Chinese intelligence purposes.[60] This extended detention and the simultaneous change of the future Vietnamese president's name to Ho Chi Minh from Nguyen Ai Quoc, appear symptomatic of the suspicions which Chungking had about his Communist affiliation and his activities in the 1920's with the Borodin mission. However, contrary to the generally accepted view, Chang Fa-k'wei has maintained that Ho Chi Minh did not have to change his name to get out of jail or that he was ever imprisoned in China in the 1940's.[61] Chang Fa-k'wei states that when he first met the Vietnamese Communist leader in Liuchou in 1941, he was bearing the name Ho Chi Minh and that shortly thereafter Ho was sent to Kunming for intelligence training. It appears that, despite the Chinese antipathy to Ho Chi Minh's ideological identity, they regarded him as indispensable in fulfilling their intelligence requirements. The contradiction in the stories relating to the wartime experiences of Ho Chi Minh may reflect a conflict in Chinese operational priorities. This conflict manifested itself following Ho's appointment to replace Nguyen Hai Thanh as head of the Dong Ming Hoi.

Strengthened by a monthly stipend increased to $200,000 (Chinese), Ho Chi Minh began to consolidate his hold over the Dong Minh Hoi by accusing certain elements antagonistic to him of being sympathetic to the Japanese.[62] Faced with pressures of this sort the leading nationalist exile, Vu Hong Khanh, returned to Yunnan with his lieutenant, Nghiem Ke To. There he tried in vain to set up serious contact with north Viet Nam through agents along the border and also through employees of the Yunnan Railway. Although the effort did not meet with any immediate success inside Viet Nam it did help the nationalists. By raising once again the problem of the tenaciousness of exile political competition, the frustrated antagonism of the VNQDD and the obvious success of the Communists again aroused the suspicions of the Chinese. Now the question of the priority of their intelligence requirements in Viet Nam, as compared with their desire to exert a controlling influence over Vietnamese exile political elements, was more sharply posed for the Chinese.

At this point the assessment of the Chinese was subject to pressures brought to bear by French intelligence operatives, who were alarmed by the increased opportunities the Communists were receiving.[63] Whatever results the Communist intelligence organization had been able to produce, it appears that they were insufficient to counterbalance the Chinese determination to manage Vietnamese exile politics and to thwart any autonomous consolidation of power within their circles. This attitude was demonstrated by Chang Fa-k'wei through a reorganization of the exiles into a provisional government of Viet Nam which created a tentative

unity by using the innocuous older exiles for their symbolic value. At a meeting held in March 1944 at Liuchou close to the Vietnamese frontier, after less than a year in favor, the Viet Minh leadership was replaced by Trung Boi Cong, an old and weak personality who acquired the vague puppet authority of president of the provisional government.[84]

But if this ease in manipulating Vietnamese exiles facilitated the immediate purposes of the Chinese it also demonstrated with perhaps unintended conspicuousness the rootlessness of these exile political elites. Since they did not represent structures of political interest wider than a handful of educated and alienated elite, they were more concerned with personal prestige and position than long-range goals. While their objectives were easier to satisfy, their range of political impact within Viet Nam was limited to an urban competition among elites rather than to a widening of the context of politics to include both peasant and upland minority population. In choosing their political allies among the Vietnamese, the Chinese selected those who were easier to control rather than those who had wider influence and political capability. The consequences of this choice were to provide an important dimension to the August Revolution and to illustrate again the incapacity of the nationalists as a coherent effective force in Vietnamese politics.

Following the organization of the provisional government, in which Ho Chi Minh had only a minor role, the Communist Viet Minh developed their activities autonomously inside Viet Nam, paying particular attention to strengthening their mountain base area. The relationship with the Chinese had been a most useful one while it lasted. If it did not result in getting Ho Chi Minh out of jail, as Chang Fa-k'wei maintains, it at least gave him a freedom of action advantageous to the Viet Minh. The financial support had been significant and it had undoubtedly allowed the Viet Minh to extend their intelligence gathering and political organization. Moreover, some of the exile-formed Viet Minh cadres were a part of the approximately 500 Vietnamese who received guerrilla training at the hamlet of Ta Ch'iao, fifteen miles from the frontier town of Liuchou. This camp seems to have given more emphasis to political reorientation than to the fundamentals of military tactics, but the politics of the camp were diffuse rather than doctrinaire. Chang Fa-k'wei says that both Vu Hong Khanh and Ho Chi Minh were lecturers at the training center and that such diverse guests as Archbishop Paul Yu and Chou En-lai came to give talks.

This training center and its program, along with the financial support and advantages available to Ho Chi Minh, serve to underscore the heterogeneous character of the relationship of the Viet Minh to the politics of China and the absence of a close wartime tie between them and the Chinese Communists. Indeed, the relationship was an expression of warlord politics in south China and its character was to set a pattern for relations between China and Viet Nam that was to endure until centralized power became more pronounced in both countries. Perhaps the best example of this trend was the fact that the subordinates of Chang Fa-k'wei—with whom the Vietnamese dealt during the Japanese occupation and in the Chinese occupation of northern Viet Nam after the capitulation—were the same personalities to represent the Chinese Communists in their early relations with the Viet Minh following the extension of their control over south China in the late 1940's. Most notable among these personalities was Hsiao Wen. Appointed in 1942 by Chang Fa-k'wei to handle Vietnamese exile affairs, he was also political adviser to the occupation command in Hanoi in 1945-46, and after joining the Chinese Communists he conducted negotiations regarding aid to the Viet Minh. Seen from an historical perspective, it was obviously not a new phenomenon that the Chinese were willing to intervene in Vietnamese politics. However, the fact that its intervention was more an extension of the warlord politics of south China than a tie with any central political group in China—Communist or Nationalist—was to have important consequences for revolution in Viet Nam.

For the Communist Viet Minh these consequences of warlord politics meant an end to the cooperation and support from the Kwangsi war zone, until the confused events of the Chinese occupation in the autumn of 1945. Following this break with Chang Fa-k'wei, they turned to the consolidation of fragmented guerrilla units and the extension of their base area among the Tho people. The Viet Minh entrusted to Vo Nguyen Giap these tasks of military and organizational preparation for the anticipated Japanese collapse. If Truong Chinh, the party's secretary general, was the embodiment of the Communists' political mobilization strategy, then Vo Nguyen Giap personified the evolving doctrine of revolutionary warfare. He was the man who forged an army of six divisions from a guerrilla band of 34 men.[65]

Vo Nguyen Giap and the "People's Army"

Although he had been a member of one of the pre-Communist revolutionary parties, the seminal Tan Viet, and had been arrested by the colonial authorities for his activities, upon his release Giap was permitted to continue his education in French schools. In 1938 he was awarded the highest French degree given in Indochina, the Doctorat en Droit (Doctor of Laws). The future commander of the Viet Minh Army then became a history professor at a private school in Hanoi, the Lycée Thanh Long, where he succeeded in orienting many of his colleagues to his revolutionary perspective. Many of the nonparty leaders in the August Revolution came from the faculty of Thanh Long. When the French declared war in 1939, the Vietnamese Communist Party was outlawed and its key members arrested. Giap escaped capture and went to China, leaving his wife and family at the central Viet Nam town of Vinh. His wife, known as Minh Thai among revolutionaries, was arrested by the French Sûreté for her liaison activities in 1941, and condemned to fifteen years of forced labor. She died between 1942 and 1943 in detention, from what Giap considered mistreatment and improper facilities. This personal blow heightened his revolutionary zeal and his hatred for the French, propelling him onward in his guerrilla activities in the mountains of north Viet Nam. Out of this wartime experience he developed a close alliance with the Tho guerrilla leader, Chu Van Tan. Through his increasingly strong ties with the Tho people, Giap prepared himself for the effort undertaken with greater earnestness after March 9, 1945, to develop a "liberation armed force" for the August Revolution. This was the nucleus of the "People's Army" which was to win spectacular victories in seven years of war against the French.

While there had been much Viet Minh political activity in the mountains of north Viet Nam throughout the occupation, it was only two and a half months before the Japanese coup de force that Vo Nguyen Giap launched the first platoon of the "People's Liberation Troops," consisting of 34 men and cadres equipped with 2 revolvers, 17 rifles, 14 flintlock rifles, and 1 light machinegun. Formed on December 22, 1944, in a Tho settlement in Cao Bang Province on the border of China, this platoon was separated from the main Japanese military concentrations in the Red River Delta, as well as from the more seasoned Tho units further to the south, by several mountain ranges. This initial Viet Minh unit expanded its strength by attacking the small French-led militia outposts scattered throughout Cao Bang Province, which were manned by a total of only 450 troops.

The manner in which these attacks on a force of 450 militiamen permitted a guerrilla platoon of 34 men to expand its strength is a microcosm of a pattern that was to be repeated on a larger scale during the Indochina War. The Viet Minh attacks in this early period succeeded because their adversary was tied down in numerous static defense posts, which enabled the guerrillas to concentrate a relatively superior force in order to overwhelm the posts one

at a time. Theoretically, the militia also could have concentrated their forces by adopting a mobile defense. But this would have inevitably left some of their territory unprotected and the mountainous terrain, a natural habitat for guerrillas, would have circumscribed their mobility. Without extensive political ties to the Tho and burdened with the legacy of Tho antagonism and revolt, the militia was limited to ineffective static defense in its response. From these isolated and modest victories the Viet Minh obtained the weapons to increase its Cao Bang contingent.

Despite their preparations, the Communist-led guerrillas in the mountains of north Viet Nam were still a relatively insignificant group when the Japanese coup de force occurred. In early March 1945, the whole "liberation force" numbered no more than a thousand men.[66] Moreover, the Viet Minh could not derive the maximum strength from their forces because there was no unified command to coordinate their operations. The Cao Bang troops under Giap's direct control were still not operating with the more seasoned guerrillas in the heart of the Tho country to the south. But by taking advantage of the coup de force, the Viet Minh were able to disarm some French who were off their guard while attempting to escape the Japanese. This increased their fund of weapons and also reduced the obstacles to their movement, since the Japanese made no attempt to replace the French in the mountain defense positions. With this increased freedom of maneuver, by the middle of April the Viet Minh succeeded in uniting their guerrilla troops around the mountain town of Cho Chu in Thai Nguyen Province. Unaware that they had only four months to prepare their revolutionary bid for power to take advantage of the Japanese capitulation in August, the Viet Minh nevertheless launched their task with a determination and comprehensiveness unmatched by other Vietnamese groups.

Potential for Revolution increases

Immediately after the Japanese coup de force, the Standing Bureau of the Central Committee of the Indochinese Communist Party met to consider the new situation. After their deliberation, they issued an instruction which would guide their party and its Viet Minh Front in preparing for an insurrection against an occupation enemy that would offer them no opposition. On the contrary, their ostensible Japanese adversary would aid them passively at first, then actively. The results of the party meeting formally confirmed what all of its members must have known: ". . . conditions are not yet ripe for an uprising because indecision did not yet prevail among the Japanese, the country as a whole was not yet ready to fight, and because the neutral strata of the population must necessarily go through a period of disillusionment with the disastrous results of the coup d'état before they give way to revolutionary forces. . . ."[67] Although the moment for a bid for power had not arrived, the coup de force had increased the revolutionary potential, and the exploitation of this potential through political and military organization was the chief concern of the party. As the party assessed the situation, "French administration has completely disintegrated and the Japanese have not yet had time to set up as effective an apparatus of repression as that of the French."[68]

Two important aspects of this increase in revolutionary potential were the absence of Japanese troops in the highlands of north Viet Nam—now held only by the militia remnants following the retreat of the colonial army into China—and the famine which ravaged the Red River Delta from March through May 1945, taking between 500,000 and 600,000 lives and sending urban rice prices soaring.[69] But if opportunities for revolutionary organization were available in the countryside, it was beyond the capacity of the modest Viet Minh cadre to take advantage of them. Yet the cities where the few determined cadres could be, and eventually were, extremely effective were still tightly held by the Japanese who in the face of a potential Allied landing, were preoccupied with local continuity and stability.

Because of the dichotomy between revolutionary opportunity and capacity, the Standing Bureau instruction attempted to define a program which made the best use of existing capacity while preparing for the exploitation of available and future opportunities. Due to the convulsiveness of events as well as to the modesty of military organization and cadres, emphasis was placed on the psychological preparation of the population. In addition to slogans and printed matter, this required the party to switch over to so-called "higher forms" of propaganda including, ". . . parades, demonstrations, political strikes, public meetings, strikes in schools and markets, non-co-operation with the Japanese in all fields, opposition to the requisition of paddy and refusal to pay taxes."[70] Shock teams were to be formed to create new political-military bases, liberation committees were to be set up in factories, mines, villages, public and private offices, while "People's Revolutionary Committees" were to be established in areas under Viet Minh control.[71]

Although the organization of this revolutionary structure was to lead to provisional governmental forms it was through guerrilla warfare that the party saw it could best ". . . keep the initiative in the struggle to drive the Japanese aggressors out of the country. . . ."[72] But this analysis of the efficacy of guerrilla tactics in extending revolutionary structure and gaining power from the Japanese was tempered with the warning that only where natural features of the country, such as mountain areas, were favorable was guerrilla warfare to be launched. However, within this framework, a more specific program of guerrilla politics for exploiting revolutionary space was hammered out immediately after the coup de force.

Unifying Guerrilla Forces

Following the arrival of Vo Nguyen Giap and his "liberation army" in the forward base area in Thai Nguyen Province the North Viet Nam Revolutionary Conference was convened by the Standing Bureau of the Central Committee of the party. As its first steps the conference unified the disparate guerrilla units which had just merged into the Viet Nam Liberation Army and placed it under the command of a Revolutionary Military Committee of North Viet Nam consisting of Vo Nguyen Giap, Chu Van Tan, and Van Tieng Dung. Moreover, the Military Committee was made the focal point of revolutionary activity by its responsibility for both "the political and military command of the resistance bases in north Viet Nam."[73] As a further advance toward a more coherent military command structure four "resistance zones" were defined in north Viet Nam along with two in central and one in south Viet Nam. Within these zones, additional bases were to be established where conditions were auspicious, "as to natural features, mass organizations, food supplies, and a favourable balance of forces between ourselves and the enemy. . . ." In north Viet Nam these conditions were best met in the arc of mountains that surrounded the Red River Delta where bases could "serve as spring boards for the general insurrection and constitute the nucleus of a future independent and free Viet Nam."[74]

Within the base area guerrilla warfare was to be the principal form of struggle for both the consolidation of control over the territory and the expansion of the Viet Minh forces. In this initial phase of guerrilla warfare the Viet Minh placed a premium on the maintenance of their force and on the rule of attacking only when it would increase their strength. Their operational watchword was, "to ambush and attack the enemy by surprise in small engagements when we are quite certain of success."[75] These guerrilla tactics were closely coordinated with those of armed propaganda units, whose task included, "repression of traitors, puppet notables, and ruffians, warnings to mandarins and puppet officials of villages, and cantons, opposition to requisitions of rice and refusal to pay taxes to the Japanese," which were to be linked with public speeches by shock teams in markets, transportation centers, schools, enterprises, and theaters.[76] Through techniques of this kind, the modest Viet Minh resources in political cadres

and armed forces were made to extend the revolutionary structure by taking advantage of the mountain area where the population was sparse and mobility difficult. By eliminating the existing remnants of the colonial administration or by persuading its vestigial cadres to become part of the People's Committees, the Communists were consolidating their hold. At the same time they were establishing a new structure for the mobilization of the mountain population for participation in the future insurrection.

In early June 1945, six mountain provinces which had come under more than partial Viet Minh control—Cao Bang, Lang Son, Ha Giang, Tuyen Quang, Thai Nguyen, and Bac Kan—were united into a single administrative entity known as the "Free Zone." A Provisional Committee was placed in charge of the Free Zone, assuming control from the Military Committee which continued to exercise authority in the military sphere. These two committees were charged with executing a program broadened to include economic, cultural, and social affairs as well as political operations. Particular emphasis was given to a three-month program of heightened preparedness which indicated the specifics of the political mobilization the Viet Minh desired. Of primary importance there was to be a "mobilization of the minds of the masses," which was to be achieved by requiring each administrative district to have a propaganda committee. Its members were required to go into every village with theatricals and displays of force and were to hold meetings at which newspapers would be read and commented upon. The next step involved the organization and the development of the youth movement. This was followed by a program to unify all Viet Minh organizations up to the provincial level within three months. From this framework significant results were expected to give needed support to the military effort. Each village was expected to organize at least one self-defense group of twelve men in addition to a guerrilla group of five men who were to be trained for operations outside the village. But the population of the base area was also to yield recruits for the Viet Nam Liberation Army which was to take on its first battalion size organization during the month of June 1945.[77]

Thus after two months of intensive effort following years of experimentation and preparation, the Communists through their Viet Minh Front succeeded in establishing their hegemony over a territory with an estimated population of 856,000 persons. Of these only 12-15 percent were Vietnamese and many of them lived in the foothills or adjoining lowlands beyond immediate control.

The Communists could claim to control a third of the territory of north Viet Nam by virtue of the absence of political opposition in the 37,000 square kilometers of the six-province "Free Zone." However, this made them masters of only 10 percent of the population of Tonkin which emphasized the Communist isolation from the mass of the Vietnamese population.[78] Moreover, it underscored not only the importance of mountains as a convenient base, but also the limitations on the Viet Minh expansion caused by not having ties to the delta heartland of north Viet Nam.

Viet Minh External Interests

While the Japanese coup de force had given the Viet Minh the chance to establish themselves in the highlands it had also created other opportunities which the consolidation of the base area helped to strengthen. The Viet Minh believed that the elimination of the French served to improve their diplomatic relations with the Allies, "because the Japanese aggressors have become our only enemy and because the revolutionary people have become the only forces fighting against the Japanese. . . ."[79] Although the continuing military occupation of the Japanese was a formidable obstacle to the immediate seizure of power by the Viet Minh, it offered

advantages which might not have occurred had Japanese authority collapsed simultaneously with that of the French and been followed by a quick Allied intervention. Based on the experience of New Guinea and the Pacific Islands, the Allies had good reason to suspect that the Japanese resistance would be protracted and tenacious. The swiftness of their surrender could not have been easily anticipated in the late spring and early summer of 1945, since the bomb that was to bring that quick collapse only received its final tests at Alamogordo on July 16, 1945. Being recognized as the only effective anti-Japanese group inside Viet Nam brought opportunities to the Viet Minh from both the United States and France. The overriding concern of the French was the reestablishment of their colonial sovereignty in Indochina. The interests of the Americans were involved in immobilizing the Japanese troops to prevent them from participating in other war theaters or in undercutting resistance in case of a landing in Viet Nam. For both allies there was a convergence of purpose in seeking to work with the Viet Minh.

After numerous tentative communications with the Viet Minh through intermediaries, a French reconnaissance detachment was ordered by Jean Sainteny, the Chief of the French Military Mission in Kunming, to move south from Tsin Tsi in Kwangsi Province into north Viet Nam's adjoining province of Cao Bang. On July 2, 1945, they made contact with the local Viet Minh authorities (who, significantly, were Tho) and requested that French troops be assisted in infiltrating into the Red River Delta. Under the pretext that they would have to refer this request to higher authorities for decision, the local Viet Minh indicated that it would take about two months to get an answer. Then Viet Minh Cao Bang representatives requested that they be given arms and instructors in order to continue their activity against the Japanese. Whether or not in response to this specific request, a mixed Franco-American mission of six men was parachuted into Viet Minh headquarters on July 16, 1945.[80] Their liaison prepared the way for air-drops of arms, ammunition, and other supplies which did much to transform the Viet Minh from a ragged bunch of irregulars into units that at least had standardized weapons if not an extensive degree of military training.[81]

Even though it appears to be a widely accepted belief that the Viet Minh received external material aid during their preinsurrectionary preparation, the magnitude of this assistance and its impact on the August Revolution have been less well known. Without being able to determine the precise circumstances it seems certain that a total of approximately 5,000 weapons were air-dropped to the Viet Minh during the summer of 1945. Certainly it is not coincidental that the number of Viet Minh regular troops at the moment of the Japanese capitulation—both claimed by the Communists and estimated by the French—was 5,000 men. Although the weapons dropped to the Viet Minh were of American manufacture and the Americans were virtually the only Allied force having the air capability in the area for such an undertaking, it does not follow that the material support of the Viet Minh was a unilateral policy of the United States. Evidence that the French too were interested in the Viet Minh as a client force goes beyond their request for assistance in infiltrating their men into the Red River Delta and the parachuting of French teams into the mountain base area. An interview in early 1947 with the Far Eastern correspondent of The New York Times, Robert Trumbull, presents significant information in this regard. It comes from an anonymous French official in Hanoi who is described as a member of the highest echelon of the French administration in north Viet Nam and a former French resistance figure. This personality seems to be Jean Sainteny, a celebrated resistance hero who was French Commissioner for north Viet Nam at the time of this interview. Commenting on the character and the consequences of French policy toward the Viet Minh, he said,

> Ironically, the Viet Minh received aid from us because the Allies thought they were fighting the Japanese. The first French agents dropped into Tonkin made contact with the Viet Minh and supplied them with arms,

> including the Sten guns that are now being used against the French . . . so the mass of the population said "These Viet Minh have the aid of the Allies; they are strong, they are the champions of the nationalists, they have destroyed the mandarinal system" . . . which was unpopular with the masses because all authority is unpopular. The Viet Minh told them, "Now you are a free people."[82]

Since the weapons air-dropped to the Viet Minh in north Viet Nam before the Japanese capitulation were only about 7 percent of the more than 80,000 weapons that they were estimated to have had when open warfare broke out in December 1946, the observation of the highly placed but thinly anonymous French official suggests that the greatest long-range impact of the aid was psychological rather than material. While these weapons permitted the Viet Minh to enter Hanoi in force on August 19, 1945, it was the acquiescence of the Japanese rather than their own strength which ensured the Communist predominance over the disoriented caretaker Vietnamese government. Moreover, the view of the anonymous official that the deterioration in compliance with the established pattern of authority was one of the principal effects of the aid to the Viet Minh tends to reinforce the earlier observation of Paul Mus. From this perspective, it was not so much the elimination of colonial administrative and military personnel as the consequences this had for the Vietnamese attitude toward the French hegemony that was the real significance of the Japanese intervention.

Extension of Viet Minh Influence

In this gap between the loss of legitimacy of French authority and the absence of legitimacy for any other authority, the Viet Minh came forward to fulfill routine tasks such as settling everyday disputes and disagreements, registering transactions, and maintaining order against the insecurities of the period. Complemented by their propaganda but limited by their meager cadres, these measures served to win acceptance for the Viet Minh. The Communists, in nationalist garb, were also able to extend their influence beyond the reach of their cadres. Shrewdly they endowed the groups with local influence which lacked any larger identity with a new legitimacy. They merely called upon them to form Liberation Committees in order to participate in the fight for independence. These committees served to structure the gaps of revolutionary space and to provide a justification and direction for what might otherwise have been random and half-hearted protest. Success in actions of this kind was in no small part due to the feeble efforts of the Japanese and their Vietnamese clients to create an acceptable alternative authority. Because of the lack of real competition, the Communists were able to gain support of many of the politically influential.

While the preparations of the preinsurrectionary period had demonstrated their growing capacity and their ability to carry out guerrilla politics in the countryside, the Viet Minh were aware that, ". . . it was in the three big cities: Hanoi, Hue, and Saigon, that the August general insurrection . . . [would win] victories of a main and decisive meaning." Even though these guerrilla bases and forces were vital to the Viet Minh after the August Revolution had run its course, they were a complementary rather than a decisive factor in winning control over Hanoi and Hue. The lack of such bases in the south was not the key determinant in the loss of Saigon. These guerrilla forces were another psychological tool in the arsenal of a political movement which during the Japanese occupation had shrewdly adapted itself to the goals of a broader segment of Vietnamese society and developed more flexible revolutionary techniques than they had displayed during the 1920's and 1930's.

This acceleration of Viet Minh influence had been partly the result of the Japanese intervention which had created opportunities for wider political expression than had existed before

the war. It had reduced the French capacity to enforce compliance while opening up the possibility for outside assistance. However, it was not opportunity which called forth the response but a subtle though fundamental transformation within the Vietnamese Communist movement. In personalities it reflected the return of Ho Chi Minh from almost a decade of aloofness from Vietnamese politics, as well as the rise of two indigenously cultivated party activists, Truong Chinh and Vo Nguyen Giap. Contrasted with their impetuous Moscow-trained southern Viet Nam counterparts these men devised techniques of political mobilization and guerrilla warfare which, by their sophistication and suitability, created new dimensions of power for communism in Viet Nam.

Over and above these innovations, however, was a new awareness of and identity with nationalism—now defined almost exclusively as the vehicle required to secure independence. As this goal had become more attainable through the Japanese occupation, culminating in capitulation, the Viet Minh was virtually the only Vietnamese group to exploit the situation through a broad appeal based on nationalism. Within this context, the Viet Minh's nationalism did not include any more specific definition than the goal of independence, and probably did not require defining until the question of parochial autonomy among the political-religious sects clashed with central party control. Feeding upon the relief felt at the demise of the colonial administration and the anxiety over the uncertain consequences of a French return, the Viet Minh won wide support for their advocacy of independence.

Complementing their capacity for decisive if not widespread action, this psychological conditioning of an anxious population through a nationalist cause in its demand for independence prepared the Viet Minh in their bid for power. For it was the hiatus in international power that ultimately created the opportunity for revolution, and exploiting this advantage was not primarily a function of military strength, even had the Viet Minh possessed the necessary armed force. Instead, it was the formation of broad and even contradictory aspirations around the single goal of independence which brought extensive influence to the Viet Minh. In this task the 1,000 armed troops that entered Hanoi on August 19, 1945, while a tangible manifestation of the advantages to the Communists from the occupation interlude, were not the decisive element in the successful seizure of power. Their source of strength had come from the doctrinal transformation which had caused the party to adapt itself effectively to the potential goal of Vietnamese nationalism.

OCCUPATION'S STIMULUS TO POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

It was through the elimination of the French administration and their acquiescence to the Viet Minh takeover that the Japanese contributed most conspicuously to revolution in Viet Nam. However, their direct aid to diverse Vietnamese political groups and their sponsorship of the trappings of independence did much, often in a contradictory manner, to develop the nationalist sentiment which the Communists capitalized upon. As a major part of this confusing trend, it was only two days after the coup de force that Emperor Bao Dai was prompted by the Japanese to issue a declaration from his royal capital at Hue on March 11, 1945, in which he abrogated the French Treaty of Protection of 1884 and proclaimed the independence of Annam.[53] Such an act could only serve to tantalize Vietnamese nationalists, for the declaration failed to use the name Viet Nam and it significantly left the area of southern Viet Nam (Cochinchina) still legally a French colony in the hands of the Japanese.

This continued separate status for the south reflected a special Japanese interest in the area. Their purpose was to use the south as a guerrilla base from which they could more easily tie down an Allied invasion force, immobilizing it from activity against Japanese

positions in China or the home islands.[84] If the south were left under Japanese control without an intervening layer of indigenous government, it would permit the necessary political base for guerrilla warfare to be developed more conveniently. Although this special interest in the south was to cause substantial political tension during the August Revolution, it had originated in Japanese desires for preparedness and stability. Again for strategic reasons, stability was the overriding concern. But means of achieving stability at a rapid pace were not readily apparent. Thus this important consideration led to another anomalous situation; the French administration had been disarmed, but it had not been totally eliminated. Therefore,

> When the Japanese replaced the French administration on 9 March 1945, they were anxious to avoid any economic or administrative dislocation which might interfere with military security for they believed an invasion of the country was possible at any moment. They were willing, therefore, to maintain the French in the lower brackets of administration. . . .[85]

However, after a month the French began to disappear rapidly from the scene and the Japanese were pressed to set up a more substantial Vietnamese regime. While their diffuse programs in the south appeared to serve short-run Japanese purposes they decided it was necessary to replace the vestigial monarchical government at Hue headed by Pham Quynh.

Ironically, this selection of a new administration was not as simple as it might have seemed. The Japanese found themselves faced with a disputatious and unconciliatory attitude among the nationalist elite which was later to frustrate the French in their attempts to "choose and form" a nationalist alternative. Ngo Dinh Diem, who had proved a stubborn bargainer for political advantage with the Japanese in preceding years, was the almost unanimous choice of the Vietnamese non-Communist political elite. Maintaining a political hostility against Bao Dai which dated from 1933, and which continued until Diem's assassination in 1963, Ngo Dinh Diem refused to form a government under the Emperor of Annam. Perhaps it was wisest for Diem not to accept the auspices of the Japanese when their defeat seemed so near and their benediction so unpromising for future prestige.

The Tran Trong Kim Government

Yet the importance of his unconciliatory behavior for nationalist politics was that Diem's alternative was to retire to the inactivity of his study, leaving the field of political conflict to others. Consequently, it was out of a desire to take what opportunity there was to get a nationalist political force in motion that Tran Trong Kim agreed on April 17, 1945, to form a Vietnamese government. Unhappily for the development of an effective and coherent nationalism, the contributions of this government were minimal. However, these initial efforts of non-Communist politicians, circumscribed as they were by Japanese control, were illustrative of characteristics which limited both their success in the August Revolution and that of their nationalist successors throughout the years up until the present.

The majority of the officials and supporters of the Tran Trong Kim government were members or sympathizers of the Dai Viet Quoc Dan Danq (Great Viet Nam Nationalist Party), known as the Dai Viet. The Dai Viet had originally been formed among university students in Hanoi in the autumn of 1940, with the hope that the Japanese occupation would help their nationalist cause.[86] The party had immediately suffered a setback at the hands of the French Sûreté, although it remained clandestinely alive among the Hanoi students and was reconstituted with Japanese encouragement in 1945, when it underwent a major transformation. While the student origin of the Dai Viet remained significant, the party now became the focus of what has been

called "bourgeois nationalists."[87] These were men who had advanced through the French education system to receive the very highest degrees and were subsequently to enjoy positions of importance in the colonial life and administration of Indochina. Tran Trong Kim, who has written the most comprehensive popular history of the country in the Vietnamese language and who was an education inspector in the colonial administration, was a good example of what constituted the backgrounds of his political associates.

In the Tran Trong Kim cabinet there were four medical doctors, a professor, and a distinguished jurist, Tran Van Chuong, who was considered the "mainspring" of the government which comprised a category of individuals who had received many privileges in a land where there were few available.[88] Their political experience had been intense but it had also been limited to what might be called "elite politics." Their activities prior to March 1945 had not included years of frustrated attempts to establish a popular political organization but had centered on the in-fighting for educational opportunity, official position, and that elusive quality known best to colonial elites as "prestige." The anti-French spirit they manifested was emphatically not a rejection of French culture but a result of their impatience at being blocked in their occupational mobility within a French-made framework short of managing the affairs of their country. While this characterization obviously cannot cover all of the diverse personalities and groups attracted to the Tran Trong Kim government, it does typify its decisionmaking core and can begin our explanation of why the August Revolution was a Communist and not a nationalist affair.

The popular reaction to the Japanese coup de force, which Paul Mus observed in the Vietnamese countryside, was also present in the cities and provincial towns. Here it was expressed by the expansion of the Vietnamese-language press and the organization of public demonstrations, all of which reflected a spontaneity very far short of mass uprising. Conscious of the importance of these sentiments, the Tran Trong Kim government attempted to respond, but on the whole their actions, reflecting their training, were bureaucratic and legalistic. Through the pronouncements of Emperor Bao Dai there was a commitment to the preparation of a written constitution which was to be based on principles of religious and political liberty. The constitution never appeared, but there was an administrative reform unifying the old monarchical bureaucratic structure with the parallel French-created one, although this did not notably increase efficiency.[89] At the beginning of July 1945, in some of its most popular measures, the Tran Trong Kim government proclaimed the name of the country as Viet Nam, adopted a national anthem, and unfurled a national flag having three horizontal crimson stripes on a yellow background which is still in use tody. Finally and grudgingly, on August 8, after the bomb on Hiroshima had sounded the knell for the Japanese, sovereignty over the southern area, Cochinchina, was turned back by the occupation authorities to the central government. Thus, for the first time since 1864, the country was again united under its historic name of Viet Nam. This unity, the object of subsequent fratricidal conflict, was resilient enough to last little less than two weeks.[90]

Emergence of New Social Patterns

In sharp contrast to these formal and bureaucratic measures, which might have been expected from the personalities directing the Tran Trong Kim government, there was also action which reflected another important facet of its political resources. Organizational activity and the stimulation of political participation among the youth of Viet Nam had more long-range consequences than almost any other effort initiated by the Dai Viet-backed government. The impact of these efforts was in large measure due to the social changes occurring during the war which had affected the attitudes and expectations of Vietnamese youth. Paradoxically,

these changes resulted from a range of activities sparked by the educational and sports programs inaugurated by the administration of Admiral Decoux. Born of a fear that the Japanese would capture the sympathies of Vietnamese youth through their propaganda, and out of a desire to win the future leaders of Indochina to the allegiance of France, Decoux had expanded social and educational opportunities as a pragmatic alternative. In four years 4,800 additional rural schools were created and the total number of students at all schools was almost doubled—from 450,000 in 1939 to 700,000 in 1944. Particular emphasis was given to the University of Hanoi where a School of Science and a School of Architecture were created and a Cité Universitaire constructed as a center for student activities.[91]

Parallel to this expansion of educational opportunities was the formation of a youth and sports corps which was structured around a selected cadre. These young people were brought to the southern coastal town of Phan Thiet for training as group leaders and then returned to their localities to organize teams for gymnastics, soccer, and other mass-participation sports. At the height of the development of this corps there were about 86,000 young people all over Indochina regularly participating in the programs, led by an additional 1,016 cadre members.[92] One of the major purposes of these educational and sports programs was to "safeguard French grandeur," to use the words of Admiral Decoux, but the practical effect was to heighten the social consciousness of the participants and give them experience in organization and group discipline.[93] While pledging an athlete's oath to the French flag and the Vichy slogan of "Family, Work, Country," the young Vietnamese were being initiated into social patterns that would later be transferred to other loyalties. Although available statistics are conflicting, it would seem probable that the organized sporting youth combined with their less disciplined student colleagues must have added approximately 500,000 young persons to the mobilized population.[94]

Political Use of Social Activities

While the French were responsible for the social mobilization of this wide segment of the youth of Viet Nam, it was left to the Japanese and to the enterprising members of the Tran Trong Kim government to make political capital of this reservoir of social talent. In the spring of 1945, they launched programs giving this mobilized youth a political organization and, under Japanese sponsorship in southern Viet Nam (Cochinchina), a partial militarization. It was the Minister of Youth, Pham Anh, in the Dai Viet government, a 33-year-old lawyer, and his talented assistant, Ta Quang Buu and, in south Viet Nam under Japanese auspices, Dr. Pham Ngoc Thach, who were responsible for giving political direction to Vietnamese youth. The distinctiveness of the program in the south was due to the particular political interests the Japanese had in connection with their preparations to resist a potential Allied invasion. The swampy and mountainous Cambodia-south Viet Nam border region seems to have been chosen by the Japanese as the center of a resistance area from which guerrilla war would be launched in the rear of the Allies as they pushed northward through Viet Nam.

The effectiveness of this guerrilla scheme required that the Japanese have a close accord with indigenous groups for assistance and flexibility. Since the activities and membership of the sports and youth movement had been concentrated in the south, it lent itself to a transformation, on July 2, 1945, into the Thanh Nien Tieng Phong (Advanced Guard Youth), which formed the nucleus of an indigenous army. This paramilitary unit became the special preserve of its organizer, Pham Ngoc Thach, who led the Advanced Guard Youth to a decisive role in the August Revolution in the south where they fought tenaciously against the reoccupying French. To the charge that in the Advanced Guard Youth the Vichy colonial regime had merely trained the forces to expel France from Indochina, Admiral Decoux has retorted that,

> The truth is that the youth of Indochina have not been more traitorous to the French cause than have been the soldiers formed under our discipline, or than the students or intellectuals of this messy country have been to French culture. . . . The crime is not that. It is imputable to Frenchmen who, by their foolishness or ambition, made inevitable the coup de force of the Japanese of 9 March 1945, creating an extremely dangerous hiatus in the exercise of our sovereignty in Indochina.[95]

With ironic consequences similar to those of the Vichy-launched youth group, both Phan Anh and Ta Quang Buu joined their Dai Viet youth with the Viet Minh upon the outbreak of the August Revolution.[96] They took with them their youthful followers, drawn largely from the students at the University of Hanoi, who had been given their opportunity for higher education through the program of Admiral Decoux. The wartime governor-general's action expanding higher education had been based on the belief that those Vietnamese educated in France had, upon their return, only infrequently found positions commensurate with their preparation and expectations. This he attributed to the fact that no requirements were placed on their curriculum, with the consequence that their preparation usually bore little relationship to needs and opportunities in Viet Nam. The admiral's remedy was to expand the University of Hanoi by emphasizing schools for professional training. This allowed education to be tied closely to existing and anticipated occupational requirements.[97]

Had this trend been understood and acted upon during the 1930's it might have served to establish more of an identity with France among the emerging Vietnamese elite. As it turned out, Decoux's recently constructed Cité Universitaire provided the revolutionary setting, on August 21, 1945, for the meeting of the General Association of Students, which demanded the abdication of Emperor Bao Dai and called for the formation of a government of national union under the Viet Minh.[98] In this crippling move, the Tran Trong Kim government was to a significant extent undermined by the efforts of its defecting youth leaders who had gotten their strength from the student origins of the Dai Viet Party. The irony of these wartime developments was thus intensified. Decoux, with hopes of winning the allegiance of Vietnamese youth through expanding their opportunities for education, had facilitated the organization of an anti-French student movement. Tran Trong Kim's interim Dai Viet government, in the hope of broadening its base of popular strength, had encouraged the political organization of university students who were to be the very ones to demand its overthrow.

Japanese Political and Military Programs

Of far greater impact than these defections upon the Tran Trong Kim government's capacity to establish a countrywide nationalist movement was the intense emphasis of Japanese political and military programs in south Viet Nam after the coup de force. This was an activity separate from and almost contradictory to their support of the Dai Viet government at Hue. There was historical reasons for this divisive effort. Japanese political programs in southern Viet Nam, having begun at the outset of 1942, antedated similar activity in other parts of Indochina. This was due in part to the fact that the non-Communist Vietnamese opposition to the French had been more conspicuous there and that Japanese officials had interests there which had been cultivated before the start of the war.

One of the key Japanese figures in this operation was a businessman named Matsushita who had opened an export-import firm in Indochina in 1925, known as the Dai Nan Koosi. This firm had a rather lusterless career and in 1938, after committing "indiscretions," Matsushita was asked to leave the country. Following the Japanese occupation, Matsushita returned to

use his Dai Nan Koosi as a cover for espionage and clandestine political activity in southern Viet Nam. At the same time the prewar Japanese consul-general in Saigon, Yoshio Minoda, was placed in charge of a similar range of activities in the north. While overt support for Vietnamese political groups did not result from this network until 1943, clandestine activity, frequently in lively competition with the French Sureté, did take place.

It was through the opportunity presented by the vigorous opposition of the religious-political sects to the French in southern Viet Nam and the concern over reprisals against them that the Japanese became involved in the early part of the occupation in specific issues of Vietnamese politics. The Cao Dai had by 1938 become the most numerous sect in southern Viet Nam, with approximately 300,000 followers, and in the first blush of enthusiasm over the French defeat in Europe and the Japanese occupation in Indochina they attempted to extend their religious organization overtly into politics. This provoked a stern reaction from the French authorities who deported their pope, Pham Ngoc Tac, to Madagascar and occupied the Papal See in Tay Ninh, west of Saigon, on December 27, 1941. In his prewar activities Matsushita had been in touch with the Cao Dai, for they had expressed an interest in the establishment of Prince Cuong De on the throne of Viet Nam as part of a neotraditionalist reform movement which would bring wider status and prestige to the sect. Being a close friend of the exiled prince, who remained the symbol of the traditionalist renovation movement, the Phuc Quoc, Matsushita capitalized upon this tie to gain a position of influence with the Cao Dai. He was, however, unable to prevent the deportation of their pope in 1942, an event which complicated his goal of gaining local political influence. Matsushita then had to find a leader who could bring some coherence to the now faction-ridden and disorganized Cao Dai sect. This problem was resolved in the person of Tran Quang Vinh, whose activities after 1943 stimulated the political consciousness of the sect. Although the Cao Dai was increasingly prepared for action it was not until the imminence of an Allied landing increased that the Japanese made use of the political capacities that Vinh had developed.

A similar sort of Japanese relationship developed with the Hoa Hao. The founder and spiritual chief of this folk religion, Huynh Phu So, was felt by the French to be exercising too great an opposition to them even though they kept him under careful surveillance in house arrest. Unlike their acquiescence in the deportation of the Cao Dai pope, the Japanese intervened to prevent Huynh Phu So from being sent out of the country and thereby won the confidence of the Hoa Hao sect. With loyalties from the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai giving the Japanese political roots in the Vietnamese countryside, they hoped to create a structured force in southern Viet Nam's politics. It was for this reason that they sponsored the formation of the Viet Nam Phuc Quoc Dong Minh (Viet Nam Restoration League) under the leadership of Tran Van An.

The Japanese seemed to want to create a political movement which would encompass both the rural folk religions and the parties which had developed among the more sophisticated urban population. Because of its continuity with the monarchy and its traditionalist orientation, the national renovation movement appeared to the occupation authorities to offer the best means for coordinating the various political factions over which the Japanese hoped to gain control. If this coalition had become a reality it would have given its creators a flexibility and a depth of influence in Vietnamese politics that would have been unmatched by subsequent movements. But the Japanese and their clients were unable to escape the pitfalls which ensnared their successors. The political distance between the rural autonomy-conscious sects and the urban-based parties was too great to be joined together by the Phuc Quoc Dong Minh. It was not an impossible task, although it has yet to be achieved by any Vietnamese political movement. Certainly, the Japanese approach to the problem maximized their chances for failure.

Tran Van An, a Trotskyite lacking strong legitimate ties to the traditionalist restoration identity in Vietnamese politics, was a poor choice to lead a broad political movement. Before settling on him for this task the Japanese had tried to get Ngo Dinh Diem to head such a movement when the plans for its formation were taking shape. Diem was the most prominent and authentic link to the traditionalist renovation element in Vietnamese politics. His father, Ngo Dinh Kha, had been responsible for preserving what prerogatives the traditional monarchy continued to enjoy under the French. Diem himself maintained a close friendship with Prince Cuong De until the latter's death in 1950. However, Diem refused these as well as later Japanese overtures and probably ended any real chance that Cuong De ever had of returning to prominence from exile.

In addition to problems of leadership the Japanese never really attempted to make their Phuc Quoc Dong Minh a countrywide movement. It seems clear that their purpose was to provide the political base for guerrilla resistance in the south rather than to create a successor government to the French colonial regime. This could explain why they made no effort to bring the genuine Phuc Quoc leadership from exile in south China or Japan into the center of their occupation plans for Vietnamese politics. From this perspective it could also be understood why no relationship was established between the Japanese-sponsored Phuc Quoc Dong Minh and the traditional monarchy under Bao Dai. Because they were unwilling to take the steps necessary to make their Phuc Quoc a credible countrywide movement, it proved incapable of serving the regional purposes of the Japanese.

Since they could not develop an effective political coalition in south Viet Nam the Japanese turned to the elements they had been unable to unify. They adopted a policy of militarization of certain Vietnamese groups to aid in their resistance to the anticipated Allied amphibious landing in the country. This gave some parochial elements the armed means of asserting their autonomous purposes. It intensified the political gap among the Vietnamese factions and made the problem of the creation of central institutions and political integration more difficult.

It is not surprising that the Cao Dai were the first to undergo this militarization, since they had the strongest relationship with the Japanese. Under the cover of a Japanese naval construction project, Cao Dai followers were assembled on the edge of Saigon, were given military training and equipment, and, with a strength of 3,000 men, units were formed which became known as the Bach Mu Doan (White Berets) and the Noi Ung Nghai Binh (Volunteers of the Interior). By contrast, the arming of the Hoa Hao is obscure and on a most rudimentary scale, which suggests that it occurred not so much by the design of the Japanese as a consequence of the availability of weapons in the occupation environment. The culmination of the Japanese military transformation of Vietnamese politics was the creation of the Advanced Guard Youth in the summer of 1945, which was to become the core of a much touted volunteer army which, so Radio Tokyo announced on June 29, 1945, was being created in Indochina.

Since these forces were never utilized directly by the Japanese, the most consequential feature of this militarization was its impact on the August Revolution and therefore on the course of Vietnamese politics. It was not just that the capacity and expectations of divergent Vietnamese interests were increased but that these militarized groups were exclusively concentrated in the south that gave a special character to the revolution. In the north the militarization of Vietnamese politics was the exclusive affair of the Viet Minh, aided initially by Allied air drops and later by Japanese acquiescence in the confiscation of former French armament. Meanwhile, the Tran Trong Kim government was not allowed to develop a military establishment and theoretically had available to it, as an instrument of authority, only the truncated militia remnant, which had consisted of only 18,000 men in all Viet Nam before the

coup de force. Of course, the Dai Viet regime could not have expected to have controlled the 3,500 of these militiamen in Cochinchina. With its political deficiencies it is doubtful that the government at Hue could have employed an armed force decisively, but the lack of a forceful extension of its authority merely condemned it further to the periphery of Vietnamese politics.

With the Communists forming the largest military force in the north and the various Japanese supported groups increasing their armed strength in the south, it seems that the Tran Trong Kim government could have overcome its potent opposition only by a penetrating psychological program. This might have been developed as a complement to armed force, but such a psychological appeal--nationalist in content—was beyond the talent of the Dai Viet politicos. Moreover, the fact that the Japanese did not incorporate those groups affected by its political activities into the structure of one central government—even formally or superficially—until their end was at hand is further evidence that their purposes were narrower and more particular than the promoting of nationalism in Viet Nam. Indeed, by their encouragement of so many conflicting interests and their generally inept efforts to coordinate indigenous political groups, they set the stage for fratricidal clashes which were to sap potentially nationalist energies and give the tightly structured Communists one of their major advantages. Of course, the parochial and unconciliatory forces within Vietnamese society were certainly not of Japanese creation, but their encouragement made these interests more difficult to resolve.

Development and Characteristics of Political Factions

Obviously, out of their concern for expediency in the wartime situation, the Japanese never considered their task from the point of view of building integrative institutions for a stable nation-state in Viet Nam. Yet it is of underlying significance that the consequences of their occupation undercut whatever potential effectiveness a countrywide successor government might have had. This resulted from their conflicting political operations in the various regions of Viet Nam. Paradoxically, it was the French who profited initially from this intensification of parochialism and regionalism. After their reoccupation they were able to detach the particularistic groups from the Viet Minh nationalist coalition. However, the French found, as the Japanese had, in their attempts at developing political coherence, that the religious-political sects among the unmobilized rural population were difficult to combine with the political parties among the mobilized urban population. The common experience of both the French and the Japanese was that the elite political parties, with the notable exception of the Communists, were fractious and ineffective in mass political techniques. As a general rule, Vietnamese parties have not had as great a capacity for expanding their organizations into totalitarian monoliths as the Communists have had. Yet each one of them has acted as though it were already the predominant force in a single-party state. Either as a cause or as an effect of this attitude, they have not possessed the abilities to compromise and to bargain necessary to maintain stable political coalitions. Thus they have been caught in the dilemma of being unable to grow autonomously and unwilling to expand through alliances. And since no one group, the Communists included, has yet to become totally predominant, it seems that the parochial tendencies of Vietnamese society have been an effective barrier to countrywide political organization and integration. But these objective limits have been less of an obstacle to non-Communist political movements than have other considerations.

Although this is primarily a study of Communist revolutionary strategy, it has become so because of the absence of a revolutionary doctrine on the part of the Vietnamese nationalists. They had, it seems, anticipated no possibility of seizing power upon the universally expected downfall of the Japanese. Apparently they had no contingency planning and they had within the Tran Trong Kim government no motivation to form a military organization even in skeletal

form. The lack of revolutionary tactics related to the competition for power was only one aspect of the absence of a broad concept of revolutionary politics. Unlike the Communists, they seemed not to appreciate the political consequences of the structure of Viet Nam's colonial society or the need for symbols and effective phrases to interpret the turbulent events of the Japanese occupation and capitulation to at least the urban population of Viet Nam. Because of these shortcomings they were unable to win wide support in opposing the return of the French. Also beyond their understanding in the August Revolution was the relationship of political organization to forms of armed struggle and seizure of power.

This sharp contrast in outlook, expectations, and capacities was a not unexpected consequence of the difference in political background among Vietnamese political activists. The Communist leadership consisted of a Moscow-trained as well as a Chinese-influenced cadre who had carefully absorbed the theory and tactics of Marxism-Leninism and had applied them to their own environment in analyses of Vietnamese society. By comparison, the nationalists had received little overseas training and their preparation had been almost exclusively in technical and functional areas. In their political activities at home they had been devastated by the efficiency of the French Sûreté and their own organizational incompetence. Consequently, this gap in political experience and ability between the Communists and their disoriented nationalist adversaries was to be manifested clearly during the August Revolution and through the seven years of revolutionary war as a decisive characteristic of Vietnamese politics.

If it was this disparity in political ability that was ultimately the crucial determinant between the political factions in the August Revolution rather than any tangible advantage or military capacity, then the Japanese occupation did not so much contribute to the development of this talent as give it the opportunity to be demonstrated. This is not to minimize the effect of the occupation in accentuating most of the existing trends in Vietnamese politics. Moreover, the Vietnamese had the occupation as a foil against which to sharpen their abilities. On numerous occasions, from the Lang Son revolt through the coup de force to the capitulation, their political sensitivity was obviously heightened and their practical experience deepened. Also, there can be no minimizing the specific advantages of the coup de force and of the capitulation, for even though the indigenous political groups had increased their capacity during the occupation they were still very far from being able to eliminate by themselves the colonial apparatus of authority and compliance.

However, from the perspective of the occupation of 1940-45 the aspect of the August Revolution which seems most in need of emphasis is not the dramatic and well-known Japanese destruction of colonial authority—the ultimate expansion of the opportunity for revolution; rather it was the Vietnamese ability to exploit this opportunity to seize such instruments of authority as were available and to develop new structures for holding power. As will be seen, there was no uniform countrywide response and, by its regional variation, the revolution reflected the diversity and complexity of Vietnamese politics. But without this response attempting to fill the void left by the Japanese there would have been no revolution. There would undoubtedly have been bids for territorial hegemony, such as the Hoa Hao were to make in the Mekong Delta, and appeals for international recognition as voiced by the sinecure government at Hue. In themselves these were, strictly speaking, revolutionary acts, but they were paltry when compared with the comprehensive assertions of sovereignty which the Viet Minh articulated. These were based on claims of nationalist [illegible] sustained by structures of political strength.

While comparable opportunities for revolutionary expression were unavailable prior to the Japanese occupation, the revolutionary capacity to exploit whatever occasions arose was

also absent. Not only did the Japanese occupation and capitulation expose Vietnamese society to virtually any form of social protest—especially by the removal of almost all formal restraints in August 1945—it also witnessed a maturation among the revolutionaries. It was this change, most pronounced among the Vietnamese Communists who responded to the Japanese intervention by forming the Viet Minh Front and establishing guerrilla bases in the mountainous Tho country, that had fundamental consequences for the August Revolution. Although the Japanese had contributed both directly and indirectly to increasing the capacity of Vietnamese political factions, it was the five-year environment of political flux and experimentation they created more than any specific form of assistance that made the occupation the catalytic force in the Vietnamese revolution.

CHAPTER 4

THE BID FOR REVOLUTIONARY POWER: THE AUGUST REVOLUTION

If the Japanese had not occupied Indochina from 1940 to 1945, revolution in Viet Nam would certainly have been delayed. The potential for widespread opposition to French rule could have remained unexploited and it could have been resolved by French programs to integrate Vietnamese elites into an autonomous political system. Yet it is difficult to imagine that the limitations of domestic politics in France would have allowed for such a development in French policy or that politically talented Vietnamese would have remained ineffective indefinitely. In the absence of more effective political action by either the French or the revolutionaries, it was primarily police power that prevented revolution in Viet Nam. Prior to 1940, the French police surveillance and military force had been able to thwart all attempts to challenge colonial rule. With the German invasion of France, however, the maintenance of the political control of the colonial regime would have been difficult, if not impossible, even if the Japanese had not occupied Indochina.

The effect of the Japanese went beyond the irreparable weakening of French control to encourage the consciousness and ambitions of Vietnamese political groups. Thus, the almost inevitable consequence of the five years of Japanese intervention was to create conditions ripe for revolution. Like the conditions the French themselves had created before 1940, these might still have been kept under control except for the crucial hiatus in established authority in Indochina. In the absence of any stronger power, the Communists were able to take advantage of the Japanese capitulation. Within this gap in authority they staged a revolution which dramatically reflected the character of Vietnamese society and the politics of revolution. This was the August Revolution.

REVOLUTIONARY DAYS OF AUGUST IN HANOI AND HUE

On the morning of August 19, 1945, about 1,000 armed troops of the Communist-sponsored nationalist front organization, the Viet Minh, entered the north Viet Nam administrative capital of Hanoi and assumed control over the city. This "peaceful conquest of power" did not meet any resistance from approximately 30,000 Japanese troops stationed in the vicinity of Hanoi. The local administration of the "independent" government of Viet Nam, which had been launched under the auspices of Emperor Bao Dai four months previously by Japan's occupation authorities in Indochina, was caught off guard. Seeing the discipline and determination of these forces, the Hanoi police and the territorial militia wavered and were then caught up in the popular tide of the day. As a gesture symbolic of its popular strength, the Viet Minh cadres led a crowd to storm the official residence of the imperial delegate Phan Ke Toai only to find that the Bao Dai representative had fled the city. After the neutralization of the armed units of the existing government and the occupation of key administrative offices and public utilities, the Viet Minh strengthened their hold over the population of Hanoi by a propaganda meeting reportedly held before 200,000 persons. It was here that the Viet Minh publicly laid claim to political legitimacy when it was asserted that, "Only the revolutionary people's government has

prestige and strength enough to realize the common earnest aspirations of the whole people: independence, freedom and happiness."[1]

Two days before this successful armed coup, the Viet Minh had met its first and only real test in the propaganda conflict over the legitimacy of seizing power in north Viet Nam. Sensing its vulnerability, and feeling the need for a popular source of strength when their Japanese supporters surrendered, the local administration in Hanoi of the "independent" Vietnamese government called a meeting of the General Association of Functionaries on August 17, 1945.[2] Since this government, created by the Japanese after the suspension of French sovereignty in March 1945, was headed by a French-trained scholar and colonial functionary, Tran Trong Kim, and had a distinct bureaucratic character, it might be expected that it would seek to maintain its power through control over the existing administrative cadre. Although the meeting held in Hanoi on the 17th before a reported 150,000 persons sought the support and the loyalty of this important element of the tenuous political fabric of Viet Nam, the gathering was wrested from its organizers by Viet Minh political cadres. As their press communiqué described it, the Viet Minh went into action as:

> A functionary had hardly finished reading the agenda of the demonstration when suddenly Viet Minh flags appeared everywhere. One was seen waving immediately over the rostrum. A storm of applause and cheers greeted its appearance. Five minutes later, a Viet Minh militant took the floor. At the microphone he called on the people to join the general insurrection that was on the point of breaking out in order to win back the Fatherland and found the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam.[3]

Manipulated in this manner by Viet Minh propagandists, the functionaries' meeting was highlighted by an appeal of the Shock Group of the Democratic Party which asserted that, "only a revolution of the entire nation will be powerful enough to secure the withdrawal of the Japanese. . . and to cut short their [the French] mad ambition to come back to this country."[4] Combining their appeals for unity with an attack on the Tran Trong Kim government, which they termed "completely powerless" and headed by "wavering and weak minded leaders," the Democratic Party appeal urged the crowd to join with the Viet Minh in the general insurrection: "Let us unite together into a single bloc. The independence of the Fatherland can be won only by blood. . . .We must take arms and rise up."[5] The rally then gave way to a parade through the streets of Hanoi with the gold-starred red flag, symbolic of the revolution, and propaganda banners supplied by the Viet Minh being carried by the throng. Before the end of the demonstration, which lasted long into the night, about one hundred Bao An troops, or militiamen, of the Tran Trong Kim government joined in the procession, bringing their rifles with them. By effective propaganda techniques the Viet Minh was able to prepare the way for the coup d'etat two days later, which succeeded because there was no force to oppose a revolutionary seizure of power.

Since mastery of Hanoi meant legitimacy for any Vietnamese government, at least over the northern portion of the country, it is important that this task did not require any absolute power but only a relatively greater strength than the existing competitor government. Even had the 1,000 troops which entered the capital on the 19th met armed opposition, it is doubtful that they would have faced more than 750 militiamen, the strength this unit was known to have had in Hanoi as late as October 1944. But in addition to the weakness of their control over the paramilitary and administrative bureaucracy, the Tran Trong Kim government lacked any real political base, especially among the urban literate and socially conscious population. Moreover, during the course of the Japanese occupation, Hanoi had seen two aspects of a general pattern of social mobilization which had been sponsored by the Vichy French administration.[6]

One was the expansion of the student body of the University of Hanoi and the other was the increase in the numbers of Vietnamese in colonial administration, especially in the central bureaus in Hanoi.[7]

Influence of Democratic Party

It was among these bureaucratic and student elements of the Vietnamese population that the Viet Nam Dan Chu Dang, or Democratic Party, was founded in June 1944 by Duong Duc Hien, who was then president of the Association of Students. The creation of the Democratic Party fulfilled a double purpose: it grouped the students, intellectuals, and urban upper classes of Hanoi with democratic ideals but hostile to Communist ideology and it allowed the Viet Minh to benefit from the political enthusiasm of these groups without having to bring them into the Communist Party where their nationalism might have conflicted with the requirements of discipline. Without this political organization, the socially mobilized population of Hanoi would not have been brought into participation in the August Revolution. Without their participation, the coup d'état in Hanoi would probably have been primarily a test of armed force, an eventuality which the Communists always sought to avoid through the use of superior political tactics.

In themselves these tactics suggested the elite character of the August Revolution, for there is no indication that there was a mass uprising in Viet Nam. Even among the urban population of Hanoi, one of the three cities where the principal events of the revolution occurred, the demonstrations were carefully organized, not spontaneous. Such instruments of power as existed in Viet Nam and could be considered objects of revolutionary seizures consisted of the small Vietnamese administrative cadre, the remnants of the militia and the Japanese-sponsored paramilitary groups, and key public facilities. They were seized not so much through a contest of strength as by superior political organization and psychological preparation. It was this elusive but vital aspect of revolutionary competition that caused a French commentator to question whether,

> the phenomenon which took place in Hanoi around 16 August was a revolution, for the enthusiasm seemed artificial and forced. Can it be called a revolution when there was no one to thwart it. . . . In truth the place was free for Ho Chi Minh, there was nothing to oppose him. . . .[8]

If this criticism missed the point it was because it neglected to appreciate the structured political coalescence of important elements of a Vietnamese elite which had been made aware of their potential social opportunities through French education and administration. For this colonially created elite, independence and national unity presented opportunities for prestige and power that they knew would be threatened by the return of the French. Thus they seized whatever instruments of power were present in the cities, while in the major areas of the countryside the politically unorganized and discontented peasantry continued its agricultural routine.

Effect of Japanese Occupation on Revolutionary Tactics

That these internal political forces in Viet Nam were able to find expression in the revolutionary seizure of power in the north, while other forces of somewhat different character were concurrently manifesting themselves in the south and center of Viet Nam, was largely a consequence of the Japanese occupation and its rather abrupt termination. The Viet Minh, as well as their adversaries, were not unaware of the impact of this event on their revolution.

The crowd that gathered in the streets of Hanoi on August 19 was told that the tactical necessities of the August Revolution required that toward the Japanese "we must be very moderate and avoid all unnecessary clashes, disadvantageous to both sides. We can also use our diplomacy to make them understand the situation, approve our revolution, and hand over their arms to us."[9]

This change from the outspoken opposition to the Japanese which had characterized the preinsurrectionary period—when the Viet Minh had received Allied support to battle the occupation forces—was due to the overtures of the Japanese themselves. Their consuls-general in Hanoi and Saigon gave carte blanche to their intelligence units to negotiate with the Viet Minh for the creation of a new provisional government. However, this Japanese support did not obscure the Viet Minh's view of the broader international aspect of the August Revolution. They knew that they needed diplomatic recognition of their regime in order to have freedom to consolidate their power. This was why the Viet Minh realized that it would have to avoid being "alone in our resistance to the Allied forces. . . which would invade our country and force on us a French or puppet government going counter to the aspirations of our people." Whether or not they would be able to win one of the Allies to their side, the Viet Minh was under no misapprehension that, "In this one and only opportunity, our people as a whole must bring into play all their resources and courage. . ." and that, "It is now or never for our people and army to rise up and win back national independence." While diplomatic recognition was a guarantee of the continuation of the hiatus in the use of international force or in mitigating the chance of its reimposition, internal manifestations of strength and legitimacy were thought to be the best means of securing this guarantee.

Attempts at International Recognition

By contrast, the government of the traditional Vietnamese monarchy felt that international recognition could compensate for the internal deficiencies which had led to its being physically and politically eliminated in Tonkin. On August 18, 1945, in the central Viet Nam imperial capital city of Hue, there was formed a National Salvation Committee under Tran Trong Kim. An important statement was issued by Emperor Bao Dai in which he sought in vain the formal recognition of the independence of Viet Nam under his rule. In this attempt, messages were sent to President Truman, the King of England, and Chiang Kai-shek, but it was in his letter to General de Gaulle that his comments were most immediately meaningful: "You have suffered too much during four deadly years," it said, "not to understand that the Vietnamese people, who have a history of twenty centuries and an often glorious past, no longer wish, no longer can support any foreign domination or foreign administration." Then, turning to a prophecy that even its author seemed to forget in future years, the Vietnamese emperor said,

> You could understand even better if you were able to see what is happening here, if you were able to sense the desire for independence that has been smoldering in the bottom of all hearts and which no human force can any longer hold back. Even if you were to arrive to re-establish a French administration here, it would no longer be obeyed; each village would be a nest of resistance, every former friend an enemy, and your officials and colonials themselves would ask to depart from this unbreathable atmosphere.[10]

Abdication of Bao Dai

Shifting their tactics in yet another attempt to compensate for their lack of internal political strength, on August 22 Bao Dai and his advisers decided to ask the Viet Minh to form a

new government under imperial legitimacy to take the place of the one led by Tran Trong Kim. But before initiatives could be undertaken, a message arrived from Hanoi in which the Viet Minh demanded that the Vietnamese emperor abdicate and recognize the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam.[11] Although it never received any public response, the Viet Minh were obviously concerned by Bao Dai's international appeal. However, it seems that the initiative to demand Bao Dai's withdrawal sprang not so much from a fear of the remote possibility that the emperor's government might be given diplomatic recognition as for its psychological impact within Viet Nam. The demand for the abdication had come in a resolution "adopted" by the General Association of Students held at the Cité Universitaire in Hanoi, which included a call for the formation of a provisional government by the Viet Minh.[12] Through this tactic, the Viet Minh was greatly strengthening its formal claim to legitimacy by having itself acknowledged as the successor government to the traditional monarchy. Moreover, it was increasing its popularity among those, especially in the north, who regarded the imperial government as a rallying point for a francophile elite and who, therefore, sought its overthrow.

To capitalize on the propaganda value of the event, a delegation was sent by the National Liberation Committee from Hanoi to receive the abdication and to make contact with the People's Committee in Hue, which had assumed control over the town without opposition on August 23.[13] This delegation was headed by Tran Huy Lieu, who was to become Minister of Propaganda in the first cabinet of Ho Chi Minh. On August 25 it was he who accepted amidst great pomp and ceremony the abdication of Bao Dai in which the emperor, "handed over the rule of the country to the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam," and declared that he would "never allow anybody to utilize my name or the name of the Royal Family to deceive our countrymen."[14] Furthermore, Bao Dai added weight to the claims of the Viet Minh to political legitimacy by accepting the sinecure post of Supreme Political Adviser to the new government under the name of Citizen Vinh Thuy.[15] Obviously, the Viet Minh was striving for as broad political support as possible.

Establishment of Viet Nam's Independence

It was not until August 30, more than a week after the initial bid for power, that Ho Chi Minh arrived in Hanoi from the Viet Minh guerrilla base area in the mountains of north Viet Nam. Two days later he addressed a crowd gathered in Ba Dinh square, reported to number 500,000 in which he delivered the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Viet Nam. In beginning his declaration, Ho reemphasized the Viet Minh's efforts to gain international prestige and recognition by stating, "All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."[16] In addition to the American Declaration of Independence, Ho further identified himself with the mainstream of Western democratic liberalism by referring to the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and then went on to assert, "Nevertheless for more than eighty years the French imperialists, abusing the standard of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, have violated our Fatherland and oppressed our fellow-citizens. They have acted contrary to the ideals of humanity and justice." The Vietnamese Communist leader then launched into a catalogue of political and economic transgressions which had been committed against the Vietnamese. This accounting concluded with an indictment that the French had not been able to provide the "protection" on which their nineteenth-century treaties of colonial dominance were based, for they had been unable to prevent the Japanese occupation of Indochina.

With this preparation, Ho then attacked the potential claims of the French to continued political hegemony in Viet Nam while he justified his own assertions of sovereignty by saying,

> . . . since the autumn of 1940 our country has ceased to be a colony and has become a Japanese outpost. . . we have wrested our independence from the Japanese and not from the French. The French have fled, the Japanese have capitulated, Emperor Bao Dai has abdicated, our people have broken the fetters which for over a century have tied us down; our people have at the same time overthrown the monarchic constitution that had reigned supreme for so many centuries and instead has established the present Republican government.[17]

By its emotional vocabulary, the Vietnamese Declaration of Independence evoked ideals and symbols which were an intimate part of the intellectual experience of the French educated elite of Viet Nam. Through this extremely effective propaganda, Ho was articulating the feeling, especially widespread in north Viet Nam, that the expectations aroused by Western education and culture had remained unfulfilled by French colonialism. There were colonially created elites loyal to France, particularly in the south, among landowners, professionals, party politicians who had participated in prewar elections, and those granted French citizenship. Yet even within these circles the general feeling of thwarted ambition under French dominance was shared. Moreover, France had done little to win the support of the elites they would confront upon their return. None of their wartime propaganda statements had much of an impact on these elite aspirations because French proposals were phrased in bureaucratic language which discussed only administrative reform.[18]

Meanwhile, much of the Vietnamese elite not already organized by the Viet Minh was being slowly directed to stand behind the independence movement. Presumably, the appeal of independence was meaningful because it offered a path toward fulfillment or release for those not committed to some structure of opportunity of French origin. For example, the breadth of the Viet Minh appeal and an indication of its effectiveness as a national independence movement was perhaps best demonstrated by its ability to win support from Vietnamese Catholics. Significantly, this affirmation came from three Vietnamese bishops in north Viet Nam, where the 1.1 million Catholics made up almost 10 percent of the population, while a fourth bishop, Ngo Dinh Thuc (a brother of the then politically quiet figure Ngo Dinh Diem), in the south where Catholics were less numerous, did not back the independence movement.[19] Shrewdly, Ho declared Viet Nam Independence Day to be the first Sunday in September (September 2, 1945), which was the Feast of Vietnamese Martyrs. He appointed a prominent Catholic layman, Nguyen Manh Ha, as Minister of Economy in his provisional government on August 29, 1945.[20]

Diverse Organizations Cause Political Discord

However, as events subsequent to the August Revolution were to show, the Catholics, like most other widely organized social groups, were more interested in sectarian autonomy than in independence for the whole country.[21] This was a reflection of the character of Vietnamese provincial society, which lacked a workable institutional framework for cultural or political integration above the level of the peasant village. In the absence of a nationwide cultural tradition, numerous parochial identities developed. With the exception of the Catholics, these social identities were ones that grew up around folk religions such as the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai, and secret societies such as the Binh Xuyen, all in south Viet Nam.

Within the larger, amorphous peasant mass that made up Vietnamese rural society in 1945, these social identities tended to be small and fragmented, territorially defined organizations. Thus, there was an area in the southern Red River Delta of north Viet Nam which was virtually a Catholic fief. Corresponding to this in the Mekong Delta of south Viet Nam were the domains

of the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, Binh Xuyen, as well as a small Catholic group. The parochial interests of these groups eventually had an unsettling effect on revolutionary politics because their goals for territorial autonomy could be satisfied with less than full independence.

Part of the success of the Viet Minh as an independence movement was achieved by outperforming any competitor elites in meeting the demands for autonomy of these parochial neotraditional social groups. At the same time, the Communist-led movement also had the capacity to incorporate the recently mobilized but still unorganized elements of the urban population of Viet Nam into their political structure. As will be seen presently, however, the Viet Minh in the south were substantially less successful in performing these two diverse political tasks. Their failure was due to a complex combination of factors related to the more complicated political environment in southern Viet Nam. Key among these factors were the more effective organization of competitive urban political groups and the existence of broader based neotraditionalist groups in rural areas. Strong regional variations of this kind have almost always affected Vietnamese politics and the period of the August Revolution was no exception.

What these differences indicated was not only a contrast in political landscape between the regions of Viet Nam but also fundamental limitations to the development of a nationalist identity. The Communists were virtually the only nationwide political group, but they, too, had to contend with regional stresses. Moreover, they were small. As Ho Chi Minh had boasted, "When the August Revolution took place, there were about 5,000 Party members, including those in jail. Less than 5,000 Party members have thus organized and led the uprising of 24 million fellow-countrymen over the country to victory."[22] In leading their essentially urban uprising, an undertaking restricted to less than 20 percent of the population of the country living in cities, the Viet Minh hoped that their nationalist appeal would win followers and it did. But they also faced a regional parochialism which saw in the Viet Minh a monolithic movement threatening the existence of sectarian identities.

In both regions of Viet Nam the impending intervention of international armed forces to receive the Japanese surrender loomed larger than any internal obstacle to the consolidation of the independence movement under Viet Minh leadership. It was out of a profound recognition of this international power factor defining the limits of Vietnamese independence which also caused Ho Chi Minh to punctuate his declaration with provocative images of the great disparity between Western democratic ideals and the French colonial record in Viet Nam. If the virtually unconditional commitment of the French to reintervention could have been blocked, or somehow mitigated, it would have allowed the Viet Minh to avoid the anguishing discipline of mobilizing the human resources of a largely amorphous society for political and military action. At the same time, the risk of losing the neotraditionalist groups in a competition with the French over sect autonomy would not have been an issue confronting the Viet Minh. Therefore, as he concluded his Declaration of Independence, Ho Chi Minh drove home the issue for the handful of Allied representatives among his Vietnamese audience on that day in Hanoi by asserting that, "We are convinced that the Allied Nations which have acknowledged at Teheran and San Francisco the principles of self-determination and equality of status will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Viet Nam."

Ironically, in the absence of Allied diplomatic recognition the Viet Minh was to receive another, perhaps unexpected, form of restraint upon French reintervention. This was the Chinese occupation of Viet Nam north of the sixteenth parallel, which occurred under the terms of arrangements made at the Potsdam Conference for accepting the Japanese surrender. The Viet Minh in the north were thus able to avoid a direct challenge to their claims of sovereign independence by the French for another seven months. However, the occupation brought

with it limitations to the freedom of political action enjoyed immediately after the Japanese capitulation. The imposition of Chinese-sponsored Vietnamese exile elites onto the body of the independence movement created new difficulties for the Viet Minh. The diversity, complexity, and often contradictory nature of Chinese political purposes in postwar Viet Nam was to be a major restriction to the Viet Minh. This was in part suggested by the size of their military contingent. Advance elements of a force that was to swell to an average of 125,000 troops during the seven-month occupation began to arrive in Hanoi on September 9, 1945. They came ostensibly for the disarmament of about 48,000 Japanese, a task that they never fulfilled.

THE CONTRASTING PATTERN OF REVOLUTION IN SAIGON

The significance of the Chinese presence in this initial stage of the August Revolution lay in its sharp contrast with the pattern of international occupation in south Viet Nam. When the British troops entered Saigon on September 13, 1945, they caused French military units, held under arrest by the Japanese since March 9, 1945, to be released and eventually rearmed.[23] When combined with a detachment of French commandos and troops of the 20th Indian Division, under the command of Maj. Gen. Douglas D. Gracey, these former prisoners comprised part of a 4,000-man force which was slowly augmented by reinforcements from France during the autumn and winter of 1945.

It had been determined in London on August 22, 1945, that French administration would be restored by British occupation forces as soon as possible. Thus, General Gracey announced upon his arrival that the responsibility for the maintenance of order would be transferred to the French as soon as they were in a position to take charge.[24] Although General Gracey attempted to avoid involvement in Vietnamese politics this proved to be impossible. The violence that erupted between the French and the Viet Minh in Saigon in late September caught his troops in a crossfire from which they could not have escaped without some positive action. Therefore, after his mediation efforts broke down, Gracey's troops were thrown into the fight to restore French rule in south Viet Nam.

Communist Party in South Viet Nam

Although the strikingly dissimilar actions of the Chinese and British highlighted important differences in regional conditions, the political contrasts between north and south Viet Nam during the August Revolution were more profound than just the differing pattern of international occupation. Of fundamental significance was the distinctive character of the Communist Party in the south and its rather tenuous relationship with the Viet Minh. Unlike the party leadership in the north, which had developed out of the Thanh Nien exile youth movement in Canton in the late 1920's, with strong indigenous roots in the clandestine Tan Viet movement, the party in the south was headed by men with more cosmopolitan experience. They had become Communists as a result of education in France and had held elective office in south Viet Nam during the Popular Front period of the late 1930's. In Ho Chi Minh's absence from Vietnamese politics in the latter 1930's, there was no attempt to enforce countrywide discipline on the party. Therefore the organization in the south developed an autonomy which prompted it to resist efforts by the reinvigorated Central Committee to bring it under its control during the Japanese occupation. It was not until after the party leaders had ruined whatever chances they had for exploiting the opportunities presented by the Japanese capitulation, and antagonized the regional political groups into a fractionalized suspicion, that the "bourgeois" Communist chiefs were replaced by trusted lieutenants sent from the north.

While serious blunders were committed by the party in the south during the wartime era, and in their tactics in the August Revolution, these did not result so much from a jealously guarded autonomy as from the limiting conditions of the region's politics. Of primary importance was the fact that the mobilized population was much more extensively organized for political action in the south, while more numerous politically conscious and effective neotraditionalist sects were also present. The actions of the French security police during the 1930's in smashing nationalist political groups in the north, while such groups were encouraged in the south by electoral opportunities, was fundamental to the many factors creating these conditions. In the north, where the Communists had mastered the techniques of clandestine activity, the party reemerged to a fairly clear field among the mobilized, politically conscious urban population at the Japanese capitulation, whereas in the south it faced efficient elite opposition. Moreover, one of the consequences of the Japanese interregnum was not only to heighten the already existent political consciousness of groups in the south, but to contribute to their militarization, including, ironically, groups of Vietnamese youth mobilized by the French into a sports program organized to secure their loyalty against Japanese overtures.

In contrast to the circumstances facing the Communist Party in the north, the situation in the south was more diffuse. In Tonkin the party was almost unchallenged in its organization of the recently mobilized population through the effective medium of the subsidiary Democratic Party. Moreover, as a result of covert Allied material aid, the Viet Minh was virtually the only armed political group. Among all the groups affected by Japanese maneuvers in Vietnamese politics, there resulted in the south at least two well-armed groups, neither of which was Communist in origin. Furthermore, the southern party had not benefited from Allied aid nor from Japanese collaboration either—a fact that they used to their propaganda advantage; to build up an armed force, nor were they able to get any such military means by guerilla ambushes or other seizures. Therefore, they not only faced more autonomous and more capable political groups than existed in the north but they also had no instruments of power to bring these groups under control. However, the majority of these competitor groups had no well-conceived program for taking the lead in an independence movement even limited to the south.

In joining with the French by 1948, all of the neotraditionalist sects were to demonstrate, just as the Catholics had in the north, that autonomy for their territorial social structures was more fundamental to them than independence for the whole country. Thus, for a coherent independence movement to have developed in the south, it would have required meeting the demands of sect autonomy and the aspirations of the urban parties while enforcing enough discipline upon both groups to achieve tactical effectiveness. This was the strategy of success of the Viet Minh in the less complex situation in the north. The party in the south failed because it emphasized discipline to the extent of causing the sects to fear for their autonomy. The party also neglected to articulate sufficiently broad goals of independence to win the unorganized but dissatisfied in both urban and rural areas. Lacking a common front, internecine squabbles broke out among the Vietnamese in the south, giving the French opportunities to bargain politically for what they could not obtain by superior force.

Formation of United National Front

The first indication that no single group in the south would be able to approximate the role the Viet Minh played in the north came with the announcement of the formation of the United National Front on August 14, 1945. This body was sponsored by the Japanese and consisted of political groups which they had aided in varying degrees during their occupation.[29] In addition, they superimposed on this political coalition lines of authority ostensibly emanating from the rapidly deteriorating imperial government at Hue. The treaties with France of 1864, which

had made the south a legally separate French colony, were denounced, reunification was proclaimed, and a Kham Sai or imperial delegate was appointed. The Japanese were waiting until the last moment before their capitulation to integrate into a governmental structure in the south groups to which they had given political encouragement, often along divergent and contradictory lines. The reasons for this delay are not altogether clear, but it suggests an unresolved competition between Japanese military cliques. Despite the apparent vagueness of their purposes, the Japanese were to assume an active role in the tactical events of the August Revolution in the south that was crucial. Their first steps in this direction occurred when the imperial delegate, Nguyen Van Sam, arrived in Saigon on August 19 and began negotiations with the Japanese to obtain arms for the creation of military forces under his control.

It was apparent to the Communists that, once these arms were distributed, their already difficult task of gaining a controlling hand over political forces in the south might be made impossible. Therefore, under the leadership of Tran Van Giau, the Communists were successful in securing a meeting of the United National Front on August 22, at which they argued that an identification with the Japanese would be disastrous. Their reasoning was that the Allies would consider the front a puppet movement. As an alternative, Giau pointed to the reputation of the Viet Minh as a countrywide anti-Japanese independence movement to which the political groups in the south could adhere. Whatever merits the logic of Giau's argument might have had for the United National Front, it seems that the decision to acquiesce in the leadership of the Viet Minh was influenced to perhaps an overwhelming extent by the leverage of the Thanh Nien Tien Phong. The leader of this youth group, Dr. Pham Ngoc Thach, had become a friend of Giau's during the occupation. The influence of the Thanh Nien on the Advance Guard Youth, one of the two most significant groups composing the front, sprang from its having the largest armed force in the south, while the chief potential adversary of the developing Thanh Nien-Communist coalition, the Trotskyites, derived their strength from having the most popular following in Saigon. Thach was undoubtedly fully conscious of his pivotal strength. If he was not a secret member of the Indochinese Communist Party, as had been suggested, then he had apparently assessed the opportunities for advancing his purposes as being better with the Viet Minh than alone or with the Japanese-sponsored United Front. Whatever the basis of Thach's decision, it is unlikely that the Viet Minh would have been able to emerge on August 25, as the controlling political force in the south, without the support of the Thanh Nien and its armed units. Once they became dominant and secure, the Viet Minh negotiated to receive weapons from the Japanese, an act which they had so recently denounced.[26]

The consolidation of the Viet Minh in the south was publicly dramatized during an enormous day-long demonstration on August 25. Groups representing the United National Front and the Viet Minh paraded through the streets of Saigon. As a symbol of the Viet Minh's new armed potency, the flag identified with the imperial government gave way to the red banner with yellow star.[27] However, the Nam Bo (Vietnamese for southern region) Committee, which assumed governmental authority on that day, was not under control of the Viet Minh since only six of its nine members were Communists.[28] The antagonism which this predominance created manifested itself on September 2, 1945. A peaceful demonstration staged by the Communists was manipulated out of control into an anti-French riot, whose destructive force continued into the following day. Before it could be stopped, four Frenchmen, a woman, and two children were dead, 100 other persons were injured, and at least 500 homes were pillaged.[29] Realizing slowly that this was a serious psychological and political challenge to his power, which could prejudice attempts to win the confidence of the Allies and generate anarchic conditions beyond his control, Tran Van Giau responded, but only after a week's delay. In the hope of neutralizing his political adversaries, he reorganized the Nam Bo Committee on September 10, as a more broadly representative body with only four of its thirteen members Communists.[30]

The situation in the south contrasted with the pattern in the north, where a widely based provisional government under Communist control, combined with enthusiastic national independence appeals from Ho Chi Minh, had been sought from the start. The party in the south lacked a charismatic figure with whom popular aspirations could be identified and it only adopted a coalition government under the pressure of violent provocation. Moreover, Pham Van Bach, whom Giau chose for the position of titular leader of the Nam Bo Committee, was an unknown lawyer who had been practicing in Cambodia. Neither he nor Giau displayed an ability to meet the fundamental demands of the groups active in the south. Because there was no resolution of their political expectations into a coherent independence movement, the strength of these groups was directed against each other rather than in preparing to oppose the return of the French. While no one group can be documented as responsible for the excesses of September 2, these events formed part of a trend in the August Revolution in the south. As a consequence of widely differentiated social identity and political power there, sectarian predominance became a more urgent goal than national independence.

Sects and Political Groups

One important example of this internecine struggle was the drive of the syncretistic folk religious sect, the Hoa Hao, to establish its territorial hegemony in the Transbassac section of the Mekong River Delta, southwest of Saigon. Although this sect might have been successfully united into a Communist-sponsored nationalist coalition, its basic territorial goals came sharply into conflict with the position of the Viet Minh. These differences were brought to a violent clash in the Mekong River port of Can Tho, which the Hoa Hao considered the rightful capital of their domain. Here, on September 8, 1945, some 15,000 Hoa Hao followers, armed mostly with knives and other crude weapons, were cruelly put down by the Viet Minh-controlled Advanced Guard Youth, reportedly supported by the local Japanese garrison. By its savagery, the massacre provoked reprisals against the Communists from Hoa Hao delta bases. Having been put down in such a bloody manner by the Viet Minh, the Hoa Hao looked to the French for a political alternative. However, the Hoa Hao was antagonized by the manner of the colonial reoccupation of the Mekong Delta towns in the autumn of 1945, and the leaders of this folk religion sought an accommodation with the Viet Minh. In April 1947 they rejoined the French side when the founder and spiritual leader of the folk religion, Huynh Phu So, was arrested and subsequently executed by the Communists. The death of Huynh Phu So, who had been appointed by Tran Van Giau to the reorganized Nam Bo Committee on September 10, 1945, in an effort to placate the aroused feelings of the Hoa Hao, presented the French with a new political opportunity. They capitalized upon it by recognizing the territorial hegemony of the sect and by eventually arming 20,000 of its adherents in the fight against the Viet Minh in the Mekong River Delta. Although the Hoa Hao appeared on the surface to be politically unstable, because of its wide, pendulum-like swings in ideological affiliation, there was a fundamental consistency of purpose in its actions. Its chief goal, as the French discovered, was territorial political hegemony.

The heavyhanded approach of the Communists to the political groups in the south did not confine itself to territorially defined social and political organizations such as the Hoa Hao; it was much more intense against the political parties among the urban population. These groups did not seek geographic hegemony, but rather control over the instruments of power in Saigon. The most avowedly determined enemies of the Communists in the south were the adherents to the 4th International, the Trotskyites, whose antagonism had its origins in deep-seated ideological differences, as well as enduring scars sustained in political infighting in the late 1930's. The Communist dominance of the Nam Bo Committee had done nothing to mitigate these antagonisms. There is almost no evidence available to suggest that the Tran Van Giau

group wanted accommodation; instead, they sought the complete elimination of the Trotskyites. Despite a moderate amount of assistance from the Japanese during the occupation, the Trotskyites found themselves unprepared for the situation that followed the capitulation. They had neither an armed force nor a well-developed party organization. In early September 1945, the Communists moved swiftly against their enemy. The man who had guided the development of the Trotskyite movement, Ta Thu Thao, was arrested on the orders of Tran Van Giau in Quang Ngai Province in central Viet Nam and was executed before the end of the year. By the end of October, five more Trotskyite leaders were known to have been assassinated by the Communists, and thereafter the party ceased to play a role in Vietnamese politics. While other, less noteworthy members of the party may also have been subjected to violence or its threat, it appears that this was a case of eliminating a political movement by decapitation.

The Trotskyites were not the only party to suffer such a fate, and the impressive results of the Communist policy of assassination indicate the shrewdness and calculation with which it was conceived and executed. In the year and a half following the Japanese capitulation and leading to the outbreak of general hostilities in December 1946, approximately 40 significant Vietnamese political figures were assassinated, not including large numbers of village and lower-ranking provincial officials. Among them were the leaders of seven different political groups in central and south Viet Nam, including—in addition to the Trotskyite and Hoa Hao chiefs already mentioned—the Constitutionalist Party; the Independence Party; Nguyen Van Sam of the National Union Front; Pham Quynh, the Prime Minister of Viet Nam before March 9, 1945, and an influential nationalist in favor of the traditional monarchy; Ngo Dinh Khoi, chief of Quang Nam Province, a leader among Vietnamese Catholics, and a brother of Ngo Dinh Diem.

Whatever influence these violent deaths had on the remaining members of the various political groups in dissuading them from any anti-Communist activity, or whatever impact these leaders might have had on Vietnamese politics if they had lived, can only be speculated upon. What appears of greater significance as a successful result of these assassinations in quelling opposition, especially from urban-oriented parties, is the indication of a general lack of tight and resilient party structure and the small number of party adherents. This absence of widespread political participation and coherent party organization emphasizes a specific characteristic of revolution in Viet Nam. Despite the more broadly differentiated social and political structure in the south, the events in the August Revolution throughout Viet Nam involved a small portion of the total population. Except for the Communists and the religious-political sects, the effectiveness and endurance of parties were slight. Therefore, one of the major characteristic components of the August Revolution was elite politics. Mass participation could not be a meaningful alternative, because organizations to mobilize large numbers of people for political action were lacking. With the exception of public demonstrations in the urban centers of Hanoi and Saigon, resulting from propaganda exhortations, the politics of the August Revolution was a close competition between a handful of Vietnamese political figures.

Rearming of French Military Forces

Because of preoccupation with competition among indigenous political groups, the Communists were caught unprepared for a major turning point in the August Revolution in the south. This occurred on September 22, ten days after the first elements of Gen. Douglas Gracey's British force had begun to arrive in Saigon. During this period, Gracey had tried to get the Japanese to maintain order and to prevent further clashes between the Vietnamese and the French. The Japanese were far from resolute in this task and finally, on September 20, Gracey assumed responsibility for maintaining order. On the 22nd, the British general was persuaded by the French representative, Jean Cedille, to rearm approximately 1,400 men of

the 9th and 11th Colonial Infantry Regiments who had been imprisoned by the Japanese on March 9, 1945.[31]

Although these men were organized to help General Gracey maintain order, once armed, they followed an autonomous and provocative course. On the night of September 22 these troops, under Cedille's orders, reoccupied all public buildings and in the morning the Vietnamese found that they had been the victims of a bloodless coup d'état. So tenuous was the influence of the instruments and institutions of power in the colonial capital of Saigon that, by evicting the unsuspecting Viet Minh from a handful of key public buildings, the French made themselves titular masters of the city. Because timing and coordination, rather than superior forces made this French success possible, the Vietnamese were able, on the following day, to launch a large-scale counterattack on all the points they had lost. By this time, however, their potential superiority had vanished for, "The immediate collapse of all administration and the prospect of the outbreak of civil war caused General Gracey to intervene, and his forces evicted the Annamites [Vietnamese] from key points and restored these to the French."[32]

The potential effects of this action in support of the French might have been mitigated or entirely avoided if the preoccupation of the Communists with local aspects of the August Revolution had not caused them to neglect their contacts with the British. For, although the British came to Viet Nam committed to restoring the French, they were not necessarily committed to expelling the Viet Minh from power. This distinction seems clear from the moves made by General Gracey when faced with the excesses from the French side. With the power advantage now in their favor, the French, who (with the exception of Cedille and about 500 commandos) were holdovers from the colonial administration, began to seek their revenge on the Vietnamese for the indignities of August and September. As one press report described it,

> Competent observers believe that ex-Vichyites ruined immediate hopes of a compromise settlement when last 23 September, they started their reign of terror by mass arrests.[33] The arrests touched off a wave of outrages by local French civilians against Annamese natives. While Vichyite patrols looked on civilians insulted and attacked unarmed Annamese on the streets. . . .

Under the pressure of this type of criticism, especially from foreign correspondents, General Gracey decided to neutralize the French colonial army units by having them confined to their barracks. Once again he charged the Japanese with the task of maintaining order. But the French reaction merely touched off a more intense Vietnamese reaction. On the night of September 24, they broke into a French housing area known as the Cité Herault, massacred 216 persons, mostly women and children, and wounded another 150.

There was no definite evidence for assigning the responsibility for this outrage to any one Vietnamese group. It has been suggested that the massacre was the work of the Binh Xuyen, a small but effective neotraditionalist political sect which started during the Japanese occupation. What is clear, however, is that, like the events of September 2, the Cité Herault incident was an obvious challenge to embarrass the position of Tran Van Giau and to demonstrate the administrative incompetency of the Nam Bo Committee. The objective was to cause additional reprisals and sanctions against them by the French and British. But extra and probably unexpected force was to be added to these reprisals. To a much greater extent than on September 2, when they chose not to intervene, the Japanese were directly implicated. They had been responsible for protecting the Cité Herault. Moreover, they still had the most powerful force in the city, with 5,000 men under arms.[34] Perhaps awareness of their ineffectiveness in protecting French civilians, and also because of Allied warnings that their irresponsibility might

be grounds for war crimes proceedings, the Japanese gave closer attention to the 2,500 Anglo-Indians under General Gracey's direct command in the face of Viet Minh attacks on the 25th and 26th of September. With the coordinated efforts of French, Japanese, and British troops, the armed units of the Viet Minh and other Vietnamese groups were driven from the center of Saigon to the northern and western suburbs, thus thwarting their attempts at a counter-coup de force.

Although on September 30, Tran Van Giau spread a pamphlet throughout the city calling for a general strike, total evacuation of Saigon by the Vietnamese, and exhorting ". . . blockade the city. . . . The Europeans will only occupy the town when it has been reduced to ashes."[35] General Gracey still had hope of a negotiated settlement to avoid a more general conflict. The British commander arranged for a meeting between Jean Cedille and the Nam Bo Committee on October 2. Several days of negotiations indicated that the minimum conditions which the Communists would accept was a return to the status quo ante of September 23. Cedille had neither the desire nor the authority to meet the demands of a recognition of the legitimacy which the Nam Bo Committee had lost by their eviction from the key public facilities and buildings in Saigon. Because of the imminent arrival of Gen. Philippe Leclerc, who was to be the Commander of French Forces in Indochina, along with fresh reinforcements, there was no incentive for Cedille to treat the Viet Minh demands seriously.

By October 3, the French ship Triomphant began to debark the 5th Colonial Infantry Regiment, which gave the French at least another 1,000 men. General Leclerc arrived by air on October 5. A week later he began the push out of Saigon with the help of the British. Occupying the suburbs of Go Vap and Gia Dinh, the French then moved northwestward to Bien Hoa on the 23rd, and to Thu Dau Mot on the 25th, of October, when they were able to take My Tho in the south—the gateway to the Mekong River Delta—by a naval assault from the river estuary, combined with a land force moving by road from Saigon. The two important Mekong Delta trading and communications centers of Vinh Long and Can Tho were taken on October 29 and November 1, respectively.[36] Before the end of December 1945, most of the towns in Viet Nam south of the sixteenth parallel had been occupied, including extreme southern areas of the plateau country inhabited by underdeveloped ethnic minorities faithful to the French. But this reoccupation did not include a strategic strip of territory running south from the key port city of Da Nang to just north of Nha Trang in the central coastal area—a situation with much significance for future events.

SHIFTING BALANCE OF MILITARY FORCES IN THE SOUTH: A REFLECTION OF THE CHARACTER OF REVOLUTIONARY STRUCTURE

A complete shift in the balance of armed forces in the French favor had occurred on October 25, 1945, when the arrival of the 2nd Armored Division increased their forces in southern Indochina to 25,000 men. This meant that the French could carry out their reoccupation policy south of the sixteenth parallel—at least of the towns and the rural areas of major economic importance—without the necessity of making political commitments or of establishing negotiations with any local groups. During October, the strength of the Viet Minh had consisted of approximately 20,000 men in the vicinity of Saigon, of whom about 15,000 were armed in one form or another. Almost all of these were members of the Advanced Guard Youth, except for about 3,000 men under the command of the Cao Dai and about 1,300 men in the Binh Xuyen. Besides these forces in the Saigon area, local Viet Minh committees formed throughout south Viet Nam by the occupation-battered cadres of the Communist Party had organized armed units. The recruits had come from among the leaderless remnants of those Vietnamese who had served with the French Army and the militia known as the Garde Civile.

It was not until September 23, when it was being evicted from key points in Saigon, that the Nam Bo Committee ordered a general mobilization, especially calling on those with previous military experience. In addition to the late start, it seems that the results of the mobilization were poor. In Vinh Long Province in the Mekong Delta, for example, where there had been 135 Vietnamese stationed in the Garde Civile before the Japanese coup de force of March 9, 1945, 20 of them, along with 100 inexperienced volunteers, responded to the mobilization call. The majority of these former militiamen appeared to respond because of a vague fear of consequences from the local revolutionary authorities. Although the respondents were confirmed in the ranks they had held in the Garde Civile, they were virtually the only persons with weapons, so that their command over unarmed volunteers was largely meaningless in terms of the immediate problem of holding provincial cities against French reoccupation.

Military Limitations of Revolutionaries

How representative the situation in Vinh Long was for Viet Nam, even the south, cannot easily be determined. Whatever success the Nam Bo Committee might have had in its mobilization of provincial forces was surely limited, in quality at least, to the approximately 6,000 Vietnamese who had been a part of the militia and the approximately 17,000 who had served with the French colonial army in areas south of the sixteenth parallel. These troops had been stationed in small, scattered groups all over southern Indochina and, after March 9, 1945, had either been interned with their French units, escaped into China under French leadership, or had sought some individual form of security against the uncertainty of the period. These additional 23,000 men could have made an important contribution to the Nam Bo resistance and had they been brought under revolutionary control in some organized form they might have played a decisive role in the August Revolution.

The attack on the Saigon suburb of Phu Lam on the night of October 13 was led by a 24-year-old Vietnamese of French citizenship who had been an aspirant de réserve of the 11th Colonial Infantry Regiment stationed in Saigon. In a pathetic but almost comical attack on Phu Lam, his unit of 200 men—armed with only 70 muskets, with 20 rounds of ammunition each, and 3 submachine guns—had hoped to capture weapons from the Japanese. This attack did more than point up the woeful lack of arms in these units. The subsequent interrogation of its chief and other men captured in the Phu Lam engagement indicated that at this stage of the August Revolution those who had obtained their military experience exclusively under the French were men caught between two pressures: the dissolution of organizational structures, to which they had previously been committed, on the one hand, and the uncertainty of participation with units that did not yet have stability of purpose or coherence in action on the other. Hastily recruited to service, in many instances after months of inactivity, these ex-militiamen and colonial soldiers were examples illustrative of the military limitations of the revolutionaries. They could not rapidly forge new structures of deep commitment among those who had no identification with the revolutionary cause before the capitulation.

Japanese-Sponsored Military Groups

Organizational loyalty and operational coherence, and even tenacity, were more conspicuous among the Vietnamese military groups which had been formed with Japanese equipment and sponsorship. In addition to this material aid, these diverse Vietnamese groups also received technical and operational assistance. Japanese officers and men were present in the ranks of the Viet Minh and the sects during the resistance to French reoccupation. Of the 65,000 Japanese soldiers and 3,000 civilians in Indochina south of the 16th parallel at the time

of the capitulation, approximately 1,000 joined actively with the various Vietnamese groups they had encouraged during their occupation. By March 1946, when there was a tapering off of armed engagements, 145 of these activists had been killed in battle by the French and 39 captured. Before the end of 1946, 280 Japanese had voluntarily turned themselves over to the French, and this left a hard core of some 560 in the south, of whom 220—the largest number—were concentrated around Tay Ninh, the ecclesiastical center of the Cao Dai folk religion. Because of the small percentage of Japanese activists with the Vietnamese and their concentration in homogeneous groups at key locations, the press and intelligence reports that they were almost exclusively agents of the Kempeitai (Japanese secret police) seem to be substantiated. These military men provided the staff and training talent that gave coherence to what otherwise might have been fragmented armed bands. Japanese combat specialists in heavy and automatic weapons lent potency to the units, and repair technicians gave them logistical endurance.

Although this direct military assistance to the Vietnamese seems to have been carefully structured around the Kempeitai, the relationship of the Japanese High Command in Indochina to the events of the August Revolution was imprecise. There was clearly no evidence of massive support for local political groups by regular army units. Yet a coordination, loose though it might have been, between the Kempeitai assistance and the action, or rather inaction, of the High Command, especially on September 2 and during the Cité Herault incident of September 25, seems apparent. The repeated unwillingness of the Japanese to intervene in the violent clashes of September 1945, despite British demands that they be responsible for maintaining order, is a more straightforward indication that the High Command of Field Marshal Count Terauchi Isaichi was not interested in disadvantaging the Vietnamese groups. It was only after the massacre of the Cité Herault that the regular Japanese units were committed to assisting the French and British units. Thus, ironically, the situation developed that Japanese combatants were active on opposite sides.[37]

Divisiveness of Political Forces

So long as the Japanese High Command was not willing to restrict the arena of Vietnamese action, with Kempeitai assistance the Vietnamese had a freedom of maneuver which could have resulted in the consolidation of the independence movement. But the Viet Minh was spectacularly unsuccessful in exploiting this latitude of action before it was terminated by the Allies and the High Command and the delicate balance of forces shifted decisively against the revolutionaries. Numerical inferiority, however, was only a part of the reason for the Viet Minh being driven from Saigon and the provincial towns of south Viet Nam. The divisiveness of indigenous political forces—in part a consequence of colonial development, in part the result of divergent Kempeitai encouragement—was at the root of the problem. Exacerbated by the antagonizing moves of the Viet Minh, this divisiveness meant that the resistance could not compensate politically for its military limitations. Moreover, the Viet Minh suffered militarily by antagonizing its potential allies. It was this divisiveness, resulting in the excesses of September 1945 in Saigon, that caused the Japanese regulars, on orders of General Gracey, to be forced into the effort against the Viet Minh. It was the concern with the effects of this divisiveness that resulted in the Nam Bo Committee's neglecting to exploit potential differences among the Allies or to win popularity locally among the uncommitted Vietnamese. Finally, it was the French who took successful advantage of the situation by detaching nearly all of the sects and parties from the Communist-Thanh Nien coalition.

Combatting Guerrilla Forces

In marked contrast to their urban performance, the Nam Bo Committee, when shifted to a rural environment and to a weaker position in the balance of forces, shrewdly adopted forms of action such as guerrilla warfare, sabotage, and terrorism, which maximized their modest strength and exposed the power limitations of the enemy. While the balance of forces had been unfavorable for maintaining a hold on the capital city and rural towns, it was sufficient for the Communists to prevent the consolidation of French control and to immobilize substantial portions of their army. Once the French forces were dispersed over the expanse of southern Viet Nam, they found themselves vulnerable to guerrilla attack, particularly as the spread of troops became thinner when extended over an ever larger area.

Thus the French came very quickly to confront what was to be the main problem of the counterguerrilla phase of the Indochina war: how to divide their forces between those assigned to static defense elements and those given mobile intervention duty. This is perhaps the classic guerrilla war problem for forces attempting to establish or maintain governmental authority. If forces are concentrated in order to wipe out an inferior guerrilla band, the adversary merely refuses combat and takes the occasion to hit emplacements left unprotected by the concentration of government forces. If government forces are dispersed to provide static security for routes of communication, military depots, economic installations, and a scattered rural population, then guerrilla forces concentrate to a strength sufficient to overpower the defenders and to disrupt communications or to capture supplies. Throughout 1946, the guerrilla activity in south Viet Nam posed a challenge which the French were unable to surmount, despite their estimates that at least 10,000 Vietnamese had been put out of action in the first half of that year. Yet, by June 1946, the French had more than 33,000 officers and men in southern Indochina from their European army—more than 50 percent greater than their highest force level for French troops during the Japanese occupation—plus more than 6,000 Vietnamese under their command. This great increase contrasted with the prewar situation, when 10,779 regular French troops maintained all of Indochina for France, with the assistance of 16,218 men of the local militia. The reason that 39,000 men could not do the job that 27,000 had done with ease in more than twice the area before the war is explained only by the transformation that Vietnamese politics underwent during the Japanese occupation.

Viet Minh Development of Political Power

From this perspective on their guerrilla capacity, the Viet Minh's task in obtaining political power during the August Revolution becomes more precise. Seizing revolutionary power, insofar as it meant obtaining administrative control over the key towns of Hanoi and Saigon, had merely facilitated the larger revolutionary task of establishing new structures of political organization. The public facilities and buildings gave no intrinsic power to the revolutionaries to help them stave off the return of the French. Their usefulness was as a bargaining tool and as a potential sanction in preventing the French from using force. But once the Nam Bo Committee was evicted from these locations in Saigon, the essential task of creating a structure of political power within the amorphous society of Viet Nam, where political participation was low, had not changed—only the environment in which this task would be accomplished. Thus, in a real sense revolutionary power could not be seized, at least under conditions present in Viet Nam in 1945; it had to be developed.

Developing revolutionary power in north Viet Nam was a less complex task than in the south, since there was no meaningful autonomous opposition to the Communists in the north. Those elements of the intellectual and administrative elite that had not been subdued by the

superior arms and organization of the Viet Minh were mobilized behind the independence movement through ideological appeals. In the initial stages of the August Revolution around Hanoi there was no pressing need to bargain with an established opposition or to organize rapidly in the face of a hostile reoccupation. Later, the northern leadership was to demonstrate that, when needed, they had impressive organizational qualities. The capacities of the southern leadership, on the other hand, were tested from the very beginning of the August Revolution. Their limitations lay in an inability to combine the very specific interests of the politically significant into a broad independence movement. As the secretary-general of the Communist Party at that time analyzed it, the results in the south were due to,

> the weakness of the Viet Minh organization in Nam Bo before the zero hour of the insurrection and to the lack of homogeneity in the ranks of the United National Front,

as well as,

> . . .the slowness in starting the insurrection, the lack of resolution in seizing power, [which] encouraged the reactionaries, especially the French colonialists and pro-French Vietnamese traitors.[38]

The momentary suspension of the international forces impinging on Viet Nam at the Japanese capitulation had presented the first real opportunity for the development of widespread political power by Vietnamese during the twentieth century. Yet the presence of the Japanese and the colonial commitments of the French meant that this hiatus would be of short duration. Before these international pressures began to reappear, the Vietnamese had not developed enough power to prevent their return. Time was a major limiting factor. In the space of a month before the reoccupation occurred in the south, most of the features of Vietnamese society which facilitated or circumscribed the development of revolutionary power were clearly demonstrated. Thereafter, these advantages and obstacles to the extension of Vietnamese political power remained to be employed and overcome in the drive to win independence from France.

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CHAPTER 5

REVOLUTIONARY OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CHINESE OCCUPATION OF NORTH VIET NAM, SEPTEMBER 1945-MARCH 1946

WARLORD OCCUPATION OF NORTH VIET NAM (FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CHINESE DOMESTIC POLITICS)

With the arrival of Chinese troops in Hanoi on September 9, 1945, a new phase of the August Revolution in the north began. The unfettered latitude which the Viet Minh had enjoyed for almost a month, during which time the Japanese had neither prevented them from establishing their provisional revolutionary government nor prohibited them from proclaiming a declaration of independence, had come to an end. While the Chinese occupation was to circumscribe the political opportunities of the Viet Minh, the purpose of its leaders—in sharp contrast to the British in the south—was not to pave the way for the reestablishment of French sovereignty. Because of the history of hostile Chinese relations with France in Indochina and the warlord involvement in Vietnamese exile politics, there was great interest in delaying the return of the French. Thwarting the growth of the Viet Minh and facilitating an orderly resumption of colonial authority would not prove to be goals of the Chinese occupation.

Although this delay was in the general interest of all Chinese associated with the occupation, it did not lead to any comprehensive or consistent exploitation of the opportunities presented. Through the divergent and often conflicting purposes of various Chinese governmental echelons, the occupation reflected many of the chaotic conditions of internal politics in China. The consequences of this situation meant that the Viet Minh, while having its purpose served by the blocking of the return of the French, now had a more complicated political environment within which to attempt to develop its revolutionary power. The difficulty stemmed from utilization of the Vietnamese exile groups by the Chinese occupation command to explore the possibilities of political influence in Viet Nam, and from the demands for privileges and largess made by these temporary Chinese overlords. These pressures obviously restricted the Viet Minh's freedom to maneuver, which had been at a maximum with the hiatus in established authority when the Japanese capitulated. The Chinese did not completely eliminate this latitude, however. Sensing the divisive character of Chinese motivations, the Viet Minh leaders successfully manipulated them to yield an extensive degree of operational autonomy. While this maneuvering placed great demands on the Viet Minh's capacity, it was out of this interaction between occupation and revolution that much of the underlying nature of both the August Revolution and Chinese interests in Viet Nam were demonstrated.

Warlord Politics Emerge in Viet Nam

In a fundamental sense the Chinese occupation was a projection of the warlord politics of south China onto the revolutionary scene of north Viet Nam. From this perspective, the confusing and often contradictory Chinese actions during the twelve months before the last remnants of their occupation forces left Indochina become more intelligible. The dispatch of troops into Tonkin, northern Annam, and upper Laos played an important role in efforts to

curb warlordism—the existence of autonomous concentrations of regional political power beyond central control—which had plagued the republican government of China since its inception. It was this consideration which was the origin of the divergence in Chinese purposes during the occupation of Viet Nam.

One particularly nettlesome source of this type of political power was in the Chinese border province of Yunnan where Long Yun had ruled as governor since 1927. During the course of the anti-Japanese war, Long Yun's strength had been diminished because of the proximity of the central government installed in Chungking, the location of armed divisions of the national regime in Yunnan, and the presence of American forces in the province. As the conflict ended, it was clearly anticipated that Long Yun would make strenuous efforts to reassert his autonomy. For this reason, the central authorities moved to siphon off his power and, rather than employ troops of the central government exclusively for the occupation, Yunnanese forces under the command of Lu Han, a cousin and trusted lieutenant of Long Yun's, were thrown upon what was considered the rich booty of north Viet Nam.

The Kunming Incident

It was this internal political factor which explains the sending of a force which mounted to 150,000—and averaged 125,000 Chinese troops between October 1945 and April 1946—to supervise the surrender of only 48,000 Japanese in north Viet Nam, a task which the Chinese consistently neglected and never completed. At a minimum, 60,000 of these troops were always of Yunnanese origin. With his power resources thus depleted, Long Yun was brought under control by the central government on October 5, 1945, in what was known as the "Kunming incident," when he was arrested and Lu Han appointed to replace him. But Lu Han did not return permanently to Kunming to administer the affairs of Yunnan, for his base of strength was obviously with his troops in Viet Nam. Instead, he made brief air trips to south China to care for his interests.

Understandably, these circumstances did not lead Lu Han to regard his position with the central government as secure, nor did it bring him any more closely under their control. Therefore, a curious situation developed. The French were attempting to obtain assistance for their military men and for the civilians still suffering in north Viet Nam from the effects of the Japanese occupation. They were also attempting to minimize the political opportunities of the Viet Minh there. Yet their diplomatic negotiations were with the central government of China, which did not have firm control over its representatives in Indochina. Although preoccupied with the problems of Manchuria and the armed challenge of the Communists, the Chiang Kai-shek government expected to use their occupation of Viet Nam as an opportunity to renegotiate its treaty relations with France. They hoped to bring an end to her extraterritorial rights in China. On the other hand, the interests of Lu Han and other warlord factions were necessarily more short range and immediate because of their own uncertain positions. This situation was intensified in late December 1945, when the 53rd Army of the Chinese Central Government arrived in Viet Nam to relieve the Yunnanese troops, who began to return to China by the beginning of February 1946. Even though this eliminated his real source of strength, Lu Han was allowed to remain in Viet Nam as the chief of the occupation forces, now more firmly under the command of Nanking.

In the five months prior to the forced return of his Yunnanese troops to China, Lu Han was able to follow an autonomously conceived path. Only partially was he restricted by visiting delegations of the central government, which periodically demanded more forthright action on the stated goals of the occupation. Lu Han was not interested in the Japanese who,

fortunately for him, managed to make themselves inconspicuous and avoided any clash with Chinese interests. More important for the Yunnan warlord were opportunities to damage French prestige, to dabble in Vietnamese politics, and to provide for his own enrichment.

Chinese-French Conflicts

This sequence began immediately upon the arrival of Chinese troops in Hanoi. At that moment the principal symbol of French sovereignty and authority was the handful of men in the French mission, led by Jean Sainteny, who had flown into the city shortly after the Japanese capitulation and installed themselves in the ornate and imposing palace of the governor general of Indochina. Had Lu Han been interested in abiding by Chiang Kai-shek's declaration on Viet Nam that,

> . . . China had no territorial ambitions there and that while sympathetic to the freedom of "weak nations" the Chinese troops in northern Indochina would neither encourage the independence movement nor assist French soldiers in suppressing the rebels. . . .[1]

he would have at a minimum allowed the small and ineffectual French mission to remain as it was. Instead, on the evening of September 9, only a few hours after their arrival, several Chinese officers appeared at the palace with the obvious intention of taking it over. They were put off temporarily, but on the 10th of September Sainteny was forced out of the palace.[2] This maneuver was unmistakably directed at embarrassing the French, diminishing their prestige with the Vietnamese, and asserting the predominance which the Chinese expected to exercise during their occupation. Since the governor general's palace was of symbolic importance in the August Revolution, its control was a key political barometer. Therefore, it was significant that after his brief occupancy Sainteny was unable to regain the building for more than a year until December 23, 1946, when the clash with the Viet Minh in Hanoi ended the urban phase of the Vietnamese revolution.[3]

Of greater potential to French authority in north Viet Nam than possession of the governor general's palace were the approximately 4,000 troops of the colonial army who had been interned in the citadel of Hanoi by the Japanese since March 9. In contrast to the British, who had released and rearmed the French troops in Saigon, the Chinese regarded their counterparts in the north as prisoners of war and not as official representatives of the French government. As a further insult, the citadel of Hanoi was carefully searched to determine whether the French troops interned there had by chance secured any weapons. The effect of these actions was slightly mitigated when the Chinese permitted the families of the colonial army to visit the troops in detention, but only a month after the beginning of the occupation.

The Chinese also blocked the restoration of colonial authority when they denied permission to approximately 5,000 French troops, who had managed to escape capture during the Japanese coup de force, to return from south China until January 1946. Then they were not permitted to enter Tonkin but were required to pass through Laos to central Viet Nam. This pattern of refusing to recognize the existence of French authority was also followed by the Chinese in the occupation of Laos, where French guerrillas who had held out against the Japanese were disarmed and the official French representative in Vientiane arrested. Moreover, the Chinese 93rd Independent Division took up positions in the highlands of Laos where no Japanese forces had ever been stationed so that they might control the opium poppy harvest. The division refused to leave Indochina until September 1946, a year after their arrival, when a second crop became available.

At the formal ceremony in Hanoi, accepting the surrender of the Japanese on September 28, 1945, the confrontation between the French and the Chinese on the questions of status and prestige became more antagonistic. The French representative to this affair, General Alessandri, who had just arrived from Yunnan for the ceremony, was not allowed to attend in an official capacity because of what was termed his "unclear position." By this it was meant to emphasize that he had served the Vichy administration in Indochina, which had cooperated with the Japanese. Although Alessandri had exonerated himself with the French by his service to de Gaulle after March 9, 1945, his Vichyite taint provided the Chinese with their opportunity for embarrassing France. When Alessandri noted the absence of the French flag on September 28 and requested that it be raised for the ceremony, he was refused. It was explained that Lu Han feared that the disturbances which had occurred in Saigon at a surrender ceremony where the French flag had been flown might be repeated in Hanoi. Alessandri was outraged, but his humiliation was not yet complete.

Later, undoubtedly as a response to Alessandri's angry departure from the ceremony, where he was seated number 114th in order of priority, Lu Han issued a statement in which he warned, "'the enemy of Viet Nam' that if they dared to cause any troubles or to stir up any bloody tragedy that he would severely punish them. . . ." Little doubt was left as to the identity of the "enemy of Viet Nam." Affronts of this sort to the French representative in Hanoi continued to mount and, on October 2, in an interview with the visiting delegate of the Chinese central government in Chungking, Marshal Ho Ying-ch'ing, Alessandri was told that his official position was not recognized and that the question of French sovereignty in Indochina was a matter for further diplomatic discussion.

Official Chinese Policy Re Viet Nam

While this attitude of the emissary of the Chinese central government seemed to indicate unanimity with the warlord factions in Viet Nam, such was not the case. Marshal Ho had also told Alessandri that China did not have the least desire to seize Viet Nam, but, on the contrary, hoped to aid in the gradual realization of its independence according to a program to be determined by the great powers. Moreover, he stated that one of the principal reasons for Marshal Ho's visit to Hanoi was to expedite the disarmament and regrouping of the Japanese. In addition, the central government of China had disavowed Lu Han over the issue of not releasing French prisoners from the Hanoi citadel. Through Marshal Ho's visit the Chinese leaders were emphasizing to their commander in Viet Nam that they wanted a purely military occupation, avoiding any political involvement in Vietnamese affairs while negotiations with France on outstanding diplomatic issues were being conducted. Although their lack of firm control over the Yunnanese occupation troops meant that a certain amount of embarrassment to the French was unavoidable, this could hardly undermine the strong bargaining position which the Chungking government had.

Lu Han's interests were motivated by entirely different considerations. He disagreed fundamentally with the occupation policy of Chungking. The Yunnanese warlord politician desired, "a long period of occupation and to place Viet Nam under China's trusteeship while supporting and assisting the Vietnamese to obtain their independence." Obviously such a situation was highly desirable from the perspective of a political leader in a south China border province, for whom opportunities for expanding influence seemed naturally to point southward. If Ho Ying-ch'ing's mission had any real expectation of dissuading Lu Han from such purposes and of prodding him on to the task of dealing with the Japanese, then the timing of the "Kunming incident" on October 5, while the marshal was in Hanoi, could hardly have been more inappropriate. With Long Yun arrested, the key issue for the Yunnanese chief in Viet Nam was to maintain what power he had by virtue of his occupation command position.

Since it seems certain that Chungking was determined to eliminate Long Yun, antagonizing Lu Han would appear to have been unavoidable. Once this had occurred, the only alternative to the central government in prosecuting its policy in Viet Nam was to replace Lu Han and take away his power. Eventually this was done, although it was delayed by the challenges the central government faced in north China, and with awareness that the troops it sent might develop autonomous interests of their own. In the meantime, Lu Han's objective understandably narrowed from what was advantageous for a Yunnanese warlord faction in an adjacent territory to what was good for Lu Han stripped of his territorial base and aware that efforts to further reduce his strength would be made. Possessing a sizable and undisciplined armed force, facing few sanctions, and having few long-range prospects for political survival, Lu Han's potential to affect the August Revolution was as great as his purposelessness and opportunism. With such a combination of circumstances, it was not surprising that the course he chose had only a modicum of consistency.

VIET MINH OUTMANEUVER THE CHINESE-BACKED VIETNAMESE NATIONALISTS

Lu Han's occupation policies were not designed to bring Viet Nam under China's trusteeship. They did not serve to establish firm ties with Vietnamese politics except in an almost accidental and pragmatic manner. When the Chinese troops arrived in north Viet Nam in early September 1945, their retinue included the Vietnamese-exile political groups that they had nurtured and sustained during the Japanese war. Just as they had been maintained for intelligence gathering during the war, now the exiles were being employed as instruments of the occupation command in the politics of Viet Nam. Unhappily for the Chinese, their capacity for effectiveness in this task was no greater than that which they had demonstrated in attempting to obtain information on the Japanese occupation in Indochina.

While Lu Han had the option of establishing a political alliance with the Viet Minh, the greater political capacity of the Communist organization also meant that it had greater autonomy. The exiles, on the other hand, were easier to control because they were almost totally dependent on the Chinese for their strength. Because of this circumstance, they were useful in opposing the Viet Minh's designs for total political hegemony, thus allowing the Chinese to secure actions from the Communist-led group which otherwise might have been more costly to obtain. These costs would have included the creation of a truly effective Vietnamese client political group or a coordination of Chinese interests with those of the Viet Minh. Such alternatives were too long range for either the occupation leadership or the Viet Minh. Out of the desire of both the Chinese and the Viet Minh to fulfill immediate goals, the context of the August Revolution was given further definition.

Diverse Loyalties of Vietnamese Exiles

One of the limiting factors of the Vietnamese nationalist exiles as effective revolutionaries was their fragmentation. This characteristic had been demonstrated in the efforts of Chang Fa-k'wei to organize them into a coherent political organization. Many of the obstacles to this goal had been of his own creation in trying to force a consensus upon them, but it was also, and perhaps primarily, the result of the exile groups' being personal followings rather than broad structures of interest. Since personal prestige was easily affronted in working out organizational priorities, fragmentation was not an unexpected consequence. A final attempt to heal these fissures by the formation of a provisional Vietnamese government in March 1944 only made the antagonisms more irreconcilable. Ho Chi Minh and Vu Hong Khanh deserted

this government, and the Kwangsi warlord Chang Fa-k'wei was ironically left with the least competent of the exiles, the aging Nguyen Hai Than, and his impotent Dong Minh Hoi. It was this division of their exile clients that existed when the Chinese occupation of north Viet Nam began. Moreover, the ties of the VNQDD (The Viet Nam Nationalist Party) to the Yunnanese and those of the Dong Minh Hoi to the Kwangsi troops proved to be sources of friction among these Chinese elements in the occupation command.

In early September 1945, as the Yunnanese 93rd Army moved across the Sino-Vietnamese border at Lao Kay and then down the Red River valley to Hanoi, they systematically overturned whatever governmental presence they found in the towns along the route and installed the cadres of the VNQDD. Similarly, the Dong Minh Hoi was established in the towns along the path of the 52nd Army from Kwangsi as it occupied Lang Son on the border and swept along the northeast coast to Haiphong. However, the non-Yunnanese troops did not remain in Viet Nam and returned rapidly to Chang Fa-k'wei's control in south China, leaving the Kwangsi leader, Hsiao Wen, as political adviser to Lu Han. Although he was without any real source of power, Hsiao Wen's primary objective was to place Nguyen Hai Than of the Dong Minh Hoi in power as the legitimate head of the provisional government to which the other Vietnamese political figures had been committed in March 1944. But from the perspective of the Dong Minh Hoi's relative strength, this was clearly an ill-founded goal.

Strength and Status of Political Parties

Initial assessments of the strength of the three major Vietnamese political groups indicate that the Chinese-protected nationalist exiles were in a disadvantaged position in number of adherents. Even with the addition of the members of the exile Phuc Quoc movement, who had long since lost any real hope of restoring Cuong De to the throne, the Dong Minh Hoi was believed to have had no more than 1,500 members. The VNQDD was much stronger and was estimated to have about 8,000 followers when it returned to Viet Nam with the Yunnanese forces after fifteen years of exile. In sharp contrast, the Viet Minh were thought to have 70,000 adherents, although this figure was based in part on the number of recruits in the mountain base area. Not only did this ranking of the strength of the Vietnamese political groups demonstrate the weakness of the two Chinese-oriented exile groups, but with Hanoi having a population of 119,700 and Tonkin containing 9,851,000 persons, it also indicated that none of these groups had a mass following.[4]

Though social and economic distress was widespread as a result of famine, floods, and Japanese-enforced food requisitions, almost all of the population remained politically inert because of the absence of organized forms for popular participation. As long as distress was localized and political organization minimal, the August Revolution continued as a process of the unstable maneuvering and bargaining of political elites rather than as a mass uprising. This did not mean that there was a lack of interest in a popular base among the parties competing for influence within the constraints of the Chinese occupation of north Viet Nam. But in the space of less than two months following the capitulation, when the first real opportunities for broad political organization had occurred in the country, none of the parties, with the exception of the Communist Viet Minh, had the capacity or decisiveness to exploit the occasion to gain a wide following. Yet neither did the Communists have a mass organization. As was observed at the time,

> The Communist Party is an elite of shock troops, but even in this case they are more like a clandestine group than a normal party. The masses are still lacking. No party exercises over them an immediate and profound hold. The parties then lack an essential thing: a pact with the people. . .

Nationalist Reaction to the Viet Minh

In establishing such a base, the Communists were committed to the use of organizational techniques which the other parties had not mastered. As a reaction to the effectiveness of these techniques, the Chinese-protected nationalist political groups launched a propaganda campaign through their respective newspapers, Dong Minh and Viet Nam, in which they sought to discredit the Viet Minh regime and to force the formation of a government of national union. They also developed shock groups which specialized in kidnaping members of the Viet Minh and, by their success in this technique, forced a showdown on the issue of a reorganized government. The Chinese feared that a showdown might lead to violent conflict. Therefore, they quickly arranged an accord between the Dong Minh Hoi and the Viet Minh on October 23, 1945, but this lasted only eight days and ended when Nguyen Hai Than resumed his denunciations of the Viet Minh.

In the second round, the tactics of the Dong Minh Hoi were less crude. They attacked the Viet Minh for their Communist origins in an attempt to play upon the suspicions of the Kuomintang Chinese as well as on the privileged Vietnamese in Hanoi and in the provincial towns. The Viet Minh responded to this challenge by having the Central Committee of the Indochinese Communist Party formally proclaim the dissolution of the party organization on November 11, 1945. There was little meaning in this gesture, for all the subsequent party documents demonstrate that the structure and leadership continued to function. While the Viet Minh were doubtless able to strengthen their nationalist identification through this maneuver, it was most effective in throwing the other parties back upon their limited capacities to oppose Communist adversaries. Not only were they deficient in organization, but they were being outperformed in the propaganda war in which lay their best hope of winning support among the unorganized population. However, the exile groups were not a complete failure in these verbal battles, for their denunciations were troublesome enough to the Viet Minh to make them take over the VNQDD newspaper, Viet Nam, on November 18, 1945. Another certain clash growing out of this incident was averted by an accord on November 19, in which the formation of a national union government was again pledged by the Viet Minh.[5] This too proved to be a transient move, quickly forgotten in the rush of events.

The character of this circumscribed competition among handfuls of political activists in north Viet Nam was the result of the small size of the groups out of power, their lack of armed units for more overt action, and their inability to translate popular uncertainty and discontent into political strength. Within these limits there were few alternatives open to the VNQDD and the Dong Minh Hoi other than trying to force the Viet Minh to share governmental power with them by propaganda attacks which questioned its legitimacy. These limits meant that the non-Communist groups had little capacity for broadening the political context of the August Revolution to develop an effective challenge to the Viet Minh. Unlike south Viet Nam, where the religious-political sects and the Trotskyites were powers to be reckoned with, the exile parties of the north were not serious competitors for power. By their foothold of strength and their limited challenges, however, they were able to cast in relief some of the essentials by which the Viet Minh was holding power.

Sources of Viet Minh Strength

Beyond armed units, Viet Minh control over the vestiges of the colonial administrative structure and their eightfold advantage in number of followers, there was a more fundamental source of Viet Minh strength. That the Viet Minh had institutionalized themselves as a revolutionary government, that they had been the first to succeed to authority upon the Japanese

capitulation, and that they had established a legitimacy based on an identification with national independence constituted the real demonstration of their power. Their experience seems to support Paul Mus' observation that,

> The only revolution that the Sino-Vietnamese political wisdom, in its classical expression, holds as authentic is that which changes things completely. It is a major proof of the right to power that a program with new solutions for all things is offered. This conception has been, in the Far East, familiar for all times to the most modest countryman.[6]

The Viet Minh had, as Mus points out, an ability to present their actions as a "renovation of the state," while their competitors had only particularistic concepts and goals for power.[7] Consequently, in the north, where the Chinese occupation permitted them to continue in authority, the Viet Minh were able to manage their Vietnamese adversaries successfully for two reasons. Their opponents lacked numerous adherents and armed units and, more decisively, they were less aware of the task of developing revolutionary political structure in the hiatus left by the collapse of colonial and Japanese authority.

Elections in 1945

These characteristics were brought out in the controversy which resulted over the Viet Minh's determination to hold general elections for a national assembly on December 23, 1945. Since this would be the first Vietnamese experience with universal suffrage, it would obviously be an event of great impact in establishing an identity between the population and the revolutionary government. It was primarily Gen. Hsiao Wen rather than the exile parties themselves who tried to block the Viet Minh's maneuver. The Kwangsi political adviser still had the hope of being able to reconstitute the coalition of the Dong Minh Hoi, the VNQDD, and the Viet Minh as it had existed in March 1944. This was not only unrealistic from the perspective of the relative strengths of the groups but also beyond Hsiao Wen's political or coercive capacity to achieve. What he could and did secure on December 19, 1945, was a delay in the elections until January 6, 1946, but this did not really satisfy his objectives. His apprehension over the decline of influence for his clients was well founded. Beyond the areas where their meager armed units were located, the VNQDD and the Dong Minh Hoi did not have the provincial political organization which the Viet Minh had constructed. While the VNQDD could count on some of the contacts it had cultivated before its downfall following the Yen Bay revolt of 1930, the Dong Minh Hoi could claim little support other than that of the followers it brought from China.

Hsiao Wen continued to press whatever advantage he possessed and, on December 23, he obtained an accord for the exile nationalists with the Viet Minh which called for: (1) the formation of a provisional government of national union while awaiting the constitution of a permanent government by the national assembly; (2) support of general elections by all parties; (3) the allocation of 70 "special" seats in the national assembly, 50 for the VNQDD and 20 for the Dong Minh Hoi, in addition to those which might be won in the election. However, this accord was not respected by any of the parties. The Viet Minh did not cancel the elections originally called for December 23, in the remote areas which they claimed could not be reached by a counter order. The Dong Minh Hoi and the VNQDD continued to lead a campaign against the elections, hoping ultimately to sabotage them by not putting up any candidates. This had little effect, and the resulting vote reported for the Viet Minh was massive. In Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh received 169,222 votes or 98 percent of the 172,765 cast from 187,880 of those registered, a figure which strains belief, since population statistics show that there were only

119,000 persons in the city. In his native province of Nghe An, Vo Nguyen Giap received 97 percent of the votes cast. The countrywide results, giving the Viet Minh 90–92 percent of the total vote, aroused such passions among the opposition that they were not published for three months, when other issues had intervened to divert attention from their incredible magnitude.

What had these elections demonstrated about revolutionary politics in Viet Nam? Did they communicate some underlying feelings of the population or did they merely ratify the existing situation? Did they represent a competition for political support between autonomous groups or were they a controlled demonstration of political strength? To such questions as these one observer has responded:

> The choice of the voters among the various candidates appeared to have been free on the whole, but the choice was limited. There were hardly any other candidates than those agreed on by the Viet Minh Front. "Collaborators," "corrupt" and suspect elements were eliminated. But wasn't this the common lot in all liberated countries? In France itself at this time was the choice before the voters so wide, could one then conceive of the candidacy of a Maurras, a Flandin, a George Bonnet, or a Paul Faure? The Ho Chi Minh government created a democratic base by the same methods and the same means as those of General de Gaulle and M. Bidault, methods it must be said, which were more liberal than those that prevailed behind the iron curtain or in Algeria.

But are these conclusions justified in light of the discrepancies which have been noted in the course of the election?

In the provincial towns controlled by the VNQĐD or the Dong Minh Hoi—such as Vinh Yen, Viet Tri, Phu Tho, Yen Bay, Lao Kay, Mon Cay, and Ha Giang—elections did not take place at all. Yet when the National Assembly convened, Viet Minh representatives were seated from these localities. Moreover, of the 374 elected members only 18 came from south Viet Nam (Cochinchina), while the north and center had 356 representatives. However, the south had 5.5 million inhabitants or a little less than 25 percent of the total population of approximately 22 million persons in Viet Nam. Although there was meant to be a truly national character to the assembly there were no elections in the French-controlled southern area and only one representative out of the eighteen allotted ever attended any of the brief sessions. This put the bulk of the constituencies in the north, where the influence of the Viet Minh was predominant. But even in locations where they were not paramount, the Viet Minh carefully managed the election of their candidates, sometimes by placing them on the lists of subsidiary parties.

The underlying significance of the election seems to go beyond this gerrymandering of the Viet Minh to establish a national legislature in its own image. The most significant Viet Minh action was to make voting practically obligatory for every man and woman above the age of eighteen in areas under Viet Minh influence. Food-ration cards had to be presented when an individual voted, and without the stamp given to the card it was no longer valid. Under the northern conditions of food scarcity and near famine, this was undoubtedly an extremely effective means of bringing the urban population more firmly under control. It demonstrated a capacity for the exercise of authority which no other indigenous group could approximate and thus increased compliance with the Viet Minh regime on a purely pragmatic basis. Legitimacy was not only to be consolidated by an identification with aspirations of the moment, but also through administrative performance to meet basic public needs.

PROFIT FROM DEALS WITH CHINESE

The fact that elections for a national assembly occurred in December 1945 and January 1946 demonstrated again that the Viet Minh had opportunities to consolidate their revolutionary power in north Viet Nam which were denied to it in the south by the determined reoccupation of the French. Although the Chinese occupation had substantially restricted the hiatus in international power which had permitted the August Revolution to occur, it had not eliminated it. This reflected the very different diplomatic status that China had with France as contrasted with that of the British. But it was also an indication of the totally different relationship that the Viet Minh had been able to develop with the Chinese occupiers which the diplomatic position of the British made almost impossible to achieve in the south. This is not to imply that the Chinese desire to improve its diplomatic relations with the French automatically brought to the Viet Minh advantages in consolidating its power. The significant divergence in purpose between the occupation forces under Lu Han and the Chinese central government, with whom the French were negotiating for their own reoccupation, meant that special efforts were required of the Viet Minh.

From the very outset of the occupation, these efforts were made with shrewdness and determination. Without these important qualities, Lu Han could have potentially eliminated the Viet Minh regime and established his own Vietnamese clients in power. But the Viet Minh displayed, at least to Lu Han's satisfaction, it seems, that they could provide more of what the occupiers wanted than any other Vietnamese group. Certainly, one important reason for this ability was that the Viet Minh had a greater hold on the population than any other political faction. Necessarily, their overthrow would have required the substitution of a group with similar capacities or the use of coercive force to get the same results. In a situation reminiscent of the Allied intervention during the Russian Revolution, it is a remarkable dimension of the August Revolution that the Viet Minh were able to manage the demands of the Chinese occupation and not only maintain but extend their own power.[8]

"Gold Week"

Although the Viet Minh abolished all taxes in a sweeping propaganda gesture at the beginning of September 1945, they organized "voluntary" subscriptions from the rich to sustain their administration. It was in this context that a "Gold Week" was held from September 16 through 23, during which the private gold hoards that were the savings of a people living in wartime insecurity were solicited.[9] These resources were available on September 18, when Lu Han arrived in Hanoi by plane from Yunnan and was presented with a gold opium pipe by Ho Chi Minh.[10] From this auspicious beginning Ho developed a relationship by which he was able, as an initial benefit, to thwart Hsiao Wen's objective of placing Nguyen Hai Than in power as a Kwangsi puppet. More vital than the "Gold Week" tactics to the solidification of this tie with the Yunnanese leader was the willingness of the Viet Minh to accept favorable exchange rates for Chinese currency, which eventually enabled the occupation forces to extract enormous profit from Viet Nam.

Chinese Occupation Profits

The question of the exchange rate was one of the first tasks with which the Chinese dealt. It appears that it was the arbitrary decision of the Chinese to set the rate at 1.50 Bank of Indochina piasters to $20 (Chinese). This meant that the value of Chinese money in Hanoi was roughly three to five times higher than in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province.[11] In Hanoi

one piaster was worth $13.33 (Chinese) while in Kunming its value was between $45 and $70 (Chinese). Consequently, every airplane flight arriving from Kunming brought with it great quantities of money to be exchanged, and in one instance $60 million (Chinese) was reported on a single flight.[12] Through opportunities of this kind, the Chinese began to buy up hotels, shops, houses, and similar types of real estate in other forms of speculation. By these and a wide variety of other financial operations, including loans received from the Bank of Indochina, the Chinese occupation was estimated to have extracted 400 million Bank of Indochina piasters as well as 14,000 tons of rice valued at 27 million piasters.[13] This did not include the returns from the opium harvests which the Chinese 93rd Independent Division was able to acquire in northern Laos. Nor did it reflect the contraband trade in Viet Nam which official and unofficial Chinese carried on in items ranging from armaments to foodstuffs.

While it is virtually impossible to establish a more precise measure of the financial burden of the Chinese occupation, a rough order of magnitude can be estimated. In 1939, governmental expenditures for all of Indochina were 114 million piasters at the existing valuation, which constituted about 10 percent of the annual product of the Indochinese states or 1.14 billion piasters.[14] In their occupation of only the northern portion of Viet Nam, it appears that the Chinese were able to secure financial and other resources equivalent to at least half of the annual prewar product of the whole of Indochina. Another measure of this burden is the estimate that all war damages totaled 2.8 billion piasters, meaning that in less than one year the Chinese were able to obtain about a fifth of what the Japanese had siphoned off in five years of occupation of the whole of Indochina.[15]

Measured against such astounding material return, any political advantages that the Chinese could have potentially secured would seem ephemeral at best. Unless the Chinese had been willing to make a more determined effort to resist French reoccupation, there would seem to have been no long-range purpose served by placing Nguyen Hai Than or any other puppet in power. The warlord occupiers undoubtedly knew better than anyone else the severe limitations of the Vietnamese nationalist exile groups. Certainly their resiliency to a reestablished French colonialism was not hard to assess. In the shorter range, the option of overturning the Viet Minh for the benefit of the exile politicians could have offered few advantages as long as the Communist-led movement was responsive to the interests of the occupiers. While Viet Minh power was minute in comparison to the Chinese occupation forces, it was significant enough to have caused Lu Han considerable trouble, especially in its political dimension, had not a relatively harmonious relationship been developed. From the outset, Ho Chi Minh showed his understanding of Lu Han's desires for largess and took no action to thwart them, even though it meant the further impoverishment of his flood- and famine-ravaged country.

Viet Minh Strategy and Opposition Parties

Whether these were the terms on which Lu Han decided to give no more than token support to the VNQDD and the Dong Minh Hoi cannot be determined from available evidence. However, the Viet Minh, who potentially could have staged a boycott of the Chinese exchange rate, did not receive a clear field in spite of their cooperative attitude. They had to deal with Hsiao Wen's political ambitions for the exile groups, and, although Lu Han did not offer this project any support, he did not actively discourage it. In addition to participating in Hsiao Wen's periodic accords with the exiles as occurred on October 23, and November 19, 1945, the Viet Minh also had to make substantial efforts to satisfy or neutralize the VNQDD and the Dong Minh Hoi. Such was the intent of the December 25 agreement in which the two nationalist parties received 70 seats in the national assembly. This agreement also stated that Nguyen

Hai Th... would become vice-premier and that two cabinet positions, Ministries of Economy and Health, would be reserved for the Dong Minh Hoi, while two other posts were allotted to the VNQDD.[16]

Obviously, the Viet Minh expected that tactics of this sort would fulfill the demands of the opposition parties. Although they initially rejected these cabinet and legislative positions, however, the exile nationalist eventually did agree to participate in a Viet Minh-led government. This change did not represent an ideological transformation but, with the departure of Yunnanese troops from the ranks of the occupation forces by the beginning of February 1946, continued opposition to the Viet Minh offered few advantages. As long as the exile nationalists remained elite-oriented groups without a mass base and without effective political tactics, few alternatives were open to them. During the early phases of the occupation, their main alternative came from Hsiao Wen's unrelenting prodding of the Viet Minh. But the Communist-led independence movement was adept enough to provide an outlet for these elite political competitors while preserving their own initiative in the August Revolution. This strategy, along with ensuring that Lu Han's purposes did not remain unfulfilled, obtained for the Viet Minh a vital measure of latitude within which they could continue to develop their revolutionary power.

This interaction of occupation and revolution which characterized the August Revolution in the north of Viet Nam showed that in a colonial society the criterion for revolutionary success was not only holding power internally but also manipulating international forces. These internal and international dimensions were intimately linked in Viet Nam. Although substantial advantage accrued to the Viet Minh from their wider base of popular support, it was not the utilization of popular strength which circumscribed the exile nationalists and satisfied the Chinese occupiers. The political skills that accomplished these tasks were an ability to sense the presence of power and to respond to its pressure. Through the expansion of their military and political capacities, the Viet Minh displayed many of the characteristics that were to persist through seven years of revolutionary war. Getting external assistance was one of the more important of these characteristics.

Sources of Viet Minh Armaments

That the Chinese occupation troops played a part in the arming of the Viet Minh has been suggested by French observers and publicly asserted by an agent of the exile nationalists.[17] From Hong Kong in 1947, there was a press dispatch which quoted the declaration of a verified Vietnamese nationalist source that, "most of the arms being used by resistance groups against the French in Indochina were bought through private channels while Gen. Lu Han's government forces occupied the northern half of the country at the end of the war."[18] This source indicated that he had purchased as much as U.S. $30,000 worth of arms from the Chinese and that anyone with the cash could get arms. This underscored the fact that the selling of arms "consisted of private and not official transactions." However, it was reported that "Chinese officers and men disposed of both Japanese arms taken over from the enemy depots and some of their own lend-lease weapons."[19]

Although there is little doubt that the Viet Minh obtained armaments through the Chinese, it is difficult to determine the exact amount. In order to define more precisely the importance of the Chinese as a source of weapons, a comparison is required with the arms secured earlier from French stocks either with the complicity of the Japanese or with their acquiescence. According to available information, as of March 6, 1946, there were weapons from the following sources in the hands of the Viet Minh north of the sixteenth parallel, in addition to the approximately 4,600 arms air-dropped to them by the Allies before August 19, 1945:

(1) From stocks of the Garde Indochinoise allegedly obtained with the help of the Japanese:

15,000 individual weapons, mostly muskets of 8 mm., not easily resupplied with ammunition

200 automatic weapons, including submachineguns and Hotchkiss machineguns

(2) From stocks of French colonial army obtained with Japanese help:

10,000 individual weapons, mostly 8 mm.

400 automatic weapons, and an indeterminate number of 60 mm. and 81 mm. mortars

6 Oerlikon cannons of 20 mm.

12 cannons of 37 mm.

20 artillery pieces of 75 mm.

6 armored cars

(3) From Japanese Army stocks, some ceded directly, others obtained through the Chinese:

6,000 rifles

100 automatic weapons

16 pieces of light artillery

6 armored vehicles

Together with the arms air-dropped to them, this gave the Viet Minh armed forces a total number of weapons as follows:

35,600 individual weapons

750 automatic weapons

36 artillery pieces

An indeterminate number of mortars and heavy weapons

12 armored cars in bad state of repair

This suggests that less than 20 percent of the armament available to the Viet Minh by the spring of 1946 was obtained through the Chinese, but this information concerned only known stocks of weapons. Considerably more arms than those specifically documented above came into the possession of the Communist revolutionaries. The most accurate estimate of their

material resources at any one time during the August Revolution is probably the one given for December 19, 1946, the day when the Viet Minh finally initiated their general attack against the French. This indicated that they had arms sufficient for approximately 150 battalions. Using the allowances of weapons thought to be available to such units, this indicates that the Viet Minh had roughly the following amount of equipment in excess of known stocks. See Table 4.

Table 4. Estimates of Viet Minh Equipment in Excess of Known Stocks

Aggregate Estimate for December 19, 1946	Amount of Increase Over March 6, 1945	Percentage of Increase
75,000 individual weapons	40,000	114
2,250 automatic weapons	1,500	300
300-450 mortars	Indeterminate	Indeterminate
4,500 submachine guns	3,900	900

In attempting to account for this increase of approximately 45,000 arms, it seems probable that the 6,000 weapons estimated to have been acquired from 48,000 Japanese troops is understated. However, it is impossible to suggest a more accurate estimate. While these Japanese arms and those of the Chinese occupation troops were undoubtedly prime items in the contraband trade, a source of greater supply was the sea and overland shipments from China. This contraband trade was facilitated by the extremely unsettled situation in the area along the Sino-Vietnamese border and the continued predominance of warlordism adjacent to the frontier both during the Chinese occupation of Viet Nam and afterward.

With the attention of both the major political forces in China focused on the conflict of the civil war in the north, the task of containing the power of southern warlords was less pressing. The border area which came less and less under the control of any authority was to remain in an anarchic state for several years until the Chinese Communists were able to impose their centralizing force on the southern region. Therefore, the Viet Minh, maintaining their mountainous base contiguous with the China border, continued to secure armaments without interruption after December 1946, when the French occupied many of the key coastal towns which were centers of the sea trade. Before this, a lively junk trade in contraband arms took place between Hainan island, the south China coast, and the Vietnamese coast. This traffic was originally set in motion by Japanese deserters but was later picked up by Chinese promoters. As a representative case, a junk carrying a load of 22 submachineguns, 2 automatic rifles, and a stock of ammunition was known to have arrived in the northern coastal town of Quang Yen in December 1945. With loads of this magnitude it would have required only twenty junks to have supplied to the Viet Minh during 1945-46 the total increase of submachineguns above known stocks. There are indications that this level of activity was completely within the capacity of the external supply operations that the Viet Minh had established. In one day, December 15, 1945, there was reported an eleven-junk convoy which deposited an estimated 1,500 metric tons of arms and ammunition on the island of Hon Me between Thanh Hoa and Vinh on the coast of central Viet Nam. On the same day it was reported that another four junks arrived in the town of Thanh Hoa with American arms which were being supplied by Chinese commercial intermediaries.

There was no question of any of this supply of arms being a gift and, as the trade developed, procedures became more standardized. The Viet Minh sent a representative Nguyen

Van Cam, to make purchases in Canton and Hong Kong on the basis of exchanging opium, gold, and rice for weapons. Like the arrangements made with the Chinese occupation forces, these agreements were not so much politically inspired as they were financially motivated. Although it seems that some of the arms supplies were facilitated by Chinese Communist cadres in south China, their assistance was on a strictly quid pro quo basis. Another element in this pattern of external supply was the purchase of arms in Thailand for the Communist-led resistance in south Viet Nam. This task was undertaken in Bangkok by Tran Van Giau, who had been removed as military commissar for the Nam Bo Committee. Through him arms were sent by sea from a small port east of Bangkok to towns and secret locations in Viet Nam along the Gulf of Thailand, as well as overland through the central Viet Nam mountains from the northeastern Thai town of Oubon.

Financial Manipulations To Obtain Armaments

The ability to obtain resources sufficient to sustain such a contraband trade was yet another indication of the organizational capacity of the Viet Minh. One important means of raising the items of exchange for weapons was through the purchase of opium on the Laotian frontier. Salt worth 1,000 piasters was given for a kilogram of opium. It was resold to Chinese trafficants in Hanoi at 15,000 piasters per kilogram in hard currency.[20] But as the Viet Minh strengthened their hold on the north, they developed an even more remunerative and more sophisticated means of financing their governmental and military operations. This involved the Bank of Indochina which, with its authority to issue currency, had always been a hated symbol of colonialism and, during the August Revolution, the chief obstacle to the Viet Minh's sovereignty. One of the shortcomings of the August Revolution from the Viet Minh's point of view was that they had "failed to seize the Bank of Indochina and suppress the privileges of the magnates of the money-market . . . . The colonialists availed themselves of this opportunity to attack us later on in the financial field . . . ."[21]

Because of this French control over finances, the Viet Minh decided to issue their own currency. They would then make it obligatory to use their notes as currency while collecting the Bank of Indochina piasters in exchange. By retiring these piasters from use inside the country and printing their own Ho Chi Minh piaster on flimsy paper of very limited durability, they expected to prevent the rise of inflation. At the same time they would have excellent backing for their currency.[22] The first Viet Minh money was printed in February 1946, but the Chinese occupiers, seeing that its use would restrict their own opportunities to get Bank of Indochina piasters, blocked the project.[23] After the Chinese departure, on June 19, 1946, an order was issued by the Viet Minh regime stating that the utilization of the Bank of Indochina piaster by Vietnamese would come to an end within two months. The French were permitted to use the Bank of Indochina piaster for purchases, but their change would be given in the Ho Chi Minh piaster.[24] Not only did this provide the funds with which to obtain additional armaments but it also increased the psychological bond between the monetized sector of the population and the Viet Minh regime. This tactic, similar to the requirement for the stamping of the ration cards during the voting of January 1946, was yet another shrewd design to strengthen the legitimacy of the Viet Minh and develop its revolutionary power.

Development of Arsenals

Seen from another perspective, the magnitude of the contraband trade in expanding the Viet Minh military power becomes more precise. Estimates indicate that, during 1946, the Communist-sponsored independence movement was able to manufacture in hastily constructed

arsenals 20,000-30,000 weapons which were copies of American carbines, Sten guns, and other foreign weapons. The establishment of these rudimentary arsenals in north Viet Nam was another advantage to the Viet Minh gained from the absence of any restrictive foreign occupation. Besides seizing what industrial raw materials were available in the north, the Viet Minh acquired control over machine shops and repair facilities, especially those of the Trans-Indochina Railway at Truong Thi in Nghe An Province and at Ha Dong just outside Hanoi. In addition, the match factory at Thanh Hoa was transformed for the production of explosives. With about 400 tons of cast iron and pyrotechnics found in the warehouses of French commercial firms, the Viet Minh put their rapidly constructed arsenals into operation. Obviously, the quality of their product was not high, since these raw materials were not intended for such purposes; nevertheless these weapons were vital in a guerrilla war of short-range fire.

It appears, therefore, that at least one-half of the increase of approximately 45,000 weapons over the arms acquired from the stocks of the French and the Japanese was produced inside Viet Nam. Although this seems like a fantastic achievement for a political movement without great organizational experience, it was not accomplished without the important assistance of deserters from the Japanese Army. Of the 48,000 Japanese troops and 2,000 civilians located north of the 16th parallel at the end of the war, 30,500 had surrendered and embarked for Japan by April 20, 1946. The remainder were variously accounted for as having fled to Hainan Island, having joined with the Chinese Army upon their withdrawal, or being merely at large in unorganized units. A disputed number, somewhere between 2,000 and 4,500 was estimated to have actively joined the Viet Minh.

Those who did join were part of a group known as the "Japanese Organism for Collaboration and Aid for the Independence of Viet Nam." This organization was headed by Lieutenant Colonel Mukaiyama who, with his principal assistant, Major Oshima, was located at Thai Nguyen in the Viet Minh mountain base area. Although Japanese groups were located at other strategic spots, the one at Thai Nguyen, comprising about 1,500 combatants and 600 technicians and workers, accounted for almost half of the largest estimate of the total number of deserters. The second most important concentration of Japanese was at the central Viet Nam port town of Quang Ngai where 300 men were grouped under the command of Major Saito, who had been the chief of the Kempeitai (secret police) at Da Nang. At this location, as well as at Thai Nguyen, the Japanese were staffing training schools and arms-production facilities, while some of their men were grouped into guerrilla units to accompany the Viet Minh into combat as experts in heavy weapons.

Largely because of this Japanese technical assistance, the Viet Minh arsenals were able to achieve a substantial production. The pace was set at Thai Nguyen where the output was: 10 pistols per day, 50 rifles, and 3 to 4 machineguns per month. This meant that the total production of this one arsenal from its beginning in October 1945 until the outbreak of hostilities in December 1946 would have been approximately: 700 rifles, 2,200 pistols, and 56 machineguns. For a production of the magnitude of the estimated 20,000-30,000 weapons to have been manufactured within Viet Nam, at least five arsenals of capacity equal to that at Thai Nguyen would have been required. In fact, more than five arsenals did exist during 1946, but it is virtually impossible to establish either their individual or aggregate production with any degree of accuracy.

On the basis of available information it seems certain that an indigenous production of 20,000-30,000 weapons was well within the capacity of the Viet Minh. Yet it must be emphasized that the data for the output at the Thai Nguyen arsenal indicate that this domestic production consisted primarily of pistols rather than rifles or automatic weapons. This suggests that, whatever the precise quantity of weapons produced inside Viet Nam, their quality was not

only low in terms of efficiency but capable of only short-range fire. Information also indicates that these arsenals were more important in filling immediate needs for ammunition and grenades as a stockpile against imminent conflict with the French than in the longer range task of manufacturing higher quality armaments. Therefore it appears that weapons of outside origin must have been the most important source of arms for the expansion of the Viet Minh military capacity in quality, as well as accounting for approximately one-half the increase in quantity prior to the outbreak of warfare in December 1946.

Political Factors in Support of Viet Minh Military Operations

Through these various sources more weapons had been set loose in Viet Nam in the chaotic aftermath of the Pacific war than had ever before been available, even to the established colonial authority in the era before 1940. Without these arms the revolutionary movement would obviously have lacked an effective means for expressing and pursuing its political goals. The very fact of possessing such arms in the postwar context of Viet Nam, where almost all patterns of authority had deteriorated, endowed their possessors with great power. Therefore, this review of the origins of Viet Minh armaments is not included here as an analysis of revolutionary war logistics but as a more precise measure of the political factors that enabled a new power configuration to be developed in Viet Nam.

These factors may be measured in statistical terms. Of the approximately 83,000 weapons of widely varying quality available to the Viet Minh in December 1946, those originating from cession by the Japanese upon their capitulation, those of indigenous manufacture, and those from contraband trade were roughly equal in magnitude. This was about 25,000 arms from each source after subtracting from the total those guns which had been parachuted in before August 1945. While one of the key factors in the launching of the Vietnamese revolution was the destruction of colonial authority by the Japanese, their material assistance to the Viet Minh was also vital. By ceding French arms to them instead of the nationalist government of Tran Trong Kim, and by helping the Viet Minh to establish arsenals, the Japanese seemed to be acknowledging that the Communist-led movement was, in their view, the most capable of the Vietnamese factions to thwart the return of the French.

Compared with this substantial Japanese contribution, the Chinese role in the August Revolution comes somewhat more sharply into focus. Unlike that of the Chinese, Japanese material aid appears not to have required Viet Minh repayment and was motivated primarily by political purposes. But as a vanquished armed force the Japanese had few alternatives in late 1945, and the tie with the Viet Minh served to maximize what impact remained to them. If the Chinese caused much impoverishment by their demands upon the Vietnamese economy, they were on the other hand responsible for most of the high quality weapons which the Viet Minh received. In addition, there was established in the contraband trade a Chinese-oriented resource that would continue to exist after the Japanese influence ceased to be effective. Such means of external supply were not only to serve the Viet Minh in getting their guerrilla war forces organized initially, but they were to be an important continuing source of matériel in the buildup of an ever larger Communist armed force. After 1950, in the diplomatic atmosphere effected by the Korean war, the Thai took steps to eliminate whatever advantages the Viet Minh had enjoyed from their territory for the past four years. But the advent of the Communist regime in China merely served to increase the possibilities for securing weapons and supplies from the north—a pattern which was an outgrowth of the Chinese postwar occupation.

Even though political conditions in both Thailand and China changed radically in the course of the nine years of the Communists' fight for independence in Viet Nam, these developments

had less effect on external supply than had other factors. The geographic features of the Vietnamese borders, and the changes in the military requirements of the Viet Minh as their armed force developed in scale, contributed the most in defining the patterns of this supply. As has been indicated and as will be seen in greater detail, the importance of external sources of arms to the Viet Minh was not so much of a quantitative as of a qualitative value. The perfecting of a conventional military organization from guerrilla units required progressively more sophisticated weapons and training. Equipment of this type was obtained almost exclusively from the contraband trade with China prior to 1947. Afterwards there were opportunities to capture them in battle from the French. Since this frontier trade expanded into one of the most significant features of the Indochina War, raising the thorny diplomatic problem of a "privileged sanctuary," it is important to emphasize that several of its initial characteristics persisted despite political changes in China.

Not only did the quality of the matériel remain more important than quantity, but it continued to be an item for which the Viet Minh had to pay with its scarce and meager resources. Moreover, the remoteness of the Sino-Vietnamese frontier and its political-military instability facilitated the transfer of the matériel, as did the Viet Minh control of certain key coastal areas. Inevitably, the opinion developed that the elimination of this source of arms would have resulted in the strangulation of the revolutionary movement. However, a critical threshold in Vietnamese politics had been crossed with the August Revolution and, as a consequence, it was political organization and not weapons that was the primary support of the Viet Minh's military operations. The big difference between the August Revolution and the abortive prewar attempts to challenge French authority was not just the opportunities for securing arms. More important was the widespread organization for political participation. In the expansion of this organization, the presence of the Chinese in Viet Nam was a vital factor.

VIET MINH EXPAND THEIR REVOLUTIONARY STRUCTURE DURING CHINESE OCCUPATION

The presence of Chinese occupation forces in north Viet Nam until the spring of 1946, delaying the attempted reestablishment of colonial rule, gave the Viet Minh time to expand their political organization. Unlike their colleagues in the south who were forced to fight almost immediately against the French reoccupation, the northern revolutionaries were able to build on their seizure of the vestigial colonial administrative structure. When they made their bid for power in Hanoi in August 1945, the Viet Minh had called for the creation of "People's Committees," Uy Ban Nhan Dan, which were to have "mobilized the masses and encouraged them to participate in revolutionary struggle."[25] Since the Viet Minh's organizational capacity was limited by a relatively small number of cadres, this technique allowed them to extend their influence by giving a rationale and a legitimacy for the formation of local groups. This process was described by one observer as follows:

> At the outset it was possible to credit the Viet Minh with a name, a tradition, and a means of liaison in great part inherited from the Communists, but without any real control over the people. Above all the Viet Minh knew how to seize their chance. Vietnamese society had been deserted by its Confucian cadre and had not been re-encadred by those imitating European values. It seemed to the villagers that the time had come for a new reign. Taking Hanoi had given the Viet Minh an initial success, but the movement could not get to the countryside. The contact with the people, the primary element in the revolutionary adventure, could not be made. It was urgent that the Viet Minh stir the people.[26]

Stirring appeals to the people of north Viet Nam had to take into account the severe famine which had ravaged the provinces of the Red River Delta in the spring of 1945. Unusually heavy rains during the summer of that year raised the river level to a perilous point. Dikes had been neglected and those French technicians who were responsible for water control had been imprisoned by the Japanese. Attempting to remedy the situation, Vietnamese subordinates opened the floodgates on the Day River dam south of Hanoi at too rapid a speed, with the result that a deluge was loosed upon the delta. As a consequence, eight of the fourteen provinces in the Red River Delta were inundated by July 1945, and there was no possibility of drying out the fields for immediate use. Moreover, a considerable portion of the delta population fled southward, fearing the plague.[27] Although the Communists have claimed that between 2 and 3 million persons perished, it appears that 500,000 to 600,000 is a more accurate measure of the tragedy.[28] Whatever the true toll, such devastation undoubtedly had an important impact on the attitude of the populace, since at the lowest estimates the calamity eliminated almost 6 percent of the population of all north Viet Nam (Tonkin).[29]

While the situation presented a potential for popular uprising, it could also have resulted in passivity. People might be expected to be more concerned with immediate personal problems than with political protest against either the authority presumed responsible for the flood and famine or the broader issues of colonial reoccupation. However, neither the extreme of mass uprising nor widespread apathy resulted. The calamity was not localized, but was evidenced outside the Red River Delta and throughout north Viet Nam by soaring prices of rice. For example, in October 1945, rice was selling for 250 piasters a quintal* in the rice-producing province of Bac Giang, but was almost three times higher in Hanoi. By January 1946 the price in the cities had reached 800 piasters per quintal.[30] Obviously, conditions of food scarcity, flood, and famine contributed to the support of charismatic appeals. Therefore, during the August Revolution,

> a task of the greatest importance for the Communist and Viet Minh cadres was to lead the armed masses to seize Japanese rice stores and French concessions full of stocks of agricultural produce. It was precisely thanks to these attacks on granaries and colonialist plantations that the national salvation movement could be developed intensely, the people rapidly armed, the self-defense brigades quickly founded where the movement had never been organized. . . .[31]

Alien Regulations Create Social Disintegration

But natural calamities were not the only or even the primary factors creating unstable conditions and the opportunities for organizing a revolutionary political structure. Of more fundamental importance was the situation already noted where ". . . Vietnamese society had been deserted by its Confucian cadre and not been re-encadred. . . ." This disintegration was not merely the consequence of the Japanese occupation and the rise of the Viet Minh. This was only the final blow, which in extensive areas of Viet Nam exposed the decay that had occurred in the administrative system of the country.

Prior to the French intervention in the nineteenth century, the "recruitment of the mandarinal [administrative] corps within the village meant that the highest ambitions were permitted to the young villagers according to their abilities."[32] These talents were determined

* Approximately 1/2 a kilo.

on the basis of examinations in the Confucian classics, which were held on a quarterly basis. The incentive for the candidates at these examinations was not just the opportunity for administrative position and prestige; there was also an exemption from military service and from corvée duty for those successful in the first echelon in the hierarchy of tests for selection.[33] As a result of this process, there was, in addition to the recruitment of a well-educated bureaucratic cadre, a commitment established to the method of selection. This occurred because there were rewards even for those not chosen for administrative careers and because the examinations gave a rationale to the whole educational system.

This aspect of social control was of vital importance to the peaceful functioning of the country. Other than this political structure, there was no comprehensive economic, social, or religious organization to provide a framework of unity for the autonomous villages of largely self-sufficient peasant farmers that composed Vietnamese society. The Vietnamese worship their God through rituals conducted by the elders of the village, with neither an ordained or specially educated priest nor a hierarchical ecclesiastical body.[34] Since there has traditionally been little diversity in agricultural produce or occupation, economic organization has been localized. Kinship has always been the most important social grouping. Though kin ties often extended beyond the village, clan relations rarely went beyond nine generations and usually were organized into subordinate groups with a more recent common ancestor.[35] Because of the forms of ancestor veneration these ties, too, were localized. These otherwise self-contained villages, where more than 80 percent of the population of Viet Nam has always lived, formed a part of a larger community almost solely on a political basis. The lines of authority and compliance knitting these villages together were founded on the local recruitment of a bureaucratic cadre and an accepted tradition of Confucian politics.

As has already been described, the imposition of the French colonial state brought the ruin of "...the Confucian balance between the ritualistic state and the autarchic village... without anything to replace."[36] The traditional examinations for recruitment to the bureaucracy were abolished in 1918. Thereafter, those chosen for administrative posts were educated at the French-sponsored schools in the urban centers and provincial towns where Quoc Ngu, a romanized Vietnamese script—not Chinese characters—developed by French missionaries was used as the basis for instruction.[37] Because the system of mandarinal recruitment and bureaucracy had been virtually the only form of cultural integration, its demise could not help but have a decisive impact. Under the colonial regime, "political life was reduced to a matter of pure administration and...the administration was in the hands of foreigners."[38]

While it had been primarily a bureaucratic structure, the traditional political system of Viet Nam had not been unresponsive to political pressures. Indeed, one of its chief functions was to communicate such pressures and to gather information so that the Confucian state could be kept in equilibrium. Moreover, it could absorb certain shifts in social influence by providing a legitimate avenue for political mobility to the ambitious and capable.

Even though equilibrium and harmony were the goals of the system, these were rare in Vietnamese history. Yet during the many centuries of internecine warfare and the struggle for power, the Confucian code was the model for political structure. With its elimination by the colonial state, there was only the most narrowly circumscribed legitimacy for political action. All else was illegal and therefore revolutionary.

The deterioration which colonialism brought to traditional politics in Viet Nam went beyond its effects on the bureaucratic structure. It also had a damaging impact on the Vietnamese village. The traditional autonomy of the village and the legitimacy of its internal structure were greatly affected by three actions of the colonial administration:[39] (1) Imposition

of money taxes in place of the customary levies in rice. This brought the villages into the money economy without their having the institutions of trade and credit to acquire the alien currency. (2) Imposition of tight control over the village councils by the establishment of extensive colonial regulations for their procedure. The standardization and centralization of the functioning of the village councils tended to make them adjuncts of the French administration while undercutting them as political institutions. (3) This trend was reinforced by the substitution of election for cooptation in choosing the council members. The traditional method of selecting a village council—"cooptation"—had reflected the hierarchical structure of village society. Before the French came, "Age, literary accomplishments, and—to a lesser degree—the accumulation of wealth provided the basis for the hierarchy."[40]

With the requirement for elections based theoretically on the equality of the individual voter, a system of politics was being imposed which did not reflect the distribution of social influence within the Vietnamese village. This did not mean that traditionalism in the village was dead but that the notables of the customary councils remained in the background, resisting French reforms and at each opportunity reestablishing themselves in their former positions.[41] Had it simply been a question of election procedures enforced from the outside, traditionalist politics might have been expected to reemerge when the void in the central authority occurred with the Japanese capitulation, and in many cases this happened. But something more than the election regulation had taken place to prevent the traditional leaders from resuming a place of authority in the village. The basis for the social hierarchy no longer had its customary vitality. Literary accomplishments could not be demonstrated by the prestige which came with success in the mandarinal examinations. Consequently, classical learning had become moribund and ties with the Confucian cultural tradition weakened. This not only isolated the villages from an integrating structure of society and politics, it also loosened one of the important bonds that had united the village community.

While respect for learning diminished, the regard for age and the accumulation of wealth continued. Yet with the village patriarchal system curtailed, age alone could not enjoy the prestige with which it had once been endowed. However, the imposition of the money tax and the money economy increased the importance of wealth as a measure of social influence. Unfortunately, the concerns with money and wealth did not strengthen the cohesion of the village. Taxes became more an individual affair rather than a continuation of the collective responsibility of the village as they once had been. Wealth tended to draw social distinctions more sharply and seems to have produced envy as much as respect. Because of the scarcity of economic opportunity, wealth, unlike literary achievement, could not potentially be possible for everyone. Its social function did more to fragment than to unify. Wealth operated as one of the chief forces in the colonial impact on the vitality of the Vietnamese village. From these pressures,

> The traditional village could not survive. It continued to look the same, at least in Tonkin and Annam, but it became an empty shell, void of any social substance it had once had and which had kept life constantly renewed. With the heart gone out of it, even the appearance of the village was in a precarious position. . . .[42]

Factors Controlling Rebellion

Thus imposition of alien regulations on village affairs and the ending of political recruitment through literary examinations brought on the disintegration of the traditional system of politics in Viet Nam. Except for two restraining factors, this atrophy in patterns of authority

and political mobility might have resulted in sustained violent protest prior to 1945. One control was the presence of the colonial administrative and police apparatus; the other was the ineffectiveness of a Vietnamese elite in exploiting the potential for revolution. As has already been emphasized, administrative control was achieved with a relatively small cadre. There was a local militia of 18,700, and a French armed force increased from 10,779 in 1937 to 19,400 Frenchmen with about 55,000 additional local auxiliaries in February 1945. Also there were 5,100 French administrators and 28,000 indigenous ones until March 9, 1945, for the whole of Indochina, which at that time had a population of 27 million persons. Moreover, the civil administrative cadre had only varied between 4,500 and 5,100 among the French, and 20,800 and 28,000 for the indigenous officials over two decades.

Obviously, this ratio of administrators to population depended on a considerable degree of political inactivity, either from compliance or apathy. In the absence of institutionalized political life, the only major outbursts of rebelliousness prior to the Japanese intervention had been within the capacity of the colonial administration to quell. But their success in putting down the Nghe An revolt and the VNQDD uprising in Tonkin was also due to the shortcomings of the Vietnamese revolutionaries. Their leadership did not have a broadly structured base of operations because of a very limited capacity for revolutionary organization. The simple lack of a cadre of organizers was one of the limits but,

> One of the distinctive features of the 1930-31 "unrest" was...a cleavage between the programs put forward by the more (and prematurely) active political leaders of the new generation and the dissatisfaction and sporadic uprisings in the rural areas; in other words between the modernized ideas and approaches of the former and the traditional tempo of the latter.[43]

Overcoming this cleavage between the modern elites created by the colonial education and economy and the more than 80 percent of the population living in the vestigial remains of the traditional Vietnamese village was the primary task of revolutionary politics in Viet Nam. This required the social and political reintegration of a society that underneath the facade of the colonial administration had become almost amorphous. Because the vitality of the Vietnamese countryside had been sapped and its ties with an organizing cultural force greatly attenuated, the leadership in this task necessarily had to come from the new but alien elites. They had to impose a structure that would unite the village population into a framework of compliance and control if the French were to be prevented from restoring their rule and a revolutionary central authority established. In north Viet Nam, where the Chinese occupation helped to facilitate the course of the August Revolution, the villages appeared,

> isolated and trying to live on a closed economy. Their council of notables had disappeared, there are no more Ly Truongs, (i.e., traditional village official who was a sort of executive secretary of the council of notables), each village lives with rules adopted by the strongest opinion or the influence of the remaining notables.[44]

Reorganizing Village Social Structure

Whether this situation was more the result of wartime occupation and subsequent famine than a continuation of the deterioration initiated by the effects of colonial rule, the consequences would appear to be the same. The villages had lost whatever internal resilience they once possessed and were extremely vulnerable to the imposition of a new structure of external political control. A new hierarchy could establish roots by filling the gap created by the

breakdown in colonial administration. Seeking to avoid the ephemeral experience it had had in the Nghe An-Ha Tinh soviet in 1930-31, the Communist-led Viet Minh hoped to implant its framework of control by regrouping Vietnamese village society according to a new concept. Due to the lack of a wide social differentiation and the decay of the customary hierarchy of village society, the Viet Minh promoted the organization of the village on the basis of natural groupings. Thus, there were committees formed among women, youth, elderly persons, merchants, militia veterans, and especially the farmers.[6]

Unlike the Nghe An-Ha Tinh soviet, although building on the experience of the Viet-Bac guerrilla zone, these groups were organized in such a way that they went beyond being units for village action to become mass-participation organizations. This development reinforced their role of restructuring village society by giving them a meaning in the larger context of the tumultuous events of the August Revolution. Each of the village groups was connected through an elaborate hierarchy with the Viet Nam Cuu Quoc Hoi, or the Vietnamese League for National Salvation, known as the Cuu Quoc, which was theoretically represented in the central committee of the Viet Minh. At the base of the hierarchy were cells of from three to five members with an elected chief. A village would comprise several cells of the same functional group, just as would a neighborhood in the urban organization of the Viet Minh. Then the underlying framework of the Cuu Quoc called for the cells to elect members for the next higher echelon in the organizational hierarchy, a village committee, which in turn would elect representatives for superior committees. The process of democratic centrism would be continued until the national level of the organization was reached.

It was largely because Vietnamese society in 1945 had become relatively amorphous that a superstructure of this type enabled the Viet Minh to win recruits without having to bring them into the Communist Party. It provided an opportunity for participation and protest to those who had been dispossessed of their social status or their intangible cultural ties. At the same time that it was offering means for a structured expression of discontent it also served to bridge the cleavage between the modern urban elites and the distressed countryside. Rather than abstract programs it was an intricate organization that served as this integrative tie.

The Viet Minh Move Toward Central Control

This structure took form gradually. Soon after the August Revolution began, the Viet Minh formally recognized the Uy Ban Nhan Dan (People's Committees), which they had urged to be organized during the days following the seizure of power. A decree of September 2, 1945, gave some form to these committees by prescribing their composition and the method for selecting their members. As the challenge of holding power increased, with the influx of the Chinese occupation troops and their sponsorship of Vietnamese exile nationalists, the Viet Minh issued a new decree on November 22, 1945. This created the Uy Ban Hanh Chanh (Administrative Committees), whose membership at the level of the province and above in the hierarchy had to be approved by the Ministry of the Interior. While in theory the Viet Minh had not previously controlled the administrative committees below the provincial level, this became an unacceptable condition for them. By order #54 of November 23, 1945, a corps of special inquiry functionaries was established who were authorized to examine and regulate the operations of the lower echelon administrative committees.

This trend toward greater central control over local units of political action was reinforced by a decree of December 30, 1945. It appointed inspectors of political affairs and from this momentum issued decree #96 of June 5, 1946, which established Committees of

Harmonization charged with consolidating and unifying the structure of administration and political control that joined the elite with the population of the country. Before the end of 1946, there was a hierarchical organization of control in which regional committees supervised the provinces whose committees in turn managed subordinate districts that were directly responsible for village activities. Committees at each of these echelons were composed of seven members, including the president, vice-president, and secretary who formed the permanent commission for decision-making, and members assigned for political, military, social, and economic affairs.

The People's Committees and their successors were the symbol, as well as the substance, of governmental power in the rural areas of Viet Nam. Great stress was laid upon their executive power in carrying out the decrees of the revolutionary government, raising taxes, creating local self-defense units, and making provisions for social progress in mass education and welfare. It was the demonstration of the capacity to act as a government which concerned the Viet Minh. Confirmation of the legitimacy they sought required the Viet Minh to fill the void resulting from the dissolution of the colonial administration. Yet more than an administrative structure was sought by the Viet Minh. They hoped to accommodate political interests so as to develop a structure of compliance and mobility as well as execution. Based on this objective, the decree of September 1945 called for the village committees to be elected by all persons above the age of eighteen.[46] However, it appears that their members were elected from within the ranks of the Viet Minh or else appointed, although the evidence is limited. In one village in the Mekong Delta south of Saigon,

> ...the Viet Minh party members elected six members to their Uy Ban Hanh Chanh (Administrative Committee). The committee chairman and his assistant were brothers from a relatively well-to-do family; the other four members were tenant farmers. When the French re-occupied Indochina in January 1946 and reestablished the colonial administration the Viet Minh committee disbanded and the traditional village Council was reinstated.[47]

Although this makes it appear that the village was open to control of the strongest external force, there was a lively contention for advantage internally. The village "was split in its sympathies, and accusations of being pro-French or pro-Viet Minh were common. Those identified as pro-French—usually big land owners and members of the village Council—were likely victims of periodic punitive Viet Minh raids on the village at night."[48] These observations indicate that there were economically privileged persons on both sides of the political conflict in this village. The significance of this divisiveness would seem to be that respect for traditional position and institutions had given way to a scramble for advantage that bore little relation to larger issues. While

> ...the village councillors were particularly susceptible to accusations of being pro-French or pro-Viet Minh and from time to time some of them were forced to flee the village, ...several villagers contend that the confusing war years provided an opportunity for unscrupulous members of the council to exploit their authority and it was widely known that one village official was guilty of having extorted money from villages by threatening to denounce them to the Viet Minh.[49]

By contrast, another village in the Mekong Delta, in Ha Tien province bordering on the Gulf of Thailand, had a slightly different experience. In this case, the village committee was appointed by a Viet Minh political inspector, Nguyen Van Tay, on September 14, 1945, before the French reoccupation of the south. The committee's membership consisted of three

representatives from the Advanced Guard Youth, three from the Indochinese Communist Party, and three from the "workers." Unlike the previous example, it was continuity rather than conflict which was the goal of the Viet Minh in this Ha Tien village. They allied with the communal council by choosing three of its members from among the former notables well versed in village affairs to advise the Uy Ban Hanh Chanh.[50] Moreover, emphasis on traditional continuity was indicated by the Viet Minh's assigning to the police chief on the village committee the duties involved in the village religious cult that had been performed by the Huong Hao in former times.[51]

Development of Viet Minh Political Cadres

For all their striking dissimilarities, these two examples demonstrate that village committees were creations of the Viet Minh rather than popularly elected bodies. But their location in the southernmost areas of Viet Nam where the Communist organization was suffering its most severe blows showed another important characteristic. The Viet Minh possessed a cadre with which to extend its influence over wide areas of the Vietnamese countryside. Yet in the absence of spontaneous local organizations this meant that the structure of revolution in Viet Nam would have to be imposed from the top down by an active and politically conscious elite. However, the limitations imposed by the quantity and quality of the cadres would substantially restrict the momentum of the revolution. The Viet Minh were thoroughly aware that "one of the shortcomings of our present movement lies in the lack of cadres." Among the revolutionaries,

> ...first of all it is the cadres, who are the vanguard elements devoting themselves actively to the work of propaganda and organization, who devote themselves to leading the masses to carry out the policies of the Government and the Party, and to serving as good examples for the people.[52]

Obviously, a high priority was placed on developing additional cadres. But in fulfilling this objective the Viet Minh were faced with a complication arising from the colonial background of Vietnamese society. There was a contradiction in that

> The great majority of cadres, schooled by the revolutionary struggle, are loyal, eager, and skillful elements with a good political background, and a fair degree of organization, but most of them have a poor educational level ....On the other hand, the technicians and intellectuals who formerly graduated from the French Universities have a certain cultural level but know little about politics.[53]

As has been seen from the days of the VNQDD in 1930-31, there were those among the educated who did know something about politics. Although the educated frequently did not side with the Communists, it was in the competition for their loyalties that the Viet Minh excelled in the August Revolution.

Beyond success in winning the loyalties of the educated, the task of developing revolutionary power was twofold. The size of the trained elite they had won was small, but the consolidation of routine administration and the expansion of the revolutionary structure depended upon its consolidation. To Truong Chinh a more pressing limitation was the low level of political awareness, not only among the educated but throughout Vietnamese society. In a rhetorical query he asked, "...have the imperialists ever thought of educating the Vietnamese people to study or go into politics? Their sole concern was the formation of a class of young

Vietnamese intellectuals who would serve them merely as tools." . . .[54] Without political sensitivity, the disruption in the countryside would be turned to narrow advantage, as was shown in the two contrasting cases of villages in the Mekong Delta, instead of the consolidation of control. In the absence of political consciousness, the cadre which the Viet Minh had in large part recruited from the colonial regime would view its role in bureaucratic terms. Therefore, one of the crucial dimensions of revolutionary success for the Viet Minh was its capacity for political mobilization of the mass of the Vietnamese population. In turn, this depended on the energies of a politically shrewd cadre in establishing a structure of participation and control to overcome the cleavage which had separated the modern elite of Viet Nam from its village society.

Military Organizations Boost Political Development

Ironically, it was the demands created by military preparation and operations which eventually offered the greatest stimulus to political mobilization. Through the physical mobilization of villagers into the nascent Viet Minh armed force, the coordination of local guerrilla efforts of village self-defense units, and the organization of propaganda units, the capacity of this structure was tested. Without the military threat posed by the French reoccupation, the Viet Minh would have had to devise other forms of participation and psychological motivation for the political mobilization of the village population. Moreover, as the military requirements of the Viet Minh increased, efforts were made to expand its local organizational capacity. This resulted in the creation of resistance committees or Uy Ban Khang Chien during the second half of 1946. The purpose of these committees was to provide local liaison for the armed forces as a source of supplies, support for mobile combat units, reporting on the political and military situation in its locality, and furnishing combatants for the regular forces in addition to organizing local auto-defense troops and maintaining local security.

Although the Uy Ban Khang Chien were supposedly subordinate to the administrative committees, a rivalry developed during the initial phases of the resistance war between the military and civilian leaders which meant that this organizational relationship did not work out in practice. Therefore, by a decree of October 1, 1947, these organisms were unified into a single entity which was then to be known as Uy Ban Khang Chien Hanh Chanh (UBKCHC) and was to be organized from the village to the national level in a hierarchy of control and execution. At the village and district levels, the military members of the committee would be representative of the popular militia, and at the province and above members of the regular army would hold this position.

Such was the political-military structure with which the Viet Minh entered into the conflict with the French. Its great attribute was that it allowed for decentralization in initiative compatible with centralization in control. Through it a bridge was laid from the urban areas, which were the focus of the struggle in the August Revolution, to the countryside where the resistance war would be fought. Without the careful preparation of this structure, the Viet Minh could not have immediately launched and sustained guerrilla warfare. Without the elaboration of this structure and its effectiveness in mobilizing the Vietnamese rural population, a level of warfare sufficient to cause the French withdrawal from Viet Nam could not have been attained. Certainly there was a greater opportunity to implant such a structure north of the sixteenth parallel because of the absence of the French until March 6, 1946, and because of avoiding warfare there for almost nine months after the French returned. The freedom that the Viet Minh enjoyed until the spring of 1946 was due to the extended Chinese occupation. Whether the Chinese financial demands made the price too great cannot be easily determined. It seems clear that, given their revolutionary goals, the Viet Minh had no choice. Undoubtedly they were glad to gain a political foothold no matter what the price.

CHAPTER 6

FRENCH RESPONSE TO THE VIETNAMESE REVOLUTION: POLITICAL COMMUNITY VS. MILITARY REOCCUPATION, MARCH-DECEMBER 1946

CONFLICTING FRENCH VIEWS CONCERNING REOCCUPATION OF NORTH VIET NAM

The political power that the Vietnamese revolutionaries [1] been able to develop north of of the sixteenth parallel during the Chinese occupation presented the French with a challenge they had not faced in the south. With the signing of the Sino-French Treaty of February 28, 1946, and the agreement of the Chinese to withdraw their troops, the issue of Viet Minh power confronted them. The way was now open for the French to return to north Viet Nam. But long before the signing of the treaty two sharply opposing views developed within official French circles over the procedure to be followed in this reoccupation. One view was that negotiations with the Viet Minh leading to a formal accord were a vital prerequisite. Otherwise, it was argued, strong resistance would be encountered. The Viet Minh would take to the maquis, preventing the reinstallation of French sovereignty.

Such was the reasoning of Gen. Philippe Leclerc, a hero of the liberation of France, who had been appointed Supreme Commander of French Troops in the Far East.[1] However, his views were regarded as a "capitulation" by his immediate superior, the de Gaulle-appointed High Commissioner for Indochina, Adm. Georges Thierry d'Argenlieu.[2] As the admiral interpreted his mission, reoccupation came first, with negotiations of an unspecified nature to follow at a later date. Before their views could reach a showdown, the situation was radically altered by the resignation of General de Gaulle on January 20, 1946, and the return of party government to French politics.

French Statement Regarding Limited Vietnamese Self-Government

Until this time, there had been little opposition to d'Argenlieu's operating on the basis of a declaration issued by the French government on March 24, 1945. This statement, while acknowledging that Indochina was to enjoy freedom in keeping with its stage of evolution and capacities, obviously held those capacities in low regard. It provided a framework for only the most limited self-government, and even that was to be dominated by a French-appointed governor general. The crux of the declaration was that "The Indochinese Federation shall form with France and the other parts of the community a 'French Union' the interests of which abroad shall be represented by France. Indochina shall enjoy within that union liberty of its own."[3]

But when these words were written there was no French Union nor an Indochinese Federation. There was also little reason for Vietnamese political activists to believe that they would have a part in shaping either of these institutions. This could be concluded from the guarded phrase that "The statute of Indochina . . . will be put into final form after consultation with the qualified agencies of liberated Indochina."[4] Moreover, this declaration was based on

principles formulated at a conference on postwar colonial problems held in Brazzaville in early 1944. The final communiqué of this meeting had stated in part that

> the aims of the work of civilization which France is accomplishing in her possessions exclude any idea of autonomy and any possibility of development outside the French Empire bloc. The attainment of "self-government" in the colonies, even in the most distant future, must be excluded.[5]

The irrelevance of the subsequent March 24, 1945, declaration to the developing political realities in Viet Nam was not primarily due to these abstractions formulated in the wartime isolation of Brazzaville. Also, it seems clear that the statement on the future status of Indochina had not been issued because of desire for a program to deal with indigenous political movements in France's principal Far Eastern possession. Rather, the declaration had been made in anticipation of the hostile ideas of international trusteeship that General de Gaulle felt were likely to be submitted the following month to the San Francisco Conference for the organization of the United Nations.[6]

The French leader's fears were not idle ones, for in a press conference aboard the USS Quincy on February 23, 1945, on his return from Yalta, President Roosevelt had told a reporter of his concern for the future of Indochina:

> The first thing I asked Chiang was, "Do you want Indo-China?" . . . He said, "It's no help to us. We don't want it. They are not Chinese. They would not assimilate into the Chinese people." . . . With the Indochinese, there is a feeling they ought to be independent but are not ready for it. I suggested at the time, to Chiang, that Indochina be set up under a trusteeship—have a Frenchman, one or two Indochinese, and a Chinese and a Russian because they are on the coast, and maybe a Filipino and an American—to educate them for self-government. It took fifty years for us to do it in the Philippines.[7]

The fears of trusteeship stemming from these remarks and the urgency it engendered in French political plans for the future of Indochina were dissipated by two events. One was the death of President Roosevelt in April 1945. The other was the resolution of the "non-self-governing territories" problem at San Francisco. But with this pressure removed, the refinement of a political program in response to the situation in Viet Nam was not forthcoming. However, direct contact was established with Vietnamese exiles in south China through the French military mission headed by Jean Sainteny. Among his tasks was the preparation for the French return to Indochina. Yet this was plainly conceived as an administrative and operational problem rather than as a political one. Ironically, this approach was to be complicated by the Viet Minh leaders with whom Sainteny was in contact. Their proclamation of an independent government and the development of revolutionary power in Viet Nam probably could not have been anticipated in the spring of 1945.

By contrast, the fragmented and uncertain French approach to the future was easily perceived. Their lack of preparation was apparent in the fact that a governor-general for Indochina, Admiral d'Argenlieu, was not appointed until the Japanese were capitulating. Moreover, d'Argenlieu was judged a poor choice, since he had no experience in Asia and was not by choice a naval officer but had been a Carmelite monk before the war.[8] In addition to haphazardness in choosing its leadership, there seemed little or no coordination among the various French agencies concerned with the reoccupation. For example, when Jean Sainteny returned to Paris from Kunming in July 1945 he found the Ministry of Colonies indifferent to his mission. The ministry's attention was focused on Calcutta where its own mission was waiting to

return to Indochina.[9] Of great consequence to the French regaining their position was the absence of French armed forces in the Far East, a condition which resulted in the Chinese and British occupation of the two halves of Viet Nam. This obstacle to French reoccupation yielded political advantages to the Viet Minh, allowing them to expose the gap between France's postwar political goals for Indochina and their capacity to achieve them.

Viet Minh Reaction to French Position

As far as the Communists in Viet Nam were concerned, the French declaration of March 24, 1945, was a cynical act. In their view,

> It was only after the French surrender in Indochina [March 9, 1945] that the de Gaulle government agreed to issue the Proclamation recognizing the autonomy of Indochina. This hypocritical proclamation was, for the Indochinese peoples, as stupid as it was ridiculous because it was published just at the time when the French had no more authority in Indochina.[10]

Although their public pronouncements attacked the French and asserted the independence of Viet Nam, the Viet Minh quietly sought an accommodation with France. This trend had dated from July 1945, when a Viet Minh aide-mémoire was passed through an OSS intermediary. The document demanded that its proposals for independence to be "announced and observed by the French in their future policies in French Indochina."[11] Key to their demands was that "Independence. . . be given to this country in a minimum of five years and a maximum of ten." Moreover, the Viet Minh said that they were willing to accept a French governor until independence was granted.

In retrospect, these demands are so modest as to appear fantastic and to question the authenticity of the aide-mémoire. Could the Viet Minh at one time really have been willing to settle for gradual independence? . . . these demands were formulated well before the air drops of weapons to the Viet Minh, the sudden capitulation of the Japanese, and the seizing of Hanoi during the August Revolution. What they demonstrate is that France was not able to take advantage of the position of the Viet Minh while their demands were still modest. From this perspective the absence of a policy closely related to the political reality in Viet Nam was a striking liability.

Jean Sainteny did not have the luxury of hindsight in his negotiations with the Viet Minh for the French reoccupation of north Viet Nam. He did not even have the benefit of the support of his superior, the governor-general of Indochina, in these negotiations. In carrying the burden of the discussions with the Viet Minh from the summer of 1945 through the signing of the accords for the reoccupation until the outbreak of hostilities in December 1946, Sainteny did have the important asset of continuity, however. He had been in touch with Ho Chi Minh as early as July 1945, through the intermediary of Laurie Gordon, a Canadian businessman who had been trapped in wartime Indochina.[12] Although Sainteny did not meet Ho until after the August Revolution in Hanoi, he did send a French mission to the headquarters of the Viet Minh. During the autumn of 1945, Sainteny had periodic meetings with the Viet Minh leader, but due to the Viet Minh's preoccupation with the Chinese and the exile nationalists these meetings accomplished little. Not until January 1946, after Viet Minh elections and the beginning of serious bargaining on the Sino-French Treaty, did Sainteny's talks with Ho reach a meaningful stage.

One of the surprising aspects of these negotiations was Sainteny's discovery that Ho felt he needed the support of the French to maintain his power and to neutralize his opposition. These adversaries included not only the exile nationalists but also a vehement group of five men who formed the Tong Bo (Direction Committee), of the Viet Minh. In Sainteny's view the Tong Bo closely controlled the actions of Ho Chi Minh. Their overriding concern was symbolized for the French representative by the propaganda slogans they had plastered throughout Hanoi which read, "Independence or Death." By contrast, Ho's approach is pictured as being one of realistic moderation. Although he was no less deeply committed to independence, the Viet Minh leader did not demand it immediately or unconditionally.[13]

Explanations of the outbreak of hostilities in December 1946 place much emphasis on Ho's inability to secure sufficient concessions from the French to placate the Tong Bo extremists.[14] Whether Ho found it convenient to strike a moderate pose and thus use the extremism of his colleagues as a lever has not become clear. What is apparent is that the middle ground position became less and less tenable during the course of 1946, and the French position became progressively more intransigent. Without any meaningful response to their expectations of independence, the Viet Minh became increasingly aggressive. This polarization of positions led to a confrontation which threatened the very existence of the Viet Minh.

In the first months of 1946, Ho Chi Minh showed himself as well aware of the Viet Minh's limitations in strength and as eager to avoid a violent test of wills. Although the discussions concerning the French reoccupation were protracted, they were not conducted in an atmosphere of crisis. It was not until the signing of the Sino-French Treaty on February 28, 1946, that an accord with the Viet Minh became a matter of priority. A week before, on February 16, the basis for an accord had already been established through Ho Chi Minh's declaration of what Sainteny felt were not unacceptable conditions.[15] The task remained to convince Paris of their utility.

Attempts at Vietnamese-French Accord

General Leclerc, whose task was to achieve the military reoccupation of north Viet Nam, considered an accord with the Viet Minh to be indispensable. His first responsibility was for the approximately 30,000 French citizens north of the sixteenth parallel. Without adequate protection, they were in effect the hostages of the Viet Minh. A more fundamental consideration was the potential for protracted resistance by the Viet Minh armed forces. If such a conflict had broken out the only partially disarmed Japanese troops and the Chinese occupation troops could not have been expected to remain on the sidelines. Given his pacification mission in south Viet Nam, Leclerc could only spare 20,000 men for the reoccupation of the north. In this task the French general fully appreciated that if the almost 200,000 armed men of three nationalities in the north were to oppose him, the ten to one ratio against his troops could lead to their destruction.[16] In his postmortem report, Leclerc observed that "if we had found. . . a land risen up against us or simply in disorder, we could obviously have landed at Haiphong, but—I affirm categorically—the reconquest of Tonkin, even in part, would have been impossible." Moreover, the bloody encounter with the Chinese garrison at Haiphong, which the French experienced upon arrival on March 6, strengthened Leclerc's view that, "despite the accords of Chungking we are certain that 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."[17]

The possibilities of a negotiated accord with the Viet Minh concerning reoccupation were vastly increased with the resignation of the de Gaulle government at the end of January 1946.

With the return of party government the Socialist Marius Moutet took the place of Jacques Soustelle as Minister of Overseas France. This removed the principal source of strength in Admiral d'Argenlieu's program to reoccupy the north without conditions and to circumscribe the power of the Viet Minh in the process. General Leclerc did not neglect this sudden opportunity. He dispatched General Valluy on a mission to Paris to emphasize the necessity of negotiations and to underscore their urgency. After the first week in March the tides would make deep-draft French troopship landings at Haiphong harbor an impossibility. The need for a timely conclusion to the diplomatic bargaining with the Chinese and a resolution of the issues with the Viet Minh was grasped thoroughly in Paris. But Leclerc's success in persuading the authorities in France to his views merely provoked Admiral d'Argenlieu to increased efforts. On February 13, 1946, the admiral departed for Paris to argue his own case. Ironically, this left General Leclerc as acting governor-general of Indochina.[18]

The day following d'Argenlieu's departure, General Leclerc telegraphed Paris informing them of his belief that it was necessary to go to the extent of "pronouncing immediately the word 'independence,'" in an accord with the Viet Minh.[19] This word became such an emotional and political obstacle that it proved to be a key stumbling block in French efforts to define a stable relationship with Viet Nam. Both in the problems of reoccupation and in the negotiations in the years which followed, the word "independence" came to imply a complete and decisive break with previous political patterns. The French refused to use it until Russian and Chinese recognition of the Viet Minh in 1950 made it mandatory.

The possibility of using the word "independence" while at the same time devising subtle techniques for preserving the substance of French influence seems not to have been considered. This would have required a more specific political program than the French had formulated. In the absence of such a program they found it necessary to construct ad hoc solutions with the Viet Minh under the cross-pressure of competing French political cliques. These pressures did not allow for a careful definition of French interests in response to the conditions in Viet Nam and, lacking such a definition, France moved toward an armed conflict that was definitely not in its interest.

Paradoxically, it appears that Ho Chi Minh was more concerned with the word "independence" than with its substance. As he told the French journalist Jean-Michel Hertrich in 1945, "France and Viet Nam concluded a marriage a long time ago. The marriage has not always been happy, but we are not interested in breaking it. . . ."[20] Ho put it more specifically to Jean Sainteny when he said, "If we want to administer ourselves and if I ask you to withdraw your administrators, by contrast, I need your professors, your engineers, and your capital in order to build a strong and independent Viet Nam."[21]

Accords of March 6, 1946

By February 18, 1946, the French had defined the formula for the best solution that Leclerc could secure in his bargaining with Ho Chi Minh. It called for France to recognize the Republic of Viet Nam as, "A Free State in the Indochinese Federation and in the French Union."[22] This arrangement was much more qualified than Ho had expected and, consequently, he would not agree to it. Although Ho wished to continue conferring, hoping for a better formula, he did take some of the actions which Sainteny considered prerequisite to an accord. A coalition government was formed by the National Assembly in its first session since the elections of January 1946. At this point, Sainteny let it be known that the French had gone as far toward an accord as they would go. It was imperative that the French ships enter Haiphong harbor between March 5 and 7. If by this time there had been no agreement, the French

relief troops would have to disembark, aware of the consequences for the French hostages in Hanoi and for the political future of the Viet Minh. A little before sunrise on the morning of March 6, as the French flotilla was making its preparations for a landing, Hoang Minh Giam, a close confidant of the Viet Minh leader, came to Sainteny's residence to notify him that President Ho was ready to accept his conditions.

Out of this test of wills came a statement of accords about which Ho Chi Minh declared to Sainteny, ". . . it is you who have won; you know very well that I wanted much more than that—well, I understand also that one cannot have everything in a day."[23] The conclusion that Sainteny had won was only relative. If the March 6 accords did not recognize the independence which Ho Chi Minh had declared Viet Nam to have on September 2, 1945, they did bring the recognition of the legitimacy of his government. It sanctioned the existence of the parliament, treasury, and—most important of all—the Viet Minh army. Three other key points bearing on the future of the Viet Minh in the accord were: first, concerning the unification of Viet Nam, "the French government binds itself to carry out the decisions taken by the population through a referendum." In addition to this opening for the potentially peaceful extension of their power throughout Viet Nam; second, the Viet Minh also received a French commitment to future negotiations. These discussions were to bear "on the diplomatic relations of Viet Nam with foreign states; the future status of Indo-China; and French economic and cultural interests in Vietnam."[24]

Perhaps the accords' most substantial and immediate advantage to the Viet Minh was the third key point—an annex dealing with the military aspects of the French reoccupation and the disarmament of the Japanese. This document defined the relief forces for Viet Nam north of the sixteenth parallel as consisting of 10,000 Viet Minh and 15,000 French forces, including those troops who had been imprisoned by the Japanese or who had escaped and returned from China. These forces were to be placed under French command with Vietnamese representation, but the French elements were to be divided into three categories: (a) units guarding Japanese prisoners who would be repatriated within ten months or before, if all prisoners had been evacuated; (b) units charged with the maintenance of public order, a fifth of whom were to be relieved by the Vietnamese army every year until at the end of five years their mission would be terminated; (c) units charged with the defense of air and naval bases the length of whose mission was to be determined by conference.

Unlike their counterparts in the south, who never had a chance to negotiate with the French and who were forced into guerrilla warfare when public buildings were taken over in Saigon, the Viet Minh in the north were assured of a sanction against an overpowering buildup of French troops and a tenuous commitment to their withdrawal within five years. While this agreement facilitated the military reinstallation of France in north Viet Nam, it did not allow unquestioned predominance of French strength in the area. The Viet Minh had at least 25,000 men under arms at the time, although they were committing less than half of them to French operational control. The maintenance of this favorable balance of forces was theoretically guaranteed by the French agreement to limit their forces to 15,000 men. French troop strength was also limited because of the lack of fresh replacements for their prewar contingents still in the north. The Viet Minh were under no restraint to limit their forces by recruitment and training. As it became more and more apparent that the French were not going to move beyond the March 6 agreement to define areas of Vietnamese political autonomy, the Viet Minh doubled its armed force from its early 1946 strength.

Significance of Accords

The political turmoil which ensued during 1946 tended to obscure the meaningful character of the March 6 accords. These agreements resolved the thorny problem of the French reoccupation without resort to violence. This led to a conclusion of the Chinese occupation and the repatriation of the bulk of the Japanese. If these measures eliminated important resources for the expansion of the Viet Minh armed forces, the precise limitation on French military strength tended to balance the advantages. The recognition of the Viet Minh government was restricted by a careful evaluation of the revolutionary power it had been able to develop. At the same time, the accords provided an avenue for the expansion of the Viet Minh's power through bargaining rather than forcing them into protracted political conflict.

As a whole, the provisions of the accords were an effective political response to a revolutionary movement still in its formative stage. They institutionalized the power already developed and they offered the creation of new political institutions through which that power could be increased. Above all, they established a precedent and a framework for dealing with a revolutionary elite which was aware of the limitations to its strength and of the problems of developing more power.

Of even greater significance were the questions that the March 6 accords did not resolve. France's desire to preserve her position in Indochina remained stronger than her military capacity to achieve this goal. But this desire was also greater than France's political ingenuity to create institutions by which they could channel the strength of the Viet Minh without provoking them to general warfare. This was a corollary of the tenuous character of French interests in Indochina and the lack of decision concerning how to secure them through political relations with the Vietnamese. Largely because Indochina was its most pressing colonial problem, France felt compelled to transform its empire into an institution with more legitimacy in the postwar world. Thus Indochina created the French Union. Because Viet Nam was the most pressing problem within Indochina, the French felt obliged to remold Vietnamese ambitions by an institution which would allow them to maintain their influence among contiguous dependencies with quite different levels of political development. Thus Viet Nam created the Indochinese Federation.

Whether the Viet Minh could have been prevented from eventually undertaking warfare by political action alone is an open question. More to the point is the fact that in 1946 the Viet Minh had a level of political and military power that was more easily dealt with than at any other moment. It seems that the Viet Minh were not anxious to launch warfare against the French unless their alternatives were blocked. Ho Chi Minh's willingness to spend four months in futile bargaining in France at the crucial point in the Viet Minh's revolutionary development—from June through September 1946—seems clearly to have demonstrated this attitude.

THE ABSENCE OF FRENCH IDEAS FOR POLITICAL COMMUNITY WITH VIET NAM

The various reactions to the March 6 accords clearly defined the positions of the parties to the Viet Nam conflict. For General Leclerc, the French military reconquest of the north had not been a realistic option. "We never intended to launch an armed conquest of North Indochina. The Cochin Chinese experience demonstrated that to accomplish that, we would need forces much stronger than those which we now have," was Leclerc's analysis of the results. Moreover, "At the present time," he said, "there is no question of imposing ourselves by force on masses who desire evolution and innovation."[25] The accords clearly bore the stamp of

Leclerc's perspective. They had been reached under the coercive force of military power for the purpose of avoiding an armed clash and defining means for future agreements. While the Leclerc position was based straightforwardly on the objective reality which faced the French, the Vietnamese point of view was more complex.

The March 6 accords were a "Vietnamese Brest-Litovsk," Vo Nguyen Giap explained in an emotional speech to a Hanoi Crowd of 100,000. He told them that the truce with the Germans had been to stop their invasion of Russia so that the Soviets could reinforce their army and their political power. "We have especially negotiated in order to protect and reinforce our political, military, and economic position," said the Viet Minh military leader. Moreover, Giap asserted, the alternative to negotiation was a long-term resistance for which the Viet Minh was not then prepared. Furthermore,

> . . . at certain points where the revolutionary movement is not very deep many people have not taken it very seriously, and if we had prolonged the resistance, there would have been a collapse in certain sectors or a loss of fighting spirit. In continuing the military struggle, we would have lost our forces and gradually our soil. We would have only been able to hold several regions. . . .

Then Giap criticized the agreement because it did not contain the important word "independence." He stated, "they do not see that the independence of a country results from objective conditions and that in our struggle to obtain it, there are moments when it is necessary to be firm and others when it is necessary to be pliant."[26]

It was Ho Chi Minh who created the strongest reaction at the public meeting to explain the Franco-Vietnamese accords. He pointed out that Viet Nam had been independent since August 1945, but that no country had recognized them diplomatically. The March 6 accords, he reasoned, opened the way for international recognition, while they limited the French military strength in north Viet Nam to 15,000 for only five years' duration. However, it was on the basis of his personal prestige that the Vietnamese leader sought to crush all arguments, "I, Ho Chi Minh, I have always led you along the path of liberty, I have fought all my life for the independence of the Fatherland. You know that I would prefer death to selling out the country. I swear to you that I have not sold you out."[27]

Trends Toward Conflict

If the March 6 accords were to the Viet Minh a Brest-Litovsk, they were regarded as a Munich by Admiral d'Argenlieu and those of a Gaullist orientation in the French circles in Indochina. Although in public the French governor-general approved and praised the accords, his attitude in private was vehemently different. On March 8, less than a week after his return from consultations in Paris, d'Argenlieu told General Valluy, who had been sent by Leclerc to inform him of the details of the French landing at Haiphong, "I am amazed, yes, General, that's the word, I am amazed that France has in Indochina such a fine expeditionary force, and that its chiefs prefer to negotiate rather than to fight . . ."[28] D'Argenlieu matched these fighting words with action, but this also took the form of negotiations. The purpose of his bargaining was emphatically not to reach an accommodation with the Viet Minh. The admiral's initiatives were designed to circumscribe the Viet Minh and to check their ability to attain their goals.

The first indication of this trend was the statement by the French commissioner for Cochinchina, Jean Cedille, that the March 6 accords did not apply south of the sixteenth parallel. Although this was quickly disavowed by General Leclerc, Vo Nguyen Giap ordered the troops in Nam Bo to continue their guerrilla warfare against the French. Secondly, Dr. Nguyen Van Thinh was elected president of the provisional government of the Republic of Cochinchina on March 26, 1946, by the reconstituted version of the Colonial Council which had ruled the south before the war. While this act did not have any validity until recognized by France, it was the beginning of a separatist movement that would be d'Argenlieu's counterweight to the Viet Minh.[29]

The negotiations called for in the March 6 accords were set in motion by a communiqué signed by Admiral d'Argenlieu and Ho Chi Minh on board the governor general's flagship anchored off the coast northwest of Hanoi on March 24, 1946. This announced a preparatory conference to be held at Da Lat, a mountain resort in southern Viet Nam, during the beginning of April. It would conclude its discussions in time for a Vietnamese delegation to be dispatched to Paris before the end of May for "official definitive discussions."[30] This Da Lat conference gave the Viet Minh an occasion to demonstrate the broad nationalist base they had been able to establish by their championing of Vietnamese independence. Its delegation was led by Nguyen Tuong Tam, minister of foreign affairs and a leader of the VNQDD. Although it included two high-ranking party leaders, Vo Nguyen Giap and Duong Bach Mai, the bulk of the delegates were nonpolitical specialists in financial and technical problems. The composition of the Viet Minh delegation also probably reflected their belief that little of consequence could be decided before the departure of another delegation for Paris.

The key issue at Da Lat was the question of the unity of Viet Nam. In order to undercut the emerging French maneuver to proclaim the independence of Cochinchina, the Viet Minh got an unauthorized delegation into Da Lat from the south to support the position of unity of Viet Nam. This group included Pham Ngoc Thach, who had come to political prominence with the Advanced Guard Youth, and Nguyen Van Sam, a non-Communist journalist who was later assassinated by the Viet Minh. Although the Nam Bo representatives did not help the cause of unity, the Viet Minh delegation continued adamant in attacking this fundamental question. Meanwhile, the French delegation of technical experts was concerned with laying the groundwork for future discussions on such problems as customs regulations, economic development, and the role of the French language in Vietnamese education. Moreover, France was not to be budged easily on the question of Cochinchina. It was here that it had its major chance to preserve what it had built up in Indochina.

The French delegation at Da Lat argued that there were objective reasons for the autonomy of the south of Viet Nam. In their view, no natural unity existed between the south and the northern Tonkin Delta, which was considered to be geographically a part of the high plateau of Yunnan and Kwangsi. The French also pointed out that prior to the seventeenth century the Vietnamese had not come into Cochinchina. They also asserted that it was the French who had seen the great possibilities for the future development of the area and had invested capital there. As far as the d'Argenlieu administration was concerned, France would not tolerate a solution to the problems of Viet Nam that was contrary to the interests of the "Cochinchinese." Yet virtually the only people feeling a "Cochinchinese" identity were those who had profited from the French presence to become wealthy landholders, to gain a French education, and to receive French citizenship.

The Indochinese Federation, which had come closer to reality by the March 6 accords, would also provide a convenient means of recognizing the autonomy of Cochinchina. From d'Argenlieu's perspective, this federation would be useful in checking the spread of the Viet

Minh's political strength. He identified the source of their power as nationalism, a pervasive force which he feared would not only overrun Cochinchina but also the neighboring states of Cambodia and Laos. The Viet Minh political drive was equated with the physical expansion over the centuries of the Vietnamese southward from the Tonkin Delta and with their military forays westward to the countries on their border.

The tide of Vietnamese expansion was at its height when the French intervened in the middle of the nineteenth century. France's peaceful occupation of Laos and Cambodia can be attributed in large measure to the protection they guaranteed against Vietnamese "expansionism." Moreover, their fragmentation of Viet Nam into three "countries," with one of them, Cochinchina, being made a French colony, was designed to restrict the unity which the Vietnamese had painfully achieved. This colonial policy had the effect of encouraging regional and local forces which were latent in Vietnamese society. The revolutionary fervor which the Viet Minh had generated now threatened to overcome these parochial tendencies. In response, the French were arguing through d'Argenlieu's propaganda that nationalism in general, and Vietnamese nationalism in particular, was an outmoded nineteenth-century doctrine which the French were justified in opposing. Their purpose was avowed to be that of providing the benefits of the modern world to the people of Indochina without the complications of politics.

Rather than to channel the energies of the Viet Minh so that they might have been dissipated by the enormity of the task of developing revolutionary power, the admiral's policy was to meet them head on. In retrospect the adamancy of the opposition to the Viet Minh appears to have won for the Communist-led independence movement more adherents than they might otherwise have expected. Since nationalism in Viet Nam was essentially an anti-French reaction rather than a defined positive force, a policy of intransigence gave it increased substance and purpose. The paradoxical nature of general and parochial trends in Vietnamese politics in 1946 were summarized by General Leclerc's political adviser, Paul Mus. In a conversation with the governor general he offered the view that if the admiral tried to divide Viet Nam there would be a strong trend towards unity. If, on the other hand, he tried to unite Viet Nam he could expect a vigorous regionalism and parochialism.

The views of the governor general in Indochina reflected the feelings of the colonial interests there and the French-oriented Vietnamese elite in the south, rather than those of the Ministry of Overseas France (the former Ministry of Colonies) or the French Parliament. In fact, it was the unsettled political situation within France following the resignation of de Gaulle and the defeat of the proposed constitution on May 5, 1946, that permitted Admiral d'Argenlieu so much latitude. It was this condition that allowed factions to develop within the French administration in Indochina over a policy of concessions versus one of force. Sensing that these circumstances might also lead to his being checked again, as on March 6, the governor general wanted to be able to recognize the autonomy of Cochinchina before the Viet Minh delegation left for Paris at the end of May. But this required the ratification of the parliament and the backing of the Ministry of Overseas France. At that moment France had no parliament and was caught up in an election fever. Moreover, Marius Moutet, the Minister of Overseas France, was campaigning in his home district and was in no position to respond to d'Argenlieu's proposals even if he had wanted to do so.[31]

Recognition of the Republic of Cochinchina

Frustrated in his designs to restrict the Viet Minh through established procedures, Admiral d'Argenlieu took it on his own initiative to recognize the Republic of Cochinchina as a "free state having its own government, parliament, army and finances, being a part of the

Indochinese Federation and the French Union."[32] When this government was formally proclaimed in Saigon on June 1, 1946, two-thirds of the audience at the ceremony were, according to an observer, French military and civilians.[33] Their overattendance emphasized that the Cochinchinese Republic was a political force founded on some 8,000 large landholders, approximately 1,500 Vietnamese with French citizenship, and about 15,292 resident Frenchmen, all living in south Viet Nam.[34] D'Argenlieu had now checkmated Leclerc's move of March 6. They had both recognized autonomous governments at either end of Viet Nam. Moreover, each of these governments was to have a surprising capacity for endurance—surprising, because it was widely expected that the Viet Minh would be crushed militarily, and because the Associated State of Viet Nam which grew out of the Cochinchinese Republic was throught sure to fall from lack of popular support.

These two governments demonstrated some fundamental aspects of the revolution in Viet Nam. The fact that unrepresentative leadership elites could remain in authority in south Viet Nam was another indication that there was not a broad popular uprising throughout Viet Nam. But the inability of military force to eliminate the politically sophisticated and purposeful Communist elite was evidence that there was much more to the revolution than the protest of a discontented bourgeoisie and the intellectuals. At the outset, neither of these groups was able to predominate and the majority of the population remained unaffected. Yet, beyond the complexity of these characteristics, it seems clear that an institutionalization of political forces by French-initiated measures could have been possible during 1946.

In the absence of these institutions, the contending elites launched a violent competition to achieve political power. In this conflict, the population could not remain unaffected. They were the object of the competition in which the goal was a new structure of political power. Inevitably, there was a strong French opinion which did not believe that a thwarted elite could create a full-scale revolution, for this would require a political mobilization of the Vietnamese population at a magnitude that had never before been approached. Moreover, France had in Viet Nam, especially in the south, an elite through which it seemed possible to maintain their influence. A measured response to the convulsion in Viet Nam could have been devised by the French. They could have created institutions granting power to indigenous elites and permitting them opportunities for political mobilization on French terms. But this appeared to be unnecessary and the institutions seemed enormously difficult to construct. For this miscalculation France was to pay a dear price. Yet, as her officials approached the pressures in Viet Nam, they did not seem to be interested in dealing with them in ways that could be useful to France by institutionalizing the revolutionary process that had already been set in motion.

The Fontainebleau Conference

The opportunity for the French to respond to the Vietnamese revolution by devising new political institutions came in the summer of 1946. The "official definitive negotiations," called for by the Ho-d'Argenlieu communiqué of March 24, did not commence for more than a month after the Viet Minh delegation arrived in France. This delay was caused by the political instability out of which the Fourth French Republic was being created. It was not until July 6 that the conference began at the palace at Fontainebleau. From the outset, the tone and character of the discussion was significantly different from that of the Da Lat meeting. The delegation was almost exclusively composed of high-ranking Viet Minh leaders, headed by Ho Chi Minh. In the opening remarks, Pham Van Dong, Ho's chief lieutenant, vehemently attacked the policies of Admiral d'Argenlieu. He directed his protest against the formation of the Cochinchinese Republic and the military occupation of the central Viet Nam plateau which had taken place during June.[35]

Before the discussion had gone very far, d'Argenlieu posed another embarrassing problem. He called a second Da Lat conference to which he invited Cambodia, Laos, and Cochinchina, as well as observers from southern central Viet Nam (below the sixteenth parallel) and from the ethnic minorities. Their purpose was to examine the problems involved in the formation of the Indochinese Federation. The conference was announced on July 25, to be convoked on August 1, and it immediately had its effect on the deliberations at Fontainebleau. Pham Van Dong emphasized that the proposed meeting at Da Lat called into question the purpose of the Fontainebleau conference. He wondered if it would not be better to suspend the discussions in France until the ambiguity between the two conferences had been resolved.[36] The tense atmosphere of the conference was heightened further after an ambush of French troops by the Viet Minh in the north Viet Nam town of Bac Ninh on August 4, in which 12 French soldiers were killed and 41 wounded.[37]

Despite these tensions, the negotiations dragged on through August and into the first weeks of September, with the status of southern Viet Nam being the intractable point of the discussions. Finally, on the night of September 9-10, 1946, a modus vivendi was drafted which was a last effort at conciliation, but rather than resolving fundamental issues it discussed secondary problems without agreement on fundamentals. For example, French nationals were to be given preference in the employment of technicians and advisers by the Viet Minh government. Schools in Viet Nam would follow French programs. Viet Nam was to form a customs union with the Indochinese Federation. A commission was to be established to study postal, telegraph, and telephone communications between Viet Nam and the rest of the states of Indochina. All of these clauses, however, were conditional ones. They depended on what Viet Nam was to become politically. On this point there was an agreement to disagree, but at a later date.[38]

The story of the Fontainebleau negotiations tells much more about French colonial policies and domestic politics than it does about revolution in Viet Nam. More than two months of intense wrangling yielded inconclusive results which are best summarized in the last article of the modus vivendi. In it France and the Viet Minh,

> agree to seek together the conclusion of special agreements on all questions which may arise, in order to strengthen their friendly relations and prepare the way for a general final treaty. The negotiations will be resumed to this end as soon as possible and at the latest in January 1947.

In retrospect, it seems almost unbelievable that the French and the Viet Minh were discussing problems of telephone communications just three months before their armed confrontation in the streets of Hanoi. But the unreality of this modus vivendi was forceful evidence that two months of hard bargaining had not given the French any clearer conception of how they might come to terms with the revolution in Viet Nam. Lacking a consensus within their own circles, the French sought to defer the question.

Conclusion of Conference

When the final draft of the modus vivendi was considered on the morning of September 10, Pham Van Dong demanded that the agreement include the date and the modalities for a referendum on the status of Cochinchina, as was called for in the March 6 accords. He asserted that the Vietnamese delegation would not sign the document if it did not contain these details.[39] This reluctance was based on the Vietnamese delegation's fear of repercussions in Hanoi for having signed a modus vivendi without receiving the least assurances of their independence and unity. If such was the overriding concern of Pham Van Dong, there were other considerations

which Ho Chi Minh thought primary. He did not want to return to Viet Nam emptyhanded. He felt that without some sort of tangible shred of hope that the French would fulfill the March 6 accords there would be no means of stopping those within the Viet Minh who wanted to launch an all-out fight for independence.

Ho Chi Minh allowed the Viet Minh delegation, with Pham Van Dong at its head, to leave Paris for Hanoi. But within a day after their departure he had signed a modus vivendi lacking the conditions that Pham Van Dong had demanded. This was not done without substantial misgivings by the Viet Minh leader, who commented on his decision by saying, "I have just signed my death warrant."[40] Moreover, he pleaded that the insufficiency of the statement would make it difficult, if not impossible, to assuage the emotions of the Viet Minh leadership. To Jean Sainteny, who had come to France to facilitate the work of the Fontainebleau conference, he pleaded, "Don't let me leave this way; arm me against those who seek to surpass me. You will not regret it."[41] Prophetically, he covered his disappointment over the meager results of his negotiation with the assertion that, "If it is necessary for us to fight we shall fight. You will kill ten of our men, but we will kill one of yours and it is you who will finish by wearing yourself out."[42]

VIET MINH PREPARE FOR A SHOWDOWN WITH FRANCE

Since the first indication that the d'Argenlieu clique was not going to give a very broad interpretation to the March 6 accords, the Viet Minh had been preparing for the military showdown that their negotiators sought to avoid. One of their immediate concerns was that southern Viet Nam not be controlled by the French and separated from the rest of the country through lack of political and guerrilla activity to oppose them. Thus, the smoldering remains of the August Revolution in the south were fanned to a new intensity. By contrast, there was no significant military provocation north of the sixteenth parallel, with the exception of the Bac Ninh ambush in early August. This, it was felt, would have prejudiced the outcome of the conferences at Da Lat and Fontainebleau. However, upon the departure of Ho Chi Minh for France at the end of May, Vo Nguyen Giap, who then became the most potent leader in the country, began to build up the Viet Minh armed forces in the north. His goal was to be prepared for whatever contingencies the breakdown in negotiations might bring.

Guerrilla Terror Begins

Meanwhile, the guerrilla action south of the sixteenth parallel was being directed toward eliminating the village-level social and administrative leadership where there were Viet Minh forces to carry out this terror. Where the opportunity presented itself, French convoys and installations were ambushed. In these operations, the southern guerrilla forces were limited by two key factors. First, there was a divisiveness in the Nam Bo command which stemmed from the Viet Minh's continuing reliance on the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen forces. Secondly, the relative paucity of the Viet Minh's men and equipment, as compared with their resources in the north and the strength of the French in the south, was restrictive. By the end of 1946, the Viet Minh had only an estimated 25,000 men under arms south of the sixteenth parallel. A substantial portion of them, estimated at 5,000 men, was located in central Viet Nam between Da Nang and Nha Trang, which remained unoccupied by the French. This indicates that during the summer of that year the approximately 35,000 French troops concentrated in the Cochinchina region in the south were opposed by a guerrilla force of almost half their size.

Despite severe losses in weapons and casualties inflicted on them by the French, the Viet Minh Nam Bo forces were able to create widespread political instability. In the rural areas of the south this was achieved through the assassination and kidnaping of more than 368 village leaders during 1946. Shrewdly, the Viet Minh were able to direct their attacks at various levels to take advantage of changing opportunities. From late August until the cease-fire provisions of the modus vivendi went into effect on October 30, they concentrated their attacks on French posts and convoys. For example, there were 212 attacks on posts in the south during October, but only 17 in November. There were 84 ambushes in the month preceding the cease-fire and only 13 following it. After the cease-fire the Viet Minh then shifted their intensity to a policy of assassination. In the first two weeks of November, 17 village notables were killed in the south and 32 were reported missing. Before the outbreak of general hostilities, an additional 48 notables were killed.

The French Predicament

Under the terms of the modus vivendi cease-fire the French could not respond militarily to these attacks on village leaders without violating the agreement. At least this was what the Viet Minh maintained. Freed of the threat of reprisal and with the structure of rural society weakened by its loss of leaderhip, the Viet Minh would be able to expand their own political framework. Although the French intransigence over the modus vivendi had predictably strengthened the determination of the Viet Minh, ironically, it had not benefited the Cochinchinese Republic. Because of their effective tactics of infiltration and subversion, the Viet Minh could continue to extend their political influence in the south even when the French tried to check them militarily. The French predicament became increasingly clear.

In their policy of postponing negotiations, they were caught between the self-imposed sanctions against a military response to the Viet Minh on the one hand and the expansion of the independence movement's influence by means of political violence on the other. The delay in negotiating seemed certain to give the Viet Minh time to increase their strength, which would in turn make their demands for concessions more extensive and forceful. Since the French position already allowed for very little flexibility, the successful campaign of guerrilla terrorism in the south pressed the followers of Admiral d'Argenlieu to seek a showdown. In the period of diplomatic inactivity following the signing of the modus vivendi, d'Argenlieu chafed at the restrictions these agreements imposed. As the admiral began to prepare for a confrontation with the Viet Minh, the wisdom of the military development program of Vo Nguyen Giap became apparent.

Increase of Viet Minh Military Forces

When the Viet Minh delegation departed for the Fontainebleau conference the end of May 1946, the armed forces at their disposal north of the sixteenth parallel numbered approximately 31,000 men. Although estimates are conflicting, it appears that at this time there were approximately 20,000 loosely organized guerrilla forces in Cochinchina and that their number, generally balancing losses with new recruitment, was relatively stable during 1946. Six months later, as a consequence of a rapid program of expansion, the Viet Minh had about 100,000 men under their control throughout Viet Nam. Doubling their armed force in that short a period of time was obviously a spectacular organizational achievement for the Viet Minh. Yet it did not mean that they had created a uniformly disciplined and trained fighting force. There were, as should have been expected, strong regional variations in size and quality.

While force levels in the far south remained unchanged, the greatest increase in military strength occurred in north Viet Nam, where most of the twofold increase in quantity was concentrated. Central Viet Nam in the area of Quang Ngai and Qui Nhon was another location of energetic organizational activity. In this central area it was estimated that the Viet Minh had about 25,000 out of 65,000 men who could be termed regulars when the armed confrontation came in December 1946. The greatest concentration of regulars, approximately 40,000, was in Tonkin. Supplementing the regulars there were about 15,000 troops of secondary quality in north and central Viet Nam and about 20,000 poorly armed guerrillas in Cochinchina.

The organization of such a force was all the more remarkable for the fact that few of its members had received military training before joining the Viet Minh. There were four sources for Viet Minh forces with previous military experience. First, the most loyal and seasoned of them all were the veteran Viet Minh guerrillas, numbering a maximum of 5,000 persons. They had been organized by Vo Nguyen Giap and Chu Van Tan in the mountain areas of north Viet Nam before August 1945. Another element in the small nucleus was a group of about 4,000 men who had been recruited by the Japanese for a volunteer armed force after March 9, 1945. There was also a group of approximately 3,000 men who had served with the French Army in Europe and other parts of the empire and who had returned home to join the Viet Minh. Of potential, but uncertain, utility to the Viet Minh were the 24,000 members of the French-led militia force, the Garde Indochinoise. They were selected by the Viet Minh with great care because of their suspected psychological commitment to their old units. This was also the attitude toward the approximately 55,000 men who had served with the French colonial army in Indochina during the Japanese occupation.

French vs. Vietnamese Troop Loyalties

There is no accurate indication of how many experienced military men joined the Viet Minh from the Garde Indochinoise, or from service as regulars with the French Army. It would have required their complete defection, a total of 79,000 men, in order to have accounted for the expansion of the Viet Minh armed forces without popular mobilization. On the basis of fragmentary information it seems that the Garde Indochinoise veterans were more likely volunteers than were the regulars among the Vietnamese in the French Army. This seems true because army units were concentrated at certain key locations and had a more distinctly military appearance than their militia counterparts. At least 3,100 of the 55,000 showed themselves disciplined enough to follow their French officers into Chinese exile when the Japanese coup de force occurred. The Garde Indochinoise, however, was scattered throughout the country in small units, with few French-command personnel, and with a local paramilitary rather than military role. The militiamen made almost no attempt to retreat into China or to oppose the Japanese.

Beyond these organizational factors there are other reasons why it appears that there was no wholesale transfer of loyalties by those Vietnamese with French military backgrounds. Not only was suspicion of the Viet Minh a barrier but also there was no universal reaction against the French regime in Viet Nam. For example, in the midst of the revolutionary fervor in the summer of 1946, Vietnamese accounted for approximately 6,300 men out of the 35,000 French forces in Viet Nam south of the sixteenth parallel. Although it is impossible to determine whether these 6,300 were part of the 55,000 who had previously served with the French during the occupation, it seems likely that they were. This impression is based on the strong trend of indigenous cooperation with the colonial regime in the military sphere. During November and December 1946, the French were able to recruit an additional 18,000 Vietnamese, bringing

them into their ranks as trained troops by June 1947. Moreover, nearly 12,000 partisans were recruited for counterguerrilla duty and a militia of 8,700 was organized. Before the end of 1947, Vietnamese troops composed two-thirds of the French forces south of the sixteenth parallel.

While this French competition with the Viet Minh for the loyalties of Vietnamese military recruits yielded the best results in the south, their success was not confined there. As a consequence of their continued role in the Indochina War, by the spring of 1954, there were almost 400,000 Vietnamese fighting against the Viet Minh under French leadership. This French capacity to mobilize substantial Vietnamese manpower for military purposes, at the beginning as well as at the conclusion of the war, suggests an important commentary on the revolution in Viet Nam. Since the military recruitment of the Viet Minh was a close corollary of their program of political mobilization, they were severely restricted by the continuing ability of the French to secure the support of widespread segments of Vietnamese society. Although there was broad opposition to France in Viet Nam and there was much deterioration in the structures of social commitment, there were still means of organizing political structures around the old colonial regime. Though this did not minimize the revolutionary character of Vietnamese society, it did mean that the decay of the old regime was not thorough and that the form of a new order was far from complete. This characteristic of revolutionary politics in Viet Nam became clearer as the two opponents worked to establish increasingly larger military forces.

Viet Minh Military Organization

In addition to the political restrictions the Viet Minh faced, there were factors of internal military organization which also tested their capacity as a revolutionary movement. Even had there been a mass defection of the 79,000 French-trained Vietnamese military men, they would not have brought with them an officer corps or a noncommissioned officer corps sufficient to provide the encadrement for a fighting force of 100,000 men. Moreover, it was undoubtedly the officers, the more privileged Vietnamese among the French troops, who were the most committed to their units. Even the existing Vietnamese officer corps was too small for Viet Minh requirements. Among the 55,000 Vietnamese in the French colonial army in Indochina less than 1 percent were officers, 27 being recognized as regulars and 23 as reserves, while 2,342—about 5 percent of the total—were noncommissioned officers.

In order to meet their leadership requirements, the Viet Minh established training schools in the town of Tong, northwest of Hanoi in the upper Red River valley on the site of a former French base, and at Quang Ngai in central Viet Nam. At both of these locations, Japanese instructors played an extremely important role. The instructors at Tong were part of Lieutenant Colonel Mukaiyama's "Japanese Organism for Collaboration and Aid for the Independence of Viet Nam." The 300-man group at Quang Ngai was the same one that had set up arsenals under the direction of Major Saito. It appears that by the end of 1946, these two schools had been able to train 1,500 noncommissioned officers. Although the number of officers graduated, if any, is not available it would seem that it was clearly insufficient to meet the Viet Minh's leadership requirements. In order to provide leadership for their 80,000-man main force, it seems reasonable to expect that the Viet Minh would have needed at least 10 percent officers, or 8,000, and about 18,000 noncommissioned officers, or 25 percent of their total strength. There is little evidence to suggest that they had this level of experienced personnel.

This situation placed an especially heavy burden on those Viet Minh military leaders who had received their training through the channels of revolutionary politics. Of the prominent

military chiefs of the Viet Minh at least five had experience in China, either at the Whampoa Military Academy or with Chinese Communist guerrilla units. Two of these Whampoa graduates were given special responsibilities in developing the Viet Minh armed force. One of them, Nguyen Son, was placed in charge of the central Viet Nam operational and training command at Quang Ngai. There, with his Japanese colleagues, he trained noncommissioned officers and organized two units of undetermined strength which were called "divisions." During the gestation period of 1946, Nguyen Son had as his command deputy another Chinese-trained Viet Minh officer, Le Thiet Hung. In a position analogous to that of Nguyen Son was Vong Thua Vu, another Whampoa graduate, who was in charge of military training at the upper Red River base of Tong.

Perhaps the best indication of the various predominant elements in the Viet Minh military tradition is demonstrated in the backgrounds of the six men who were chosen to command the infantry divisions which slowly began to emerge from guerrilla units in 1949. Two of them were men with Chinese military training. Two others were of Tho origin and had risen through the guerrilla movement started by Giap in the Tonkin mountains during the Japanese occupation. One was a former noncommissioned officer in the French Army. The remaining division commander had progressed through the revolutionary movement inside Viet Nam after 1946 without having had any outside military training.

The character of this latter-day military structure reflected some of the particular features of the Viet Minh's revolutionary politics. The emergence of the Tho generals betrayed a continuing reliance on this key mountain minority for manpower as well as bases. The Chinese background of officers given vital training and operational responsibilities, in conjunction with Japanese deserters, recalls the role of external aid in the expansion of the Viet Minh force. Whether or not the approximately 80,000 weapons obtained through the aid of the Chinese and Japanese were a limit to their manpower recruitment, it does indicate that their men were relatively well provided for in armament. Also, this profile of their division commanders indicates from another perspective that the development of the Viet Minh military strength depended on the leadership of men without extensive prior experience. Moreover, their mobilization of a 100,000-man armed force in a little over a year was not only a spectacular achievement, it was a vital prerequisite if the revolutionary movement were to be sustained. Against the pressures of the French the Viet Minh's ability to field a fighting force of this magnitude stood out as a striking claim to legitimacy.

Measured against the approximately 350,000 men that the Viet Minh had brought into their battle force by 1954, this initial achievement gives evidence of the capacities that the Viet Minh were to demonstrate on numerous occasions in stalemating the French militarily. By the autumn of 1946, the Viet Minh had established a unique military position. They had increased their armed forces to a larger size than the French then had in Viet Nam. More important to their strategy, they had expanded their strength to approximately 75,000 men north of the sixteenth parallel where the French were restricted by the March 6 accords to 15,000 men. With the continued effectiveness of the guerrillas in Cochinchina, the French were caught in a double-pronged strategy. Giap had done his work well. Through his efforts the Viet Minh were prepared to wait out the hiatus in diplomatic bargaining or to resist the initiatives of d'Argenlieu.

BEGINNING OF REVOLUTIONARY WAR

The trend toward a French confrontation with the Viet Minh was not averted by the Fontainebleau conference and the signing of the modus vivendi. Indeed, the trend was

purposefully sustained by the French high commissioner in Indochina. Admiral d'Argenlieu's second Da Lat conference in August had created much hostility among the Viet Minh because there was no masking the event as a transparent attempt to bolster the prestige of the Cochinchinese Republic. This was followed by another provocative action which the admiral initiated just as the modus vivendi was being signed. On September 10, 1946, he ordered the French commissioner for Tonkin to establish control over customs collection in north Viet Nam.[43] In particular, d'Argenlieu wanted to bring to an end the freedom with which the Viet Minh had been able to use the port of Haiphong.

Concerning this issue the modus vivendi had stated, "Viet Nam forms a customs union with the other countries of the Indochinese Federation. Consequently, there will be no internal customs barriers and the same tariffs will be applied everywhere on entry and departure from Indochinese territory."[44] However, the Viet Minh did not regard this as superseding the March 6 accords which recognized their government as having the right to maintain a treasury. In addition, the modus vivendi called for the formation of a coordinating commission on customs. D'Argenlieu's action would seem to have prejudiced the work of such a commission before it could be established. Not unexpectedly, his initiative caused a violent reaction by the Viet Minh. On November 14, the Vietnamese National Assembly had passed a resolution demanding that France "respect the customs sovereignty" of Viet Nam.[45] Before their demands could be pressed further, events brought the issue to a head.

The Fighting Begins

The incident that was to set off a chain reaction leading to the general conflagration between France and the Viet Minh occurred on November 20. A boat belonging to a Chinese trader bringing motor oil into the port of Haiphong was confiscated by French authorities. As they were towing the craft away from its mooring, a vehicle with Vietnamese militiamen called Tu Ve approached the scene and opened fire on the French. Although no one was injured in the exchange of fire, the noise attracted additional Vietnamese forces. They arrested a French officer and two enlisted men who were trying to locate the storehouse of goods taken from the boat, which they considered contraband. In the ensuing attempts to liberate the French personnel, fighting broke out with great intensity and, before it subsided during the night, twenty French soldiers were killed and twenty wounded.

During the course of the following day a cease-fire agreement was reached in Hanoi between French and Vietnamese representatives. This was known by the name of its signers as the Lami-Nam agreement. At the same time Admiral d'Argenlieu, then in Paris for consultations, is reported to have instructed his deputy in Saigon, General Valluy, to use force to settle the Haiphong incident. Before orders could be given, the fighting had stopped. But the situation soon flared again. Whether by coincidence or in retaliation, another incident occurred at the border town of Lang Son on November 21. A French team attempting to locate the graves of their comrades killed by the Japanese on March 9, 1945, was fired on by the Viet Minh. In an hour and a half of fierce combat eighteen French were killed or wounded.

Immediate French Reactions

Despite the response from the French military representatives in the north that measures were being taken to resolve the crisis, the high command in Saigon overruled these officials. General Valluy feared that incidents might multiply while negotiations were being conducted. Therefore he gave directly to Colonel Debes, the French commander in Haiphong, the following order:

> It appears clearly that we are up against premeditated aggressions, carefully staged by the Vietnamese regular Army which no longer seems to obey its government's orders. Under these circumstances, your commendable attempts at conciliation. . .are out of season. The moment has come of giving a severe lesson to those who have treacherously attacked you. Make use of all the means at your disposal to master Haiphong and so bring the leaders of the Vietnamese to a better understanding of the situation

On November 22, Colonel Debes informed his Vietnamese counterpart in Haiphong that, in view of the violations of the Lami-Nam agreement, he was demanding that the Viet Minh forces evacuate the Chinese quarter of the city before 9 o'clock on the morning of the 23rd. In responding to Debes' letter the Vietnamese commander denied all of the French officer's charges and called his attention to the continuing negotiations in Hanoi which had, early on the morning of the 23rd, reached an agreement for the reestablishment of a mixed guard at the railroad station in Haiphong. This exchange of letters was followed by another set in which Debes repeated his accusations and demands and the Vietnamese commander denied them. The verbal battle was ended by the French commander who gave the order to open fire at 1005 hours on the morning of the 23rd. This unleashed not only a bombardment by ships of the French fleet in Haiphong harbor, but also by marine artillery and strikes by fighter aircraft. Before the day was over, the Viet Minh forces had been neutralized and about 6,000 persons, including civilians fleeing the town, had been killed.

After this event, the atmosphere in north Viet Nam was supercharged with suspicion and hostility on both sides. One important reaction in France to mitigate the tension was the naming of Jean Sainteny as a special envoy with full civil and military powers in north Viet Nam. Because of his close relations with Ho Chi Minh it was felt in Paris that Sainteny could do much to alleviate the bad feeling caused by the Haiphong incident. But when he returned to Hanoi on December 2, the newly reappointed French commissioner for Tonkin found the situation desperate. However, it seemed widely accepted that the reciprocal confidence between Ho and Sainteny could still have served to reestablish calm and could have prevented the clash that otherwise appeared inevitable.[46] Yet, if this were to occur, decisions would have to be made in Paris on the content of negotiations to prevent further incidents and on the future of the broader agreements called for in the modus vivendi. But France still faced the momentous problems of domestic politics, which had shunted the Indochina controversy to the sidelines of decision making.

While Paris seemed to want to avoid a showdown it also appeared unable to control the largely independent actions of Admiral d'Argenlieu. Although Sainteny's belated mission was indicative of a desire for conciliation, he was not specifically authorized to take any new initiatives. In a letter of December 8 to his father-in-law, the former governor general of Indochina and former President of France Albert Sarraut, Sainteny expressed his own predicament and at the same time perceptively summarized the French problem in Indochina,

> . . .all the ground gained before and by the 6 March [accords] is lost. Everything has to be done again. . .we are here to execute orders, but we must receive these orders. France ought to know if it wants to conserve its Empire and how it expects to do it. It is necessary to abandon for a few moments the preoccupations of narrow minded politicians and give the orders to those who are attempting to save it. There is not a moment to lose. . . .[47]

Even as Sainteny wrote these lines, the city of Hanoi seemed, at least to one observer, to be ". . .a city preparing for disaster."[48] Shady streets were being barricaded with trees felled

across them, roadblocks had isolated the city from the surrounding countryside, and wide segments of the civilian Vietnamese population had fled the northern capital. "No one in his right mind wants fighting in Indochina," was certainly a widely held view, but in a dispatch filed three days before the clash it appeared that "the prospect of it is increasingly sinister unless irresponsible violence and bickering over technicalities can be curbed."[49]

Landing of French Legionnaires Spurs War

One of the key "technicalities" was the landing of a French Foreign Legion battalion on December 5, 1946, at Da Nang, without consulting the Viet Minh.[50] Although under the tense circumstances consultation might have been considered unexpected, the action was a violation of the March 6 accords as well as the spirit of the modus vivendi. Obviously, these reinforcements accelerated the trend toward a military confrontation. Even though Paris had reaffirmed its recognition of the September 14 modus vivendi as the legal basis of their relations with the Viet Minh, there was little confidence in this pronouncement in Hanoi. This reaffirmation was coupled with an announcement that France was going to increase its total armed strength in Indochina because of the situation created by the Haiphong incident.[51]

This increase in French military strength north of the sixteenth parallel and the indication of a continued expansion of their armed forces in Indochina was an unmistakable development. It must have suggested to the Viet Minh leadership that they had little to gain by deferring whatever action they planned in retaliation against the French. Their advantage of holding the French forces to 15,000 men as prescribed in the March 6 agreements would certainly be lost in this French buildup. By July 1946, there were 67,000 Frenchmen and Legionnaires under arms in all of Indochina. The 18,000 additional Vietnamese recruits inducted in November and December 1946 would bring the French military strength up to about 95,000 men by the early spring of 1947.

The training of these recruits and the announced dispatch of additional forces from France meant a timelag in the buildup. In the estimated six months before this expansion could be completed, the Viet Minh still had an important advantage from the March 6 accords. This came from the scattered pattern in stationing the 15,000-man French contingent in north Viet Nam. Although one-third of their strength--5,000 men—was concentrated around Hanoi, the remainder were dispersed throughout the territory in detachments of a thousand men or less. This pattern increased the vulnerability of the reoccupation forces, which were under restrictions to remain in garrisons at fixed points. Even though the approximately 75,000 Viet Minh under arms were clearly inferior in both training and equipment to the French, they would never again have so favorable a balance of forces. With the mounting pressure of French military expansion, as well as their inflexibility in negotiations, the Viet Minh had few durable advantages. Since there seemed no foreseeable improvement in their relations with the French, time was against the Viet Minh.

Viet Minh React

Of more immediate concern than the gradual expansion of their military force was the fear that the French would launch a coup d'état in Hanoi similar to the one that had broken the hold of the revolutionary movement in Saigon on September 25, 1945. Whether or not the Viet Minh were aware of them, it appears certain that there were several French contingency plans for the seizure of Hanoi. What the Viet Minh did discover at Haiphong in December 1946 was a directive issued by General Valluy more than seven months before, on April 10, 1946, which

required the French garrisons in north Viet Nam to gather information in order to be prepared to neutralize local Viet Minh forces by surprise.[52] Obviously, this aroused the suspicions of the Viet Minh to a new height. In particular, Vo Nguyen Giap became adamant in his advocacy of the view that "The best means of not being surprised is to strike first. . . ."[53] Thus, on December 7, in response to the landing of the French Foreign Legion battalion at Da Nang, Giap issued a directive ordering his forces to be prepared for a "preventive coup" by December 12.

In the midst of the gathering storm a brief ray of hope was seen by the Viet Minh in mid-December as a result of the election of Leon Blum to head a new French government. Their expectations stemmed from an article that Blum had written before his election in a Socialist newspaper, Le Populaire, on December 10, 1946. In it he had said, ". . . There is one way and only one way of preserving in Indochina the prestige of our civilization, our political and spiritual influence, and also of our material interests which are legitimate: it is sincere agreement [with Viet Nam] on the basis of independence. . . ."[54] Ho Chi Minh reacted by dispatching a message on December 15 to the new French Socialist premier which called for: (1) the return of French and Viet Minh troops to the positions they had held prior to November 20 in Lang Son and Haiphong; (2) the withdrawal of the troops landed at Da Nang by the French on December 5; and (3) the cessation of French mopping-up operations in Cochinchina. The substance of the message was virtually the same as that of a telegram sent by Jean Sainteny shortly after his return to Hanoi and to which there was no response. Whether a direct appeal to the new French premier might have averted the clash will never be known. Ho's message was held up in Saigon by French authorities and did not reach Paris until December 26, seven days after the fighting had begun in Hanoi.[55]

Meanwhile, beginning on December 17, a series of incidents involving the Viet Minh self-defense militia, the Tu Ve, and French units in Hanoi resulted in several deaths on both sides. On the morning of December 19, 10,000 Viet Minh troops were grouped in three sections on the outskirts of Hanoi and an approximately equal number of militiamen were alerted that an attack would be launched that evening. At the same time the French commander for north Viet Nam, General Morlière, demanded that the Tu Ve be disarmed as an indication of the peaceful intentions of the Viet Minh. This demand was the reason given later by Ho Chi Minh as the instigation of the outbreak of the fighting, for it was considered an ultimatum.[56] Before noon on the nineteenth, Ho sent a letter to Sainteny in which he asked the French commissioner to search for a way to ameliorate the ominous climate developing in Hanoi.[57] General Morlière responded sympathetically to this spirit of relaxing tensions by acceding to Vo Nguyen Giap's request that a part of the French troops be given leave from their posts. For the first time in about 15 days, over 1,200 French soldiers were allowed to visit the cafés and cinemas of Hanoi.[58]

Outbreak of General Hostilities

As the tense day of December 19 was moving toward dusk, a Eurasian agent of the French who had infiltrated the Viet Minh armed forces informed his superiors that the Vietnamese were preparing a coup de force at 8 o'clock that evening. Shortly after receiving this news a letter arrived from the Viet Minh indicating that they were prepared to hold a meeting on the following morning to consider the demand of General Morlière to disarm the militia. Whether this was just a ruse to keep them off balance the French could not be sure. Yet it was a great relief to their military command to hear the clocks of Hanoi sound the hour of eight without incident. Four minutes later the city was plunged into darkness as the central power station was taken over by the Viet Minh, followed by fierce fighting in the shadowy streets.[59]

Although the exact moment for the outbreak of hostilities may not have been chosen until very soon before the attack, there was little question that there had been substantial preparation. The Vietnamese and Chinese quarters of Hanoi had been well stocked with food and ammunition. Holes had been cut between adjoining houses to facilitate passage through. Tunnels to points outside the city had also been carefully prepared. These provisions made it possible for elements of the Tu Ve to hold out for almost two months before the French were able to make themselves complete masters of the city on February 19, 1947.[60] After three weeks of fighting against the estimated 10,000 Tu Ve, the 5,000-man French garrison was able to lift the state of siege that had been proclaimed when the fighting broke out. At the same time the Hanoi-Haiphong highway, the veritable lifeline for food and supplies of the 5,000 French civilians in Hanoi, was reopened.[61]

The garrisons in the other north Viet Nam locations were not quite so fortunate. Hue was under constant attack until reinforcements arrived to drive off the Viet Minh on February 5.[62] Less fortunate still was the French detachment at Vinh, a central Viet Nam town 155 miles south of Hanoi, which capitulated to the Viet Minh on December 21. The reinforced garrison at Da Nang was the object of a fierce Viet Minh attack but it was able to hold both the town and the airfield there. Viet Minh attempts were also made to take the Red River Delta towns of Bac Ninh, Phu Lang Thuong, and Nam Dinh, with the latter being under the most severe pressure until March 12, 1947, when a ground column arrived from Hanoi.[63]

These attacks served to demonstrate that the Viet Minh were capable of coordinating their military operations over all Viet Nam. Moreover, these operations against the French garrisons in the north were matched by intensification of the guerrilla war in the south. Before two months had passed, the French in north Viet Nam recorded almost 10 percent casualties, with 1,555 men reported killed or wounded from December 19, 1946, to February 7, 1947.[64] Although this was far from devastating the French armed forces, it was probably also far from being an accurate figure of their losses.

General Leclerc's fears that the Viet Minh might withdraw to the countryside for guerrilla tactics were confirmed. Nonetheless, it seems that there was no real change in thinking caused by the December 19 events in Hanoi. In its aftermath, Marius Moutet, the Minister for Overseas France, was quoted as saying that "Before there can be any negotiation it will be necessary to get a military decision."[65] In a special sense this statement was correct. However, the military decision did not come for another seven years. When it did occur it was the Vietnamese who did the deciding, and the ensuing negotiations at Geneva were on their terms and not those of the French.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: THE ORIGINS OF REVOLUTION

FRANCE AND THE ORIGINS OF REVOLUTION IN VIET NAM

France did not seem to realize that at the end of World War II Viet Nam was in the midst of a revolution that French colonial policies had done much to stimulate. Moreover, France remained unaware that this revolution had brought about a configuration of power which made colonial rule anachronistic. Instead, the French appear to have calculated that the Viet Minh and other groups were so weak militarily that they could easily be brought under control by force of arms without heeding their political demands. Although General Leclerc had tried to warn his fellow countrymen what costs a military occupation of Viet Nam would require, his assessment was given little credence. Had Frenchmen known that their military action would claim vast resources badly needed for France's postwar development, as well as the lives of more than 75,000 of their soldiers over nine years of war, they might have sought alternatives.[1] Since their calculations were so myopic that they could not foresee the tragedy that lay ahead, they chose to try to crush the revolution rather than to seek ways of sharing political power with the Vietnamese.

As if to show how little interested they were in a political settlement with the Viet Minh, the French made a final cynical gesture in the spring of 1947 before the first Indochina War began in earnest. In a move dictated largely by domestic political considerations, the newly appointed French High Commissioner, Émile Bollaert, who had replaced the intransigent Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu, tried to display apparent flexibility by sending an emissary to Ho Chi Minh. The purpose of the mission was ostensibly to satisfy the Socialist members of the French coalition government that contact with the Viet Minh leader was being maintained. But the effect of the undertaking was to demand the virtual unconditional surrender of the Viet Minh. Chosen for the mission was Paul Mus who, several months earlier, had agreed to become Bollaert's political adviser in the hope that he might contribute to averting a full-scale conflict between the French and the Vietnamese. Paradoxically, Mus, a scholar and teacher who enjoyed wide respect among the Vietnamese for his service to education in Viet Nam before World War II, was to be yet another agent of French intransigence. He was also the last Frenchman to talk with Ho Chi Minh until after the Viet Minh victory in 1954.

When Paul Mus set off by foot from Hanoi in May 1947 to walk through the Viet Minh lines in search of Ho Chi Minh, he was given no new terms with which he might initiate a more fruitful round of discussions. Instead, he was instructed to inform Ho that the conditions for further discussion with the French would be for the Viet Minh to disarm [illegible] troops, permit free circulation of French troops throughout all Vietnamese territory, [illegible] rate in predetermined perimeters all Viet Minh soldiers once they were disarmed, return all hostages, and deliver into French hands all non-Vietnamese within Viet Minh ranks. After he reached the mountain redoubt in the hills of northern Viet Nam where the Viet Minh had its headquarters, Mus conveyed these terms directly to Ho in a private discussion between the two men. Without immediately responding to the conditions Mus had brought, Ho turned the conversation in a leisurely manner to his impressions of the future of the French Union. He felt that if it were to become

a reality it had to be based on the mutual respect of the parties involved. Then, abruptly, without having consulted any of his colleagues in the Viet Minh hierarchy, Ho terminated the discussion by saying, "In the French Union there is no place for cowards; if I accept these conditions I would be one."[2]

While a willingness to renew negotiations with the Viet Minh could have averted a war, it would not have led to any immediate resolution to the political problems of Viet Nam. Indeed, it was because these dilemmas of sharing political power were so difficult to resolve that the less ambiguous road to war seemed so attractive. Perhaps more than anyone else involved, Ho Chi Minh sought to avoid this road because he realized that the Vietnamese people were not only unprepared militarily for war but, more important, they were not unified politically. In the sixteen years since its founding, the Indochinese Communist Party under Ho's leadership had been unable to establish a countrywide political organization free from parochial pressures or strong enough to mobilize unchallenged political power. Undoubtedly Ho had the discouraging experience of the precipitous revolt of the Communist Party in southern Viet Nam in 1940, as well as its hasty action in 1945, to remind him of the limitations in launching a countrywide resistance against France. Still, the Indochinese Communist Party had done more to bring the Vietnamese people into a unified political movement through the Viet Minh front than had any other group. If Ho Chi Minh could not get France to recognize the legitimacy of this power—meager though it was in relation to the armed strength of France—then he had no choice but to fight.

The fact that the Viet Minh were strong enough to challenge the French but not powerful enough to throw them out of Viet Nam was an indication of the relative strength of the revolutionaries as well as the diversity of the origins of revolution. Because the Viet Minh had been unable to surmount the parochial, especially regional, divisions in Vietnamese society, the revolutionary pressures they could bring to bear against the French were limited. Although these parochial divisions had traditionally been barriers to Vietnamese political unity, colonially sponsored social changes had tended to reenforce them, making them even more significant obstacles. As well as buttressing existing social cleavages these social changes, through which France had brought limited modernization to Viet Nam, also produced many pockets of potential political power. But because of its localized character this potential power was extremely difficult to mobilize. Spasmodic uprisings confined to local areas were indicative of the existence of revolutionary potential in the decades before Japanese intervention. Yet the swiftness and and effectiveness of the colonial regime in crushing these revolts meant that there was little revolutionary structure within which this potential might have been transformed into more extensive revolutionary organization.

Without a determined and effective leadership no incipient revolutionary movement—in Viet Nam and elsewhere—has been successful in moving beyond sporadic and isolated terror to make a sustained bid for governmental power. Consequently, incumbents who place all their emphasis on crushing pockets of revolt but who fail to prevent the formation of a disciplined revolutionary leadership are overlooking the long-range source of their difficulties. With few exceptions those who become revolutionaries are politically skilled individuals whose talents are potentially available to the incumbent government. This was especially true in Viet Nam, where the revolutionaries were almost exclusively the product of the colonial education system which the French had established to provide a trained body of functionaries for their commerce and administration.

If the opportunities in commerce and governmental administration had been extensive enough to have given the rising generations of French-educated Vietnamese a stake in the continuation of colonial rule, it is conceivable that they might never have sought the path of

revolution. But prior to the Japanese occupation colonial institutions offered little upward mobility or expanding opportunity. Indeed, institutions which were sources of employment for educated Vietnamese remained relatively static in size and number, primarily because of budgetary limitations. But the paucity of colonial revenues merely reflected restrictions on colonial economic growth. Industry in France feared the loss of export markets if Viet Nam became highly industrialized and consumer goods were manufactured locally.[3] Because such policies gave colonial society a static quality, sharp antipathies developed between the French directors of colonial institutions and their Vietnamese subordinates. No matter what their educational background, individual Vietnamese had little prospect of rising to positions where institutional policy was made. For most of those who became revolutionaries it was clear that their own opportunities for advancement were inseparably bound up with eliminating French rule in Viet Nam.

Not all Vietnamese, of course, were excluded from positions of privilege and influence in Viet Nam's colonial society. For those who had become large landholders, prosperous merchants, or high-ranking bureaucrats, and had capped their achievements by becoming French citizens, the rewards of colonial rule were gratifying indeed. Their sentiments were hardly revolutionary and when revolution did occur the object of their loyalty was clear. These Vietnamese sought the continuation of French rule because their personal fortunes depended on it. But their support was anything but decisive for France, since they numbered probably less than one-half of one percent of the Vietnamese population;[4] and for a larger number of Vietnamese to have been identified with French rule, a broader sharing of the fruits of colonial society would have been necessary.

Economic growth in Viet Nam was so limited by the mercantilist policies of the colonial regime, however, that its fruits could not be widely shared without being dissipated altogether. Moreover, those Vietnamese who had the lion's share of the economic rewards of the colonial economy had sealed their loyalty to France by acquiring political status through French citizenship. While it is unlikely that France would ever have made citizenship available outside of the indigenous oligarchy through which it ruled Viet Nam, it is also unlikely that French citizenship would have been very satisfying to rising generations of Vietnamese. Without providing a legitimate means for Vietnamese to have political status other than as colonial subjects or to share in governmental authority in Viet Nam, France alienated those whose power they were eventually unable to control through force.

VIET NAM'S CONTRIBUTION TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ORIGINS OF REVOLUTION

Men cannot make revolutions unless they have an acute sensitivity toward the social bases of their country's political difficulties and a capacity for creating new forms of popular participation in politics which will link people together in a common effort to change the society in which they live. Revolutionaries in Viet Nam have had this sensitivity and capacity. Their formation of a new system of politics by overcoming some—though by no means all—of the traditional antipathies within Vietnamese society and their foundation of a new political community based on mass participation in politics are the most important contributions of this Vietnamese experience to an understanding of revolution.

Conditions in a society may be ripe for revolution—just as they were in Viet Nam when Japan's occupation of the country collapsed at the end of World War II—but without the creation of a viable political alternative there seems little likelihood that a revolution will actually occur. What are the specific qualities that a revolutionary leadership must possess in order to launch a revolution even when conditions are ripe? Why—and how—does a revolutionary

leadership take form from among those politically talented people in a society who are thwarted in finding opportunities within a prevailing regime? And what does the emergence of such a leadership indicate about the incumbent political system and the society it is trying to govern?

A major conclusion of this study is that the circumstances which led to the emergence of a revolutionary leadership in Viet Nam are strikingly similar to other instances of revolution. For example, an investigation into the nature of the Bolshevik elite in Russia and the Nazi elite in Germany concluded that, despite the radically different ideological images these two groups had of themselves, they had both arisen from "frustrated segments of the middle classes who had been denied access to what they considered their proper place and organized violent action to gain what they had been denied."[5] These Russian and German revolutionary elites were people who "had experienced some upward mobility, gained some economic rewards and wanted political power." But they "had been denied access to politics."[6]

While there are obviously profound dissimilarities between political upheaval in Russia and Germany and revolution in Viet Nam, this description is basically an accurate portrayal of the reasons why a revolutionary elite arose in Viet Nam. The existence of this similarity does not mean, of course, that, whenever new rising elite groups are thwarted in their aspirations, a revolution will automatically result. But it does suggest that such groups are probably the most capable of providing revolutionary leadership and that their alienation from the existing system has been a conspicuous event leading to many revolutions. Primarily because of their educational achievements, these rising middle groups have been the "symbol specialists" in the revolutionary leadership. Without them, "to speak the words that caught the ears, touched the hearts, activated the behavior of the radicalized cohorts, the specialists in violence might have murdered and pillaged but they could not have built a revolutionary movement capable of seizing state power."[7]

However, these symbol specialists have not been mere street corner orators who have exhorted the mob. Instead, their chief role has been to "shape the images and teach the rites of the new ideology they dispensed."[8] Through their revolutionary ideology they have established contact with an increasingly wider range of the population and brought them into a revolutionary movement poised for mobilizing power against an incumbent regime. As studies of China, Russia, and Germany show, the "intellectuals of higher social status founded the [revolutionary] movements through which people of lesser status subsequently made their way to the top."[9] So it was in Viet Nam that the ideological and organizational efforts of Truong Chinh, a technical school student, and Vo Nguyen Giap, the holder of a doctor of laws degree, were responsible for the rise of Chu Van Tan, an uneducated mountaineer, to be Minister of Defense in the revolutionary government. Indeed, the success of the revolution launched by this thwarted Vietnamese intelligentsia depended vitally on mobilizing the less privileged portion of the population of Viet Nam.

Without the effects of modernization, it seems unlikely that a revolutionary intelligentsia would have taken form and organized the types of revolution they led in Russia and China.[10] Certainly, in Viet Nam the modernizing effects of the colonial education system were instrumental in the emergence of an effective revolutionary intelligentsia. Through education came the opportunity for some upward mobility and some economic rewards, but their mobility into a potentially modern world was limited by the narrow contours of colonial society. Most of all they could develop skills that made them significant competitors for political influence. But in colonial Viet Nam there were no legitimate means by which rising generations of Vietnamese could use their political skills to compete for influence over governmental decisions. Only by organizing themselves into a revolutionary movement could they share in the governing

of the country—a position which they felt their political strength entitled them to and which French intransigence prevented.

Older generations of Vietnamese revolutionaries also felt themselves entitled to share in the governing of the country, but they lacked the cohesion and strength to challenge the French successfully. They could not bring about changes in the politics of Viet Nam that would develop the force to displace France and create a unified political order. By contrast, rising generations of French-educated Vietnamese distinguished themselves from these earlier, ineffective revolutionaries through their capacity for forging a revolutionary strategy and with it establishing an organization which was the nucleus of an alternative government. In launching their revolution, this later generation of revolutionaries was not merely attempting to overthrow French rule; they were trying to achieve fundamental changes in Vietnamese politics by creating new ways of mobilizing and sharing power.

There were reasons other than the level of political skills that made rising generations of revolutionaries more effective than their traditionalist predecessors. During the first four decades of the twentieth century, the political environment in Viet Nam underwent radical changes. The transformation of Vietnamese society, brought on by the partial modernization of the country by France, made it easier to mobilize power against the colonial regime than was the case during earlier phases of French rule. First of all, the disaffected French-educated elite—though still small in relation to the whole of Vietnamese society—was much larger than any preceding revolutionary elite. But more important, the population of the country which these revolutionaries would have to arouse against France had become more highly mobile as a result of the modernizing influences of colonial policies.

Since both the elite and the mobile segments of the population were limited in their chances for further mobility, they shared a common frustration against France, which gave them a cohesiveness they manifested in their nationalist aspirations. In the minds of these Vietnamese, nationalism meant driving France from Viet Nam so that those who had achieved a certain level of mobility would have a greater control over their own destiny. Appeals to nationalism, therefore, were ultimately successful in launching revolution, because this ideology mobilized into action those who had acquired social mobility and political cohesiveness from the colonial impact on Vietnamese society.

Instead of winning the allegiance of those whom it was bringing into the modern world, the French had to face mounting opposition from them. Increasingly, the Vietnamese were frustrated by the incapacity of colonial institutions for adapting to the challenge of changes which they were responsible for initiating, which resulted in the denial of access of rising middle groups to what they considered their proper places. It is the effect of this inflexibility that George Pettee calls "cramp," meaning that a maladjustment between institutions and the structure of society has occurred which produces a tension that a revolution may relieve. A revolution, says Pettee, "takes place when the great majority of the society feel cramped beyond tolerance." But, he cautions, a revolution "never can happen until a great proportion of the culture has already developed under purposes which cannot be satisfied under existing institutions, and the existing contradictions have integrated the will of the revolutionists and disintegrated that of the conservatives."[1]

In a similar vein, Chalmers Johnson has asserted that all revolutions are caused by multiple dysfunctions in society which, when left unresolved by an intransigent elite, revolutionaries seek to correct by far-reaching change. Dysfunction occurs, says Johnson, when one of the component structures of society, "does not function in the way it must in order to maintain equilibrium," and, "if no remedial action occurs, the entire [social] system will move out

of equilibrium." Revolution, he believes, "is the preferred method of change when (a) the level of dysfunctions exceeds the capacities of traditional or accepted methods of problem solving, and when (b) the system's elite, in effect, opposes change."[12]

In the concepts of "cramp" and unresolved "multiple dysfunctions" there is again emphasis on the disparity between social instability and the lack of institutional response to it that is mentioned so frequently in the literature as a major source of revolutionary potential. Whether or not Pettee's and Johnson's particular analytical concepts are valid for all revolutions, the disparity that concerns them was conspicuously present in the origins of revolution in Viet Nam. Here, the most significant source of "cramp" or "multiple dysfunction" arose from the tensions of the partial modernization of the country. Because of the restrictions of colonial policy, a French-educated Vietnamese elite, though trained for modernity, did not have the opportunity to make Viet Nam a more thoroughly modernized society. In the countryside the demands of modernity were imposed—especially in monetary taxation—without providing institutions for the eventual modernization of rural Viet Nam.

Since the modernizing effects of colonial programs were so pervasive, but yet not far-reaching enough to modernize the whole country, they produced tensions which resulted in a potential for revolution. Men who had acquired new skills and talents, but who had no sanctioned means for employing the potential power afforded by these attributes of modernity, sought outlets in political change and violence. When Viet Nam became a "Nation Off Balance" it also became a society with a substantial potential for revolution.[13] The demands upon the colonial government were greater than its performance to meet them.

The concepts of "cramp" and "multiple dysfunction" might seem to point to the conclusion that revolution results when certain conditions of social imbalance are ignored by governments. But neither Pettee nor Johnson believes that revolution inevitably occurs when a certain set of social conditions appear. Both of them would agree with Harry Eckstein that, "one should not seek explanations. . . in specific social conditions, but rather in ways in which social conditions may be perceived. . . ."[14] As James C. Davies has put it, political stability is "ultimately dependent on a state of mind, a mood in a society. . . . It is the dissatisfied state of mind rather than the tangible provision of adequate or inadequate supplies of food, equality, or liberty which produces the revolution."[15]

Yet Davies thinks that there is one particular condition which always produces the state of mind for revolution. He asserts that, "Revolutions are most likely to occur when a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal." A period of rising economic performance results in "an expectation of continued ability to satisfy needs—which continue to rise—" but in the period of reversal there develops "a mental state of anxiety and frustration when manifest reality breaks away from anticipated reality."[16]

The key question in understanding revolution in Viet Nam or elsewhere is "Why do people come to expect and demand political power which is denied to them?" Although it is impossible to account for all the reasons why people become dissatisfied with their political status, the experience of Viet Nam and much of the literature on revolution offer some significant insights into why political expectations rise. If people find new opportunities for individual achievement through education, commerce, industry, communications, religion, and so forth, they acquire talents and skills which make them more nearly equal in ability to those exercising governmental authority. Political expectations will tend to rise as these individuals achieve social attributes which are similar to or greater than those who have the greatest enjoyment of political power in a society.

The enjoyment of political power does not mean merely holding governmental office or exerting widespread political influence. From the perspective of the individual, it also means the enjoyment of personal liberties, a dependable way of seeking redress of grievances, and the absence of formal barriers to positions of decision-making authority. When those with rising achievement and political expectations are systematically excluded from such power then their frustration usually leads them to question the basis of governmental authority.

As observers have frequently noted, revolutions are not made by impoverished and downtrodden men. They are launched by men who are rising in individual achievement but whose expectations for political status have been frustrated. As Aristotle has put it, the "principal and general cause of an attitude of mind which disposes men toward. . . ' revolution is,". . . a passion for equality, which arises from their thinking that they have the worst of the bargain in spite of being the equals of those who have the advantage."[17]

In Viet Nam this state of mind was undoubtedly present from the very beginning of French rule, but initially it was neither widespread nor intense enough to result in anything more than abortive revolts. These uprisings were led by mandarins who were trying to regain the political status they had enjoyed prior to French control. But France's power proved to be overwhelming against the meager strength the mandarins were able to mobilize. Strictly speaking, their leadership was not revolutionary, since they were not asserting a new system of politics in which the Vietnamese people might share power more widely than they had before colonial rule. The mandarinal revolts were merely attempts to restore an old form of politics to its previous position of predominance, and few Vietnamese were willing to risk their lives for such a restoration.

Political expectations became more widespread and intense as colonial programs transformed Vietnamese society. For the approximately ten percent of the population who found opportunities for mobility and achievement through colonial institutions there was a new awareness of the importance of political status. They were reminded of their inferior position when their occupational mobility was thwarted by more privileged but often less qualified Frenchmen, when their educational opportunities proved to be greater than their employment opportunities in relatively static French institutions, and when decisions affecting their interests were made by French councils.

Inevitably, personal frustrations over thwarted mobility led to the political expectation that the ending of French rule would end the barriers to individual opportunity. And for those who had avoided obstacles to occupational advancement, their achievements made them more nearly equal to their French rulers and raised their expectations about the political status they should enjoy. Significantly, a small portion of Vietnamese were successful in having their social and political status recognized when they acquired French citizenship. But the great majority of Vietnamese had developed political expectations that were not easily satisfied by citizenship or any other token response of the French regime.

Because of the colonial government's limited responsiveness, these rising political expectations became the major source of revolutionary potential in Viet Nam. Such a discrepancy between political expectations and capabilities does not appear, on the basis of the literature on revolution, to be unique in Viet Nam. Rather, it seems to be the most significant way of expressing the various factors that contribute toward militate against the development of revolutionary potential. But despite the apparent utility of this analytical expression—revolutionary potential—it is still hard to be precise about the details of the process that is taking place.

While political capabilities or performance can be measured by criteria such as the extent to which power is shared through the decentralization of decision-making, the extent of participation in politics through access to positions of authority and expressions of the popular will, and the extent of legitimacy as evidenced in popular compliance, political expectations are more elusive. They are difficult to measure because political expectations are based on the way men perceive social conditions rather than on the objective state of conditions themselves. In this respect, the Vietnamese experience seems to offer some useful examples of ways to account for the rise of political expectations, since French intervention stimulated expectations that were not present when they arrived.

With the rise of individual achievement and mobility among the Vietnamese, individual expectations rose too. These new aspirations were expressed through demands for higher education, appeals for broader opportunities in the civil service, and the formation of political parties. For example, there was the creation of the Constitutionalist Party in the 1920's in southern Viet Nam by a handful of wealthy Vietnamese who wanted self-government for their country. Other kinds of expectations were demonstrated in the abortive Yen Bay uprising of 1930. The most conspicuous participants in this revolt were lower and middle rank civil servants who, like the wealthy southern Vietnamese, would not have had any comparable opportunity for social mobility prior to French intervention. And, of course, there was the leadership of the Indochinese Communist Party, which arose partly from backgrounds of traditional status but which coalesced during its rise through the colonial education system.

If there were a direct relationship between this rising mobility and rising expectations, if the adage, "The more people get the more they want," is correct, then a measure of the social mobility of a population would be a good measure of their rising expectations. Whether or not mobility is the most precise measure of expectations, it seems to be the best available one. Such a measure can allow one to determine the point at which personal expectations are most likely to take on a political character. From the Vietnamese experience it appears that political expectations are most likely to develop (1) when people's achievements increase their status relative to the status of those enjoying the greatest amount of political power, and (2) when people can identify their personal frustrations in thwarted mobility or opportunity with the action or inaction of those in political authority.

When political expectations are rising and political performance is not, the discrepancy between the power people expect and what they get will produce the potential for revolution. If their expectations are continually frustrated and they see no hope of fulfillment under existing conditions, people will question the basis on which political authority is founded. The extent of this potential for revolution may be quite limited, either because expectations are not widespread or because the performance of the incumbents has responded to all but a portion of the people's expectations. But as unfulfilled expectations become more extensive the potential for revolution will increase.

This potential for revolution results because people's expectations usually reflect achievements which have brought them considerable virtual power in terms of skills, wealth, or influence over others. Thus, the greater the political expectations the greater the virtual power to affect political life. Understandably, institutions of authority cannot long maintain their legitimacy when substantial amounts of potential power are denied formal expression and a share in political privileges. If the denial persists, then popular compliance with governmental decisions can be expected to decline, with the result that political crises may arise over "illegal" actions, budgetary difficulties from a popular refusal to pay taxes, or similar conflicts. The larger the number of people who feel deprived politically the greater the revolutionary state of mind and the greater the potential for revolution.

Existence of revolutionary potential, however, even when it is relatively widespread, does not mean that a revolution will inevitably occur. Unless the capabilities of the revolutionaries for mobilizing potential political power are greater than those of the incumbents, either to crush this mobilization by force or blunt it by token concessions, a revolution is unlikely to take place. Without the creation of an opposition political structure—a revolutionary political structure—the frustrated expectations of the revolutionaries may simply result in sullen apathy or feeble protest. But with a burgeoning political organization revolutionaries can become the credible competitors of an ineffective and intransigent incumbent.

Among the various competitive capabilities that revolutionaries require for success, three appear to be critical. First, and most important, the revolutionary political structure must become a distinctively new way of sharing power. Only by a new approach to sharing power can the revolutionaries hope to mobilize support from those whose expectations have been thwarted by the incumbents. Secondly, a revolutionary ideology must establish the legitimacy of the revolutionary structure by emphasizing that the revolutionaries are trying to fulfill popular expectations which the "illegitimate" incumbents have failed to heed. Finally, a revolutionary military organization must be created to aid in the expansion of the revolutionary political structure.

In achieving these competitive capabilities, the Vietnamese revolutionaries were effecting changes in the politics of their country that challenge many commonly held assumptions about the nature of revolution in a modernizing society. Too often the protractedness and destructiveness of revolutionary violence—in Viet Nam and elsewhere—have obscured the political significance which lies behind it and have led to the assumption that social deterioration and chaos are the inevitable results of such conflict. But, on the contrary, the level of violence that revolutionaries can sustain is a clear indication of the capacities of their political structure as compared with the strength or weakness of existing political institutions. Although revolution can occur without violence, it is unusual unless an incumbent government either lacks instruments of force (police and armed forces), has lost control over them, or decides to carry out a revolution itself rather than to face a challenge from an opposing political structure. Consequently, the amount of popular strength required to displace an incumbent is a prime determinant of the extent to which changes in the structure of politics are likely to occur during a revolution.

Because the French had firm control over Viet Nam—especially the urban areas—at least up until 1945, it seemed unlikely that any revolutionary group could develop the strength to displace colonial rule. While there was great disaffection with the French among that segment of modernized Vietnamese society who lived in the cities, there was little opportunity to exploit such feelings, since demands for a change could be ignored or else could be conveniently crushed by force. Rural areas, on the other hand, were under much less firm control and protests there were harder for the French to quell. The peasant-village population was also more difficult for revolutionaries to mobilize because of their narrow existence and their unfamiliarity with large-scale organization.

As long as French power was extensive enough to keep popular discontent under control, the challenge to the political skills of the Vietnamese revolutionaries remained substantial. The twofold challenge these Vietnamese revolutionaries faced was that, in a society only partially modernized, it is relatively easy for incumbents to keep the small, modern sector under political control, while it is exceedingly difficult to form resilient political links with the more traditionalist oriented population in the countryside, even when they are in open revolt.

Formation of a revolutionary political party was obviously an indispensable first step toward exploiting the potential for revolution in Viet Nam. Before the twentieth century, however, political parties of any description had not existed in the country; yet they became recognized as a necessity because preexisting institutions had been conspicuously ineffective in mobilizing the power to thwart the imposition of French rule. Gradually, clandestine parties began to take the edge over more parochial groups such as families, mandarinal cliques, and so forth, in rallying the Vietnamese for participation in politics, and thus they set an important trend. But early Vietnamese parties did not achieve much success. In trying to avoid detection by French security forces, these clandestine parties found it necessary to work through traditionalist groups such as secret societies and provincial associations, rather than to make direct appeals to the more modernized though unaffiliated portions of the population. As a result, they only rarely surmounted the factionalism and parochialism that had rendered preceding political institutions ineffective.

Ideological shallowness was a basic cause of the shortcomings of these early clandestine parties. Their incapacity for conceiving and communicating a strategy for revolution inhibited their organizational effectiveness, because they could not be specific about their goals for new ways of shaping and sharing power. By comparison, the revolutionary ideology of the Indochinese Communist Party was instrumental in coalescing those rising middle groups in Vietnamese society that were frustrated at being denied access to formal positions of political influence. This coalescence occurred gradually in response to the slow evolution of Communist ideology. From 1930, when the Communist Party was founded in exile, to the August Revolution of 1945, this ideological evolution was focused on specifying ways in which the nationalist aspirations of frustrated middle groups could be achieved. As the Communists developed increasingly precise techniques for mobilizing and sharing power—as they became more specific about who was to get what, when, and how—they steadily achieved a commanding position of revolutionary leadership in Viet Nam.

Even though they eventually outstripped their revolutionary competitors in number, the Communists remained essentially an elite political party. Their ideological successes prior to the August Revolution did not result in a mass following but in a well-disciplined party of the type required by the circumstances of revolution in Viet Nam. Nor could it have been otherwise. One of the important lessons of this study of Viet Nam is that the emergence of a revolutionary leadership is a vital factor in the unfolding of revolution; and, without the framing of an effective revolutionary ideology, it seems most unlikely that a successful leadership could have been formed. Yet it is still surprising to note how small the Communist Party really was. As Ho Chi Minh has recalled:

> When the August Revolution took place, there were about 5,000 Party members, including those in jail. Less than 5,000 Party members have thus organized and led the uprisings of twenty-four million fellow-countrymen. . . to victory.[18]

Less surprising is the fact that the Communist Party's initial attempts at exploiting the potential for revolution in Viet Nam were failures. Naturally, these early attempts were made in areas where the French were especially weak, not where the opposition to colonial rule was necessarily the most intense. They came in the Nghe Tinh uprising in central Viet Nam in 1930-31, the Mekong Delta revolt of 1940, and the Bac Son uprising in northern Viet Nam during 1940-41. In all of these cases revolutionary leaders from the modernized sector of Vietnamese society were trying to mobilize into larger scale resistance those rural people whose discontent with colonial rule had broken out in open revolt. But in the intensity of these uprisings, the revolutionaries could not implant the organizational structure to transform these

pocket revolts into the nucleus of a broader revolutionary movement. Despite their gradual success in winning the allegiance of a revolutionary elite, the Communist Party still faced the challenge of using these leaders to forge political links with the mass of Viet Nam's population in the countryside.

Only during the last of these pocket uprisings—at Bac Son—were the revolutionaries successful in establishing a durable enough political structure to gain control over a portion of Vietnamese territory and create a revolutionary "base area." However, this limited success was due as much to fortuitous circumstances as it was to the skills of the leaders of the Indochinese Communist Party. Unlike the earlier uprisings in the rice-growing lowlands of Nghe Tinh and the Mekong Delta, the Bac Son revolt occurred in a remote mountain region which, even in the best of times, the French probably could not have controlled in the face of such a virulent protest. But with the indirect Japanese assistance to the revolutionaries and the restrictions on the French imposed by Japanese occupation, the colonial government's grip on the countryside was gradually ebbing away.

Not only was the situation fortuitous, but the way in which the revolutionaries exploited it made it crucial for events in Viet Nam, and also illustrative of an important lesson in understanding revolution. The fact that the Communists had obtained control over Vietnamese territory gave the party an image of legitimacy which none of its revolutionary competitors could match. Yet the party realized how tenuous its hold over the Bac Son base area really was; in this first firm, political linkage to the population outside the party, the Communists were almost exclusively dependent on guerrilla bands organized among the minority mountain people, the Tho. And while the party was aware that a larger, more conventional armed force was a necessity if it were to exploit broader revolutionary opportunities, it also recognized that the building of a revolutionary army is essentially a political task and that even a burgeoning armed force could not achieve all of the party's revolutionary goals. In moving beyond the Bac Son base area, the party's need to create a more diverse and more penetrating set of political links with the Vietnamese people was clear.

How could an elite political party of no more than 5,000 members form organizational ties with enough of Viet Nam's population to create a governmental alternative to the colonial regime? Since the Communist Party could not hope to recruit into its membership such a popular following and, at the same time, maintain its necessarily tight discipline, the party had to establish new institutions for rallying the Vietnamese to participate in the revolutionary politics of their country. In addition to an expanded revolutionary army, the most important new organization was an alliance of mass membership groups known as the Viet Minh, which provided the first stimulus and a rationale for popular participation in politics in Viet Nam. Under the overarching control of the Viet Minh a widely diverse set of political parties and popular associations allowed people of various—often conflicting—affiliations to identify with the party's revolutionary cause.

In forming the Viet Minh, the Communist Party was taking advantage of the effects of the Japanese occupation which had made the Vietnamese quite conscious of the vulnerabilities in French rule even before the elimination of the colonial government in March 1945. Sensing that the wind was blowing in a new direction, the Vietnamese, who are gamblers by nature, felt that they must anticipate what the wind would bring. By joining the Viet Minh they could identify with the cause of national independence without necessarily incurring all the commitments of membership in a clandestine revolutionary party. Of course, new recruits soon learned that their share in the expected fruits of independence would depend on their role in preparations to exploit the growing weaknesses in colonial rule. So, gradually many of those attracted to the Viet Minh found their way into the Communist Party and the revolutionary army being formed in the Bac Son base area.

The principal purpose of the Viet Minh, however, was not to act merely as a conduit for party recruitment; its primary function was to enhance the legitimacy of the party's slowly emerging revolutionary structure so that it would be recognized as the sole reliable force seeking independence for Viet Nam. In pursuing this goal, the Viet Minh's success was extensive enough for it to be virtually the only revolutionary group that most people had ever heard about when the Japanese collapse occurred and the cry for independence went up. Yet, despite their preparations, the Japanese capitulation caught the Viet Minh leaders by surprise: they had not had the time to develop a governmental structure which could completely fill the political void left by the Japanese. Even though they reacted quickly by taking control over Hanoi, Saigon, and other major cities, there was no preexisting political structure—with the exception of the now impotent administrative institutions of the colonial regime—which these Communist leaders might seize and use to rule the country.

With the collapse of Japan's occupation of Viet Nam, the potential for revolution had reached its peak. There was, for the moment, no incumbent which could prevent the revolutionaries from making their bid for governmental power and legitimacy. But, as the Viet Minh leaders learned at firsthand, the brute force of the incumbent is not necessarily the most formidable obstacle which revolutionaries must confront. Their greatest challenge is to exploit successfully the potential for revolution by creating an alternative political structure which can win the allegiance of a people and therby achieve governmental legitimacy. Without such an effort revolutionary potential may continue to exist, even though a revolutionary government has displaced an incumbent and taken control of a country. So long as the potential for revolution persists, the stability of a new revolutionary incumbent remains in doubt.

In proclaiming the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, holding elections for a national assembly, and forming a coalition government with opposition parties, the Viet Minh was responding to this challenge of revolution. While these actions did serve to galvanize popular feelings into support for the Viet Minh, this support was not widespread or deep enough to ensure that the revolutionary government would control all of Vietnamese territory. This did not mean that opposition was localized and even manageable, except for areas of southern Viet Nam. It simply meant that most Vietnamese had no commitment to any political movement beyond their village and that until they did, the full potential for revolution would continue unexploited. Moreover, as the British and then the French began to reoccupy Viet Nam, the possibilities of exploiting revolutionary potential were progressively reduced as more and more of the country was brought under colonial military control.

Here were the sources of protracted revolution in Viet Nam: the Communist Party through its Viet Minh front had launched a revolutionary government which—though it could not gain control over the whole country—had mobilized enough popular strength to prevent itself from being wiped out. In response, the French, who were both unwilling and incapable of creating a competitive political alternative to the Viet Minh—at least not until after 1950—attempted to stop the expansion of its revolutionary structure by force. The inevitable result was a tenacious revolutionary war in which the steady development of the Viet Minh's political structure during seven years of conflict enabled it to tie down the French Army to fixed-position defense and, ultimately, to defeat them at Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

In trying to stop the Viet Minh, the French faced a dilemma that was impossible for them to resolve. If they abandoned territory, even temporarily, in order to achieve military flexibility and mobility, it also meant their abandoning the tenuous political commitment of the people living in the area. Since they could not mobilize the troops—either at home or in Viet Nam—to occupy the entire country and, at the same time, match the flexible strength of the Viet Minh's regular forces, the French had to sacrifice control over territory. Had they,

instead, been able to sponsor a government capable of establishing new institutions for sharing and mobilizing political power and forging political links with the countryside, then there might have been some rationale for the use of French military power. This they could not do.

France's military capacity to control territory was steadily worn down by the Viet Minh's strategy of revolutionary war in which force was made subordinate to the essential task of developing an alternative political system. By expanding their political structure from base areas to which they had retreated after French forces drove them from the cities in late 1946 and early 1947, the revolutionaries won increasing commitment among the Vietnamese population. The greater their popular commitment the more difficult it was for the French to control territory and the easier it was for the Viet Minh to mobilize the population for service in politics and warfare. Of even greater advantage to the Viet Minh was the fact that they were not forced to defend territory in order to win the political commitment of the population: its military forces were able to maneuver the French into unfavorable territorial positions where they were forced to fight if they were to maintain even their dwindling political credibility among the Vietnamese. Thus, the acceptance of the Viet Minh as the legitimate government in progressively broader areas of the country marked political milestones on the seven-year long road to Dien Bien Phu.

In expanding their political structure, the Viet Minh relied upon techniques which, in a more rudimentary form, had been instrumental in their launching the August Revolution. By refining these techniques, the revolutionaries took advantage of the added stimulus for popular participation in politics that resulted from the intensification of warfare in Viet Nam. As the dangers and destructiveness of war mounted, the rural population felt an increasing need for mutual assistance and self-protection. Responding to these heightened expectations, the revolutionaries appealed for a rallying behind the Viet Minh's various associations as the only means of eliminating French rule, ending the war, and restoring order to the countryside.

Despite their propagandistic tone, these were not hollow appeals. At the same time, the Viet Minh called upon the local popular participation groups to form administrative committees which would be prepared to receive and carry out directives from the leaders of the revolutionary movement. Then the Viet Minh brought these committees together into an administrative hierarchy which was supported by, and parallel to, a hierarchical organization among the popular participation groups. Although the Communist Party maintained a tight hold over these "parallel hierarchies" its real source of political control over the countryside came from its ability to base an administrative hierarchy on popular participation. Through this technique the Viet Minh bypassed those traditional elements of village society which were either unable or unwilling to engage in politics except on a basis of status and not on a basis of performance.

By instituting a totally new approach toward political mobility and status, based almost exclusively on performance in revolutionary war, the Viet Minh were not dispensing with ideology. On the contrary, they were trying to replace the vestigial Confucian concepts of society and politics, as well as certain local traditions, with a new ideology—a new rationale for a new system of politics. Instead of the Confucian tradition of politics in which there had been mobility and status for only the very few who had the extensive classical education required to pass the rigid, stylized examinations, the Vietnamese revolutionaries wanted to institute a political system of mass mobilization. Because its principal goal had been to achieve social harmony and institutionalized authority in a relatively static society, the Confucian state system in Viet Nam never developed a great degree of power. Only a new system—one capable of generating the power to defeat France and lay the foundation of national unity—could fulfill the goals of the revolutionaries. Thus a new basis for political mobility was required. Thus a new means of sharing—of distributing—political power was required.

Here in Viet Nam was the beginning of revolution—a revolution that remains incomplete and is the underlying cause of the war now raging there. Here was the start of fundamental changes in the way who gets what, when, and how in Vietnamese society. Men, who had gotten some mobility and some economic rewards from the colonial system of politics, had been denied the formal political power they thought due them and were creating a new system of politics to link them with their society so that they might overcome the weaknesses and armed opposition of the old regime.

EPILOGUE

THE FUTURE OF REVOLUTION IN VIET NAM

Although it ended the first Indochina War, the partitioning of Viet Nam by the Geneva Conference of 1954 did not bring an end to revolution. While it did separate adversaries who had been locked in fierce combat for seven years, this division of the country was only intended to be temporary, lasting until elections could be held in 1956. But there were no binding international guarantees that these elections would be held; nor was there any guarantee that the Vietnamese followers of the non-Communist State of Viet Nam, who had withdrawn south of the seventeenth parallel, would participate in such elections or respect their results.[1]

This lack of guarantees was in part a reflection of the inability of the conference participants to determine the exact purpose of the proposed elections. Article Seven of the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference states that general elections "shall be held in July 1956," but it does not specify the issues to be voted upon.[2] Though this article calls for consultations to define the issues, such meetings were never held. These proposed sessions were boycotted because the representatives of the State of Viet Nam had, in effect, been excluded from the cease-fire negotiations at Geneva and their newly appointed Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem, had denounced the cease-fire agreements and proclaimed the date of their signing as a national day of shame.[3]

Despite the controversy over Ngo Dinh Diem's refusal to participate in general elections, it should have been clear that elections alone could not resolve revolutionary conflict in Viet Nam—particularly after the partitioning of the country. Since the future political order of Viet Nam was the basic conflict during the seven years of combat, it seemed most unlikely that the Vietnamese could simply stop fighting and settle their differences without the benefit of new institutions for sharing power and resolving conflict. But the creation of new institutions in which Communist and non-Communist Vietnamese might share political power and unite their country was regarded as impossible, especially during the emotional intensity of the Geneva Conference.

Because the conference participants did not wish to confront the profoundly complex dilemma of how a unified political order might be established in Viet Nam, they decided to separate the antagonists rather than to try to resolve the bases of their conflict. In the absence of an agreement at Geneva on the fundamental issues in Viet Nam, the great powers found a convenient substitute in proposing elections among the Vietnamese on issues which were left unspecified. Although masked by a declaration of apparent consensus, the Geneva Conference participants only agreed on the points on which they actually disagreed profoundly, and thus they set the stage for a new phase of revolutionary war.

With the division of Viet Nam at the seventeenth parallel, the areas under the political control of the revolutionary opponents took on a definable territorial configuration for the first time in the Indochina War: the Communist-led Viet Minh were in the north and the non-Communists were in the south. The partition had the effect of strengthening the control of the State of Viet Nam over the southern areas of the country where it enjoyed its greatest

political support. No longer would its strength be diluted by efforts to maintain military control over rural areas in the north where its political support, except for Catholic bishoprics, was nil. But this relative improvement in the non-Communist government's position of political strength did not mean that the State of Viet Nam had achieved unqualified independence from France. On the contrary, France, in getting itself out of an embarrassing and militarily untenable situation via the Geneva Conference, exposed more conspicuously than before the impotence of the State of Viet Nam.

Although the State of Viet Nam Army fought as distinct national units alongside the French, none of its representatives signed the cease-fire agreement with the Viet Minh military command.[4] While Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem and the State of Viet Nam diplomatic delegation at Geneva opposed the cease-fire, this was not the reason for their military representatives failing to sign the agreement. France was making all the decisions for the non-Communist side in the war in Viet Nam and, though it had created the State of Viet Nam as a political alternative to the Viet Minh at Geneva in 1954, France still had not accorded it the substance of sovereignty. Not only had the State of Viet Nam failed to develop the strength to become a serious political competitor to the Viet Minh, it had not even been able to overcome its dependency on France for survival. But with United States support, Ngo Dinh Diem in 1954 signaled his determination to create in southern Viet Nam a government that was sovereign--at least to the extent that it was free of French control.

In declaring Viet Nam to be an independent republic and in forcing the French to leave the country by the spring of 1956, Diem claimed that he had carried out a revolution.[5] In a limited sense he had. But the political changes that Diem brought to southern Viet Nam were deceptive. Though he had succeeded in crushing the power of the political-religious sects which had been dependent on France for their autonomy, he had not created any commanding political organization capable of integrating these groups into resilient governmental institutions. Nevertheless, it appeared that Diem had achieved a strong central administration free from the internecine squabbling that had marked the life of the State of Viet Nam. And while many problems remained, it was thought that he had established a viable political order.[6] In fact, Diem had merely made his own narrowly based group, composed primarily of Catholics and northern refugees, supreme over all the other non-Communist political groups in southern Viet Nam.

To accomplish this, Diem had needed control over the French-led national army of Viet Nam. In the non-Communist political system in southern Viet Nam, where power was so narrowly defined that it meant the same thing as force, mastery over the army also meant having a predominance of political power. Although Diem's political shrewdness played a large role in his success, it was the support of the United States that was decisive in his wresting control of the army away from its French-appointed commander—a Vietnamese who was a French citizen. The United States simply redirected its military aid and financed the national army through Diem's government, which left the French without their accustomed resources to maintain their leverage over the army or to sustain the private armies of the political-religious sects.[7] Lacking these American resources, the French could not continue to manipulate the parochial groups toward their interests unless they were willing to use French Army units—which they occasionally did. But once the national army was under Diem's authority, there was little to stop him from becoming master of the territory south of the seventeenth parallel. The political-religious sects—the Hoa Hao, the Cao Dai, and the Binh Xuyen, and others—were crushed or driven into hiding.[8] For the time being, no other groups risked challenging Diem's supremacy.

Diem's "revolution," which brought the appearance of viable order and stability to politics in southern Viet Nam, was accomplished by military force and not by political mobilization.

Consequently, its results were limited and deceptive to observers, who thought that the existence of order was indicative of far-reaching change. But Diem had not achieved any fundamental improvement in mobilizing and sharing political power. Through the success of the national army, Diem did not have to share power with anyone and, as long as his military force was strong enough to thwart those capable of mobilizing power against him, he was secure.

However, his experience in crushing the political-religious sects was misleading. While these parochial groups could mobilize substantial numbers of villagers for political and military action, their strength was sharply limited by a rudimentary ideology and poor organization. Diem assumed that all political groups in southern Viet Nam suffered these same limitations and that, therefore, they could be conveniently managed by force. Moreover, he must have believed that the withdrawal northward of Viet Minh regulars had rendered their political infrastructure ineffective. Yet Diem's only safeguard against the revival of the Communists' expansion of their revolutionary structure was to oppose it by force. He had no thought of a political alternative which might develop a deep commitment among the rural populace because it would offer them a means of participating in the politics and thus affect the politics of the Republic of Viet Nam.

The revolution that Ngo Dinh Diem brought about had its effect in the superstructure of politics in southern Viet Nam; it did not reach the village foundation of Vietnamese society. The essence of this revolution was the elimination of the fratricidal competition between Vietnamese political cliques by the emergence of the faction around Diem and by the exclusion of the French from the politics of the country. In effect, Diem scored a successful coup d'état, yet the political structure he acquired through this stroke was weak. It consisted primarily of the national army and the shell of a countrywide administrative structure, but there were no mass political parties, viable local institutions, or other similar organizations through which it could exercise power without force.

One of the main reasons that the French had relied on the political-religious sects and comparable parochial groups was as compensation for the lack of political structure. In crushing these groups Diem was merely confronting himself with a more troublesome dilemma: how was he to gain political power in the rural areas which contained the political substructure of the country? If his revolution were to have significance beyond the cities and provincial towns, Diem would have had to create a legitimate means of access to the political superstructure, a way of sharing power between local and central institutions, and an ideology that reached the interests of the villagers.[9] Diem, however, was disinterested and seemed incapable of making these changes, and his revolution remained unfulfilled. Instead of political mobilization he saw as his major task such stringent political control that it prevented anyone else from mobilizing power.

Diem's effort to prevent others from mobilizing political power against him was futile. Increasingly greater amounts of military force were required in a vain attempt to maintain control over the countryside, but force alone could not prevent large portions of the rural areas from slipping away from Saigon's authority.[10] As the pace of military operations heightened, strains on the national army also increased. As a precaution against cliques forming within the army, Diem rotated those officers with troop command at such ridiculously short intervals that they had little opportunity or incentive to organize effective units.[11] This only served to produce incentives among key military leaders to stop Diem's destructive manipulation of the army. If Diem had been assured of the loyalty of those officers to whom he delegated authority, such sharp antipathies might never have arisen. But the problem of loyalty within the army was a microcosm of the larger political dilemma in the country: there was no predictable pattern of upward mobility, there was only Diem's personal choice of those he felt

to be most reliable.[12] Demands of loyalty to a person rather than to institutions created a sense of arbitrariness which sapped the morale of the armed forces.

Because of the relative ineffectiveness of his troops and the rising tide of armed opposition, Diem, acting on American advice, found it necessary on several occasions to increase the size of the armed forces, which only compounded the problem of keeping them under his political control. Abortive coups d'état launched against Diem in 1960 and 1962 by dissident officers should have been a warning, but the self-confident Diem was on a seemingly irreversible course.[13] He did not appear to doubt his ability to continue manipulating the army commands or the advisability of using manipulation as a prime means of political control. Yet his greatest source of security was probably his belief that the United States would not abandon him because of its anxiety about the consequences for the war against the Communists in the countryside. But Diem had left no margin for error. When an urban-based revolt led by an emergent yet parochial religious group—the Buddhists—erupted in the summer of 1963, Diem's predictable but ineffective attempt to crush it by force shocked the conscience of the world. Severely embarrassed by his blunt repressions, the United States dissociated itself from Diem and his family—a move which Vietnamese military leaders interpreted as opening the way for them to remove Diem from the politics of the country.[14] Since he had created no other sources of power, there was no counterweight to the army. Thus, Ngo Dinh Diem left power in Viet Nam just as he had come to it—through a coup d'état.[15]

In their victory over Ngo Dinh Diem in November 1963, the Vietnamese military faced the same kind of problems that Diem had faced when he came to power in 1954-55. In 1963, however, the problems had become compounded and solutions were more urgently required if the Republic of Viet Nam was to become something more than an institution for holding power by force. Like Diem, the military leaders proclaimed their coup d'état to be a revolution. But unlike Diem, they seemed to be more genuinely concerned with the institutionalization of political power and more aware of the limits of holding power through force. Yet this awareness and concern did not result in a specific program of action designed to change the way in which power was mobilized and shared.

In effect, these military leaders were confronting the age-old dilemma of establishing a viable political order—a dilemma with which the Vietnamese had grappled unsuccessfully since they had thrown off Chinese domination in 939. During the following millennium, numerous dynasties had come to power through military force, just as the military leaders had in 1963, but none of them had successfully institutionalized political power. In contrast to the situation in earlier centuries, military leaders of 1963 were opposed by a regime in northern Viet Nam and in wide areas of the countryside of the south which had gone further than any previous regime in mastering this age-old dilemma of power. If those who overthrew Diem were to become credible competitors for legitimate political authority, then they clearly would have to become a revolutionary government.[16]

Evidence derived from events since 1963 strongly suggests that the Republic of Viet Nam has made a genuine though vain attempt to effect a political revolution. The motivation for this attempted revolution has quite clearly arisen from the conspicuous ineffectiveness of instruments of force to sustain the government's power, especially against non-Communist groups in urban areas. For instance, the civil disobedience of the Buddhists which reached a crescendo in the provinces just south of the seventeenth parallel during the spring of 1966 resulted in concessions leading to the election of a constituent assembly which drafted a new constitution for the republic.[17] While this constitution is an indication of an intent to share authority more widely in the hope of enhancing the power of the government, there is no certainty that the military will permit the new institutions to function as they were intended. The military might once again fall back upon a reliance on force.

At best, even if the military does not block the process, the new constitutional framework as it was proposed in March 1967 can only have effect in the superstructure of politics in southern Viet Nam. Even this would be an achievement. If successful, it would mark the unification of a multiplicity of parochial groups in what would become pluralistic institutions. In contrast with the totalitarian nature of the Communist regime in the north, this would be an historic accomplishment indeed. Yet it would not have a substantial impact upon the village substructure where institutions offering opportunities in the superstructure would still not be available. Instead, the new constitutional superstructure would be imposed on the countryside in the hope that it would somehow develop order and security there. In lieu of political mobilization a program of "pacification" or "revolutionary development" is being carried out in an effort to gain control over rural areas cleared of the regular units of the enemy. Obviously, such political control, even if it is attained, will not afford the villagers a stake in the power of the Republic of Viet Nam.[18]

Through these random efforts, the Republic of Viet Nam has been groping toward revolution. As genuine as these efforts might have been, no political movement can simply grope toward revolution and expect to achieve a fundamental change in the way power is shaped and shared. The inadequacy and ineffectiveness of such actions have been made dramatically clear by the need to increase U.S. armed forces in Viet Nam to almost twice the size of the contingent that was needed in Korea.[19] These larger U.S. forces have been required because the Republic of Viet Nam has been unable either to mobilize political support to resist the enemy or to raise the manpower to sustain its own armed forces. Certainly the degree of enthusiasm with which people participate in military service is a good measure of the legitimacy of a government, especially when that government is fighting for its life.

However, the Vietnamese appear to regard the military as an arbitrary institution that is trying to control the country without sharing power with the people. Yet, unless it can acquire an adequate number of troops, the Republic of Viet Nam will have very little power to share. Inability to resolve such dilemmas indicates that the leaders of the Republic of Viet Nam, both military and civilian, have had little conception of the requirements for political revolution. Nor have they been aided significantly by their American advisers.

With few exceptions those who have understood the meaning of revolution in Viet Nam have been members of the Vietnamese Communist movement. Thus far, their understanding has been expressed in action and not in any comprehensive published source to which one can turn for information. Yet the need to understand this revolution is urgent. Not only is the revolutionary conflict in Viet Nam consuming lives and treasure on a tragic scale, but it also exemplifies a pattern of experience that many other countries may share in their advance toward modernity. This book was undertaken out of a desire to comprehend revolution in Viet Nam and in the hope that an examination of the Vietnamese experience could contribute to a more perceptive understanding of revolution in general.

Revolution is a process in which the structure of political power is permanently changed so that new ways of mobilizing and sharing political strength become established. Revolution occurs when an existing political structure has to be changed in response to a new configuration of power within a society. This does not mean that revolution is inevitable, but it means that if a new configuration of power arises the governmental structure must change to accommodate it or face the possibility that another group will mobilize power against it. Often, revolution occurs by the violent overthrow of an existing political structure and its replacement by a new structure, but it need not happen this way. Incumbents can achieve revolution within their own governmental framework—although the experience of the republic in southern Viet Nam indicates that revolutionary change is difficult to achieve even when it is recognized as a necessity.

In this study of Viet Nam, several aspects of the process of change in the structure of political power stand forth conspicuously as contributions to an understanding of revolution. The lack of a strong tradition of political unity in Viet Nam has meant that revolution has had to contend with unresolved problems of politics persisting into the present. Thus the revolutionary conflict which has resulted as a response to colonialism and modernization has divided the Vietnamese people against each other as they once were a little more than a century and a half ago. Perhaps this experience indicates that where modernization is partial and not expanding, old antipathies may be reenforced instead of a new sense of community developing. If this is a general phenomenon, it may portend a bitter future for unintegrated societies in other parts of the world which are struggling with the effects of modernity. In such circumstances those individuals who feel thwarted in their aspirations and ascribe their frustration to political causes may play on traditional antipathies as a means of acquiring political strength. Unless they can create a dependable structure for mobilizing potential political power they are unlikely to achieve a revolution.

Such a revolutionary political structure, capable of mobilizing vast portions of the rural population for military and political action, has been the distinguishing characteristic of revolution in Viet Nam. While this mobilization has been the achievement of the Vietnamese Communist movement, it has not resulted simply because of their identification with Communist ideology. Their success can be attributed to their own efforts to develop a form of political organization uniquely adapted to Viet Nam, but which could be applied to other emerging countries. By providing peasant villagers with new forms of political participation, political status, and equality, this organization has bridged the gap between the relatively nonmodernized sectors of Vietnamese society. In this effort, the Communists have not only brought to the countryside many of the opportunities of modernity—literacy, organizational ability, and familiarity with machines—but they have also created a new sense of community.

At the heart of this community is a new structure of power which has won widespread commitment because it has rewarded popular participation. Through a sharing of power, the Communists have been able to mobilize the strength with which to expand their revolutionary structure. Yet the power of the Communists is still insufficient to bring the whole country under control; revolution in Viet Nam continues. The juxtaposition of such radically different political communities—at first the French and the Viet Minh and now the two republics of Viet Nam—serves to emphasize the problems of change in the structure of power, which is the essence of revolution.

Despite the many unique factors in the Vietnamese experience, it is this competition between political communities which links revolution in Viet Nam with revolution in other countries at different periods of history. Instead of there being a contest between incumbent and insurgents, there is a conflict between two separate political communities, each of which is claiming to be sovereign over the whole of Viet Nam. From this perspective, it is easier to see that revolution is not simply an overturning of an incumbent or a group by violence, but a confrontation between contrasting forms of political organization which are trying to respond to similar needs of political community. And as R. R. Palmer has noted in his study The Age of Democratic Revolution, it is the substitution of one political community for another that is the central focus of revolution. As he has seen it, a revolutionary situation is

> one in which the confidence in the justice or reasonableness of existing authority is undermined; where old loyalties fade, obligations are felt as impositions, law seems arbitrary, and respect for superiors is felt as a form of humiliation; where existing sources of prestige seem undeserved, hitherto accepted forms of wealth and income seem ill-gained, and

> government is sensed as distant, apart from the governed and not really "representing" them. In such a situation the sense of community is lost, and the bond between social classes tends to jealousy and frustration. People of a kind formerly integrated begin to feel as outsiders, or those who have never been integrated begin to feel left out. As a group of Sheffield workingmen demanded in 1794: "What is the constitution to us if we are nothing to it?"[20]

In Viet Nam a century and a half later this question is just as germane to an understanding of the origins of revolution as it was in the eighteenth century.

FOOTNOTES

PROLOGUE: REVOLUTION IN VIET NAM IN PERSPECTIVE

[1] In order to establish legitimacy over a portion of the Vietnamese population, it has seemed necessary to claim the right to rule over all Vietnamese. Since the Republic of Viet Nam in the south is in a poor position to emphasize such a claim, it has not done so; but it has not renounced legitimacy over all of Viet Nam. Needless to say, the United States has never supported the Republic of Viet Nam as the sole government for the whole of Vietnamese territory.

[2] For a discussion on the lack of agreement at the Geneva Conference, see John T. McAlister, Jr., "The Possibilities for Diplomacy in Southeast Asia," World Politics, Vol. XIX No. 2 (January 1967), pp. 258-305; see also Jean Lacouture and Philippe Devillers, La fin d'une guerre (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1960), pp. 111-288. On the election issue, see Franklin B. Weinstein, Vietnam's Unheld Election (Ithaca, N.Y.: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, Data Paper No. 60, July 1966).

[3] See U.S., Department of State, A Threat to Peace: North Viet-Nam's Effort To Conquer South Viet-Nam, Publication 7308, Far Eastern Series 110 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961); U.S., Department of State, Viet-Nam's Campaign To Conquer South Viet-Nam, Publication 7839, Far Eastern Series 130 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965); for an interesting critique of the latter, see I. F. Stone's Weekly, Vol. XII, March 8, 1965.

[4] R. W. Apple, Jr., "Vietnam: The Signs of Stalemate," The New York Times, August 7, 1967; Robert Shaplen, "Letter From South Vietnam," The New Yorker (June 17, 1967), pp. 37-91.

[5] Probably the most prominent attentiste was Ngo Dinh Diem who left Viet Nam in 1950 not to return until 1954, when he was appointed Prime Minister of the State of Viet Nam.

[6] Voting statistics are from Bernard B. Fall, "The Political Development of Viet Nam: V-J Day to the Geneva Cease-Fire," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University (October 1954), p. 662. Military personnel figures are from Henri Navarre, Agonie de l'Indochine (1953-1954) (rev. ed.; Paris: Plon, 1956), p. 46. One of the last useful prewar estimates of Viet Nam population put the total at 21.6 million persons. Haut Commissariat de France en Indochine, Affaires Économiques, Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, douzième volume (1947-1948) (Saigon, 1949), p. 19.

[7] In the autumn of 1954 the Viet Minh indicated to the International Control Commission supervising the truce in Indochina that they had 130,000 persons to evacuate from four locations in the south. These included 87,000 combatants and 43,000 political cadres and families. B. S. N. Murti, Vietnam Divided: The Unfinished Struggle (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1964), p. 224. Before the evacuation had been completed, nearly 150,000 Viet Minh had been brought north, but the laxity of control procedures left authorities unsure of the exact number.

[8] Harold D. Lasswell, Politics: Who Gets What, When, How (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1958).

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF REVOLUTION IN VIET NAM

[1] D. G. E. Hall, A History of South-East Asia (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1955), pp. 169-170; also L. Aurusseau, La première conquête chinoise des pays annamites," Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, Vol. XXIII (1923), pp. 137-264.

[2] G. Coedès, The Making of South-East Asia, translated by H. M. Wright (Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif.: University of California Press, 1966), p. 40

[3] Edwin O. Reischauer and John K. Fairbank, East Asia: The Great Tradition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company), p. 395. It is important to note that areas neighboring Viet Nam in what we now call China were not fully and permanently absorbed into the Chinese central administration (except for the delta province around the city of Canton) until the T'ang dynasty (618-907) at the earliest, and some parts, like Yunnan Province, not until the fourteenth century. This uneven pattern of integration emphasizes the changing nature of the Chinese interest in the southern frontier area of which Viet Nam was a distant part.

[4] Henri Maspéro, "L'expédition de Ma Yuan," Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, Vol. XVIII, No. 3 (1918), p. 27.

[5] Henri Maspéro, "La dynastie des Li antérieurs," Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extreme-Orient, Vol. XVI, No. 1 (1916), pp. 25ff.; also see Hisayuki Miyakawa, "The Confucianization of South China," in Arthur F. Wright (ed.), The Confucian Persuasion (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1960), pp. 21-46; and Herold J. Wiens, China's March Toward the Tropics (Hamden, Conn.: Shoe String Press, 1954), Chap. VI.

[6] Le Thanh Khoi, Le Viet-Nam: Histoire et civilisation, le milieu et l'histoire (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1955), p. 126. This book is the most comprehensive history of Viet Nam available; it is based on French and Vietnamese monographic sources.

[7] Henri Maspéro, "Le protectorat général d'Annam sous les T'ang," Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, Vol. X (1910), pp. 539ff.; see also Joseph Buttinger, The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Vietnam (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1958), Chap III, pp. 129-197.

[8] A. R. Woodside has called this fifteenth-century attempt to make Viet Nam a province of China "the greatest policy disaster suffered by the early Ming empire." See his excellent study of the tribute system, "Early Ming Expansionism (1406-1427): China's Abortive Conquest of Vietnam," Papers on China, Vol. XVII (Cambridge, Mass.: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, December 1963), pp. 1-37. For another important study of the tribute system, see Truong Buu Lam, "Sino-Vietnamese Relations at the End of the Eighteenth Century: A Study of the Tribute System," Paper No. 3, prepared for the Conference on the Chinese World Order, September 1965 (Cambridge, Mass.: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University).

[9] Maspéro, "La dynastie des Li antérieurs," pp. 25ff.

[10] Le Thanh Khoi, Le Viet-Nam, pp. 145-149. The first examinations for selection of the scholar-bureaucrats were given in 1075.

[11] On hereditary character of scholar-bureaucrats, Roy Jumper, "Vietnam: The Historical Background," in George McTurnan Kahin (ed.), Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia (2nd ed.: Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1964), pp. 377-378, cites Tran Van Giap, "La vie d'un mandarin annamite du XVIe siècle," Cahiers de l'École Française d'Extreme-Orient, Vol. XXVI (1941), pp. 24-25.

[12] Coedès, The Making of South-East Asia, pp. 86-87.

[13] For a map showing the phases of southward expansion at the expense of the Cham, see Pierre Huard and Maurice Durand, Connaissance du Viet Nam (Hanoi: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1954), p. 33; also Le Thanh Khoi, Le Viet Nam, p. 530.

[14] Coedès, The Making of South-East Asia, pp. 205-207; also André Masson, Histoire du Vietnam (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960), pp. 21-22.

[15] Georges Maspéro, Le royaume de Champa (Paris: Van Oest, 1928), pp. 206-216.

[16] On the problems of political unity, see Paul Isoart, Le phénomène national viêtnamien: De l'indépendence unitaire à l'indépendence fractionée (Paris: Librairie Générale de Droit et de Jurisprudence, 1961), pp. 33-80.

[17] Charles Maybon, Histoire moderne du pays d'Annam, 1592-1820 (Paris: Plon, 1920). This work is the most thorough and well-researched study available in a Western language for any period of Vietnamese history.

[18] Ibid., pp. 1-12.

[19] L. Cadière, "Le mur de Dong Hoi: Étude sur l'établissement des Nguyen en Cochinchine," Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, Vol. VI (1906), pp. 87-254.

[20] Great Britain, Admiralty, Naval Intelligence Division, Indo-China. Geographical Handbook Series, B.R. 510 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1943). This is the best available geography of Viet Nam; also see Canada, Department of Mines and Technical Surveys, Geographical Branch, Indo-China: A Geographical Appreciation (Ottawa, 1953).

[21] For a map showing these rice-growing areas, see Masson, Histoire du Viet Nam, p. 10.

[22] These statistics are from Georges Condominas, "Aspects of a Minority Problem in Indochina," Pacific Affairs, Vol. XXIV (March 1951), p. 77; see also John T. McAlister, Jr., "Mountain Minorities and the Viet Minh: A Key to the Indochina War," in Peter Kunstadter (ed.), Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities and Nations (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 771-844.

[23] Gourou is quoted by Paul Mus, Viet Nam: Sociologie d'une guerre (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952), p. 18. The role of the village in Vietnamese expansion is discussed, pp. 13-22.

[24] In Viet Nam's archaic ideographic writing the character for village is composed of two roots which "together give the idea of a place where individuals sacrificing to the spirits come together"; Paul Ory, La commune annamite au Tonkin (Paris: Augustin Challamel, 1894), p. 3. The manner in which a new village was created is described in Pierre Pasquier, L'Annam d'autrefois (Paris: Société d'Éditions Géographiques, Maritimes et Coloniales, 1929), p. 42.

[25] Gerald Hickey, Village in Vietnam (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 276. The most comprehensive work dealing with village government is Vu Quoc Thong, La décentralisation administrative au Viet Nam (Hanoi: Presses Universitaires du Viet Nam, 1952); also see Nguyen Xuan Dao, Village Government in Viet Nam: A Survey of Historical Development (Saigon: Michigan State University, Viet Nam Advisory Group, September 1958).

[26] Although the Vietnamese kept abreast of the developments in Confucian thought in China, their concept of Confucianism followed a pattern that was uniquely Vietnamese. At the village level it mixed with Buddhist and Taoist beliefs. Huard and Durand, Connaissance du Viet Nam, pp. 48-49.

[27] Mus, Viet Nam, pp. 23-25.

[28] Paul Mus, "Viet Nam: A Nation Off Balance," Yale Review, Vol. XLI (Summer 1952), pp. 524-533.

[29] Maybon, Histoire moderne, pp. 15-20.

[30] Ibid., pp. 290-331.

[31] John F. Cady, The Roots of French Imperialism in Eastern Asia (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1954), pp. 11-12.

[32] With the signing of a treaty at Versailles on November 28, 1787, Louis XVI agreed to provide military assistance to Nguyen Anh, the future Emperor Gia Long. Among the 360 men in the French-led force that fought in Viet Nam, many were veterans of the American Revolution. Philippe Vannier, the captain of a ship in the French squadron, had been present for the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown. John F. Cady, Southeast Asia: [illegible]ical Development (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), pp. 281-284.

[33] Jumper, "Vietnam," pp. 380-383.

[34] Louis Napoleon's "susceptibility to Catholic propagandist pressure developed largely from his determination to deny to his Legitimist political enemies of the Right the backing of the French Church." Cady, Southeast Asia, p. 415.

[35] Cady, Roots of French Imperialism, pp. 267, 296.

[36] Virginia Thompson's French Indochina (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1937) is the standard work in English on the French colonial regime.

[37] In the hope of maintaining their autonomy, the Vietnamese tried to play off the Chinese against the French. See Hall, History of South East Asia, pp. 569-571; also see Cho Huan-Lai, Les origines du conflit franco-chinois à propos du Tonkin jusqu'en 1883 (Paris: Jouve, 1935). A documentary history of the French conquest is Georges Taboulet, La geste française en Indochine: Histoire par les textes de la France [illegible] Indochine des origines à 1914 (2 vols.; Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1955-1956).

[38] Jean Chesneaux, Contribution à l'histoire de la nation vietnamienne (Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1955), p. 7.

[39] Hoang Van Chi, From Colonialism to Communism: A Case History of North Vietnam (New York and London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), pp. 10-13.

[40] Isoart, Le phénomène national viêtnamien, pp. 126-137.

[41] Joanne Marie Coyle, "Indochinese Administration and Education: French Policy and Practice, 1917-1945," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University (1963), pp. 54ff.; see also Jumper, "Vietnam," pp. 383-384.

[42] Harry J. Benda has discussed these regional distinctions among political elites in Viet Nam in his perceptive essay, "Political Elites in Colonial Southeast Asia: An Historical Analysis," Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. VII, No. 3 (April 1965), pp. 233-251, especially pp. 248-249.

[43] A sharp critique of French colonial policies in promoting social disequilibrium and regionalism is found in Chesneaux, Contribution à l'histoire, pp. 15-182. See map on p. 169 for regional configuration of French enterprises.

[44] Laurence C. Thompson's A Vietnamese Grammar (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1965) is a text which uses the northern pronunciation which it describes as "the most widely accepted as a sort of standard." Robert B. Jones, Jr., and Huynh Sanh Thong's Introduction to Spoken Vietnamese (Washington, D.C.: American Council of Learned Societies, 1957), uses the southern pronunciation and gives a comparison with the northern style.

[45] Hickey, Village in Vietnam, pp. 280-282.

[46] Donald Lancaster, The Emancipation of French Indochina (London: Oxford University Press, 1961, issued under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs), pp. 65-68.

[47] Karl W. Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development," The American Political Science Review, Vol. LV, No. 3 (September 1961), p. 493.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Isoart, Le phénomène national viêtnamien, pp. 191-219, presents a detailed account of the structure of the French colonial state.

[50] Paul Mus, "The Role of the Village in Vietnamese Politics," Pacific Affairs, Vol. XXII (September 1949), p. 266.

[51] In 1935 all the schools of the University of Hanoi with the exception of those of law and medicine were closed because of "intellectual unemployment." Coyle, "Indochinese Administration and Education," p. 82.

[52] Mus, "A Nation Off Balance," pp. 524-533.

[53] Jumper, "Vietnam," p. 383.

[54] Gouvernement Général de l'Indochine, Direction des Services Économiques, Annuaire Statistique de l'Indochine, 1936-1937, pp. 25, 241.

[55] Henri Navarre, Agonie de l'Indochine (1953-1954), (rev. ed.; Paris: Plon, 1956), p. 46

CHAPTER 2. THE COLONIAL BACKGROUND TO THE VIETNAMESE REVOLUTION, 1885

[1] Le Thanh Khoi, Le Viet Nam (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1955), pp. 386-387

[2] A Vietnamese source on the relationship of Chau and Cuong De is Trang Liet, Cuoc Doi Cach Mang: Cuong De [Life of a Revolutionary] (Saigon: Ton Nhat Le, 1957), pp. 12-18.

[3] Paul Isoart, Le phénomène national viêtnamien: De l'indépendence unitaire à l'indépendence fractionnée (Paris: Librairie Générale de Droit et de Jurisprudence, 1961), p. 229.

[4] Ibid., p. 228.

[5] Tran Trong Kim's Viet Nam Su Luoc [History of Viet Nam] (6th ed., Saigon: Tan Viet, 1958), p. 567, contains a summary of the revolt.

[6] The conduct of French pacification in Viet Nam during this period is best covered by Jean M. A. de Lanessan, La colonisation française en Indochine (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1895), pp. 1-113. Comments on the limitations of the Vietnamese scholar-bureaucrats are found in Le Thanh Khoi, Le Viet Nam, pp. 382-385. The French doctrine of colonial warfare is treated in Jean Gottman, "Bugeaud, Galliéni, Lyautey," in F. M. Earle, Makers of Modern Strategy (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1943), pp. 236-249; also Lieutenant Colonel Lyautey, "Du role colonial de l'Armée," Revue des Deux Mondes, Vol. CLVII (février 15, 1900), pp. 308-328

[7] A comparison can be made by seeing Peter Paret, Internal War and Pacification: The Vendée, 1789-1796 (Princeton, N.J.: Center of International Studies, 1961). A more thorough study is Charles Tilly, The Vendée (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964).

[8] Le Thanh Khoi, Le Viet Nam, p. 229.

[9] Georges Coulet, Les sociétés secrètes en terre d'Annam (Saigon: Imprimerie Commerciale, C. Ardin, 1926), p. 6.

[10] Ibid., p. 9.

[11] Ibid., p. 8.

[12] In the sense used by Robert Redfield in The Little Community and Peasant Society and Culture (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1953), p. 48. By contrast, there has been more cultural integration of the Thai village into a larger framework because of the role of the Buddhist bonze and the temple or wat. There is no counterpart of the Thai bonze in a Vietnamese village—a person representing a countrywide cultural hierarchy and a structured set of beliefs. A discussion of the wat and the village bonzes can be found in H. K. Kaufman, Bangkhuad: A Community Study in Thailand (Locust Valley, N.Y.: Association for Asian Studies, 1960).

[13] Coulet, Les sociétés secrètes, pp. 26-142.

[14] Pierre Pasquier, L'Annam d'autrefois (Paris: Société d'Éditions Géographiques, Maritimes et Coloniales, 1929), p. 248.

[15] Roy Jumper and Nguyen Thi Hue, Notes on the Political and Administrative History of Viet Nam, 1802-1962 (Saigon: Michigan State University, Viet Nam Advisory Group, 1962), p. 101.

[16] Coulet, Les sociétés secrètes, p. 16.

[17] Ibid., p. 17.

[18] Isoart, Le phénomène national viêtnamien, p. 231.

[19] Ibid., p. 236.

[20] Coulet, Les sociétés secrètes, pp. 20-21.

[21] Hans Kohn, The Idea of Nationalism (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1961), p. 16.

[22] I. Milton Sacks, "Marxism in Viet Nam," in Frank N. Trager (ed.), Marxism in Southeast Asia (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1960), p. 114.

[23] Rupert Emerson, From Empire to Nation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), p. 44.

[24] Albert Sarraut, La mise en valeur des colonies françaises (Paris: Payot, 1932), pp. 44, 47, 50, as cited by Ellen Hammer in The Struggle for Indochina (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1954), p. 60.

[25] André Dumarest, La formation des classes sociales en pays annamite, thèse, Université de Lyon, Faculté de Droit (Lyon: Imprimerie P. Ferrol, 1935), p. 59.

[26] Ibid., p. 62.

[27] League of Nations, International Labour Office, Labour Conditions in Indochina (Geneva: 1938), pp. 294-295. Ethnic Vietnamese and other peoples residing in Viet Nam made up all but a small portion of the whole, with Cambodians comprising only 2.4 percent and Laotians 2.0 percent of the total work force. However, with Vietnamese labor being used in each of the other two countries of Indochina, it is difficult to be more specific about the size of the labor force in Viet Nam by using existing statistics.

[28] In 1931 Viet Nam had a population of 17.7 million. Gouvernement Général de l'Indochine, Directions des Services Économiques, Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, 1936-1937, pp. 19-20.

[29] Charles Robequain, The Economic Development of French Indochina (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 82.

[30] Ibid.

[31] League of Nations, International Labour Office, Labour Conditions in Indo-China, p. 168.

[32] Ibid., p. [illegible].

[33] Robequain, Economic Development, p. 81.

[34] Donald Lancaster, The Emancipation of French Indochina (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 61.

[35] Yves Henri, Économie agricole de l'Indochine, Gouvernement Général de l'Indochine, Inspection Générale de l'Élevage et des Forêts (Hanoi, 1932), pp. 108-109, 144-145, 182-183, 212.

[36] Ibid., p. 191.

[37] Ibid., pp. 182-183

[38] Ibid., pp. 108-109.

[39] The legal and administrative problems involved in citizenship are discussed in J. Merimee, De l'accession des indochinois à la qualité de citoyen français, thèse, Université de Toulouse, Faculté de Droit (Toulouse: Imprimerie Andrau et LaPorte, 1931), especially pp 110-15.

[40] Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, 1936-1937, p. 23

[41] Paul Bernard, Le problème économique indochinois (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latine 1934), pp. 19-21

[42] According to population statistics, this leaves 1.1 million people unaccounted for. This statistic and the lack of documentation are the limitations of Bernard's analysis.

[43] Davy Henderson McCall, "The Effects of Independence on the Economy of Viet Nam," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Economics, Harvard University (1961), pp. 4-5, 29.

[44] Great Britain, Admiralty, Naval Intelligence Division, Geographical Handbook Series, B.R. 510, Indo-China (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1943), p. 292.

[45] Henri, Économie agricole de l'Indochine, p. 110

[46] McCall, "Effects of Independence," p. 20.

[47] Robequain, Economic Development, p. 152.

[48] Paul Mus, "The Role of the Village in Vietnamese Politics," Pacific Affairs, Vol. XXIII (September 1949), p. 269

[49] Paul Mus, "Viet Nam: A Nation Off Balance," Yale Review, Vol. XLI (Summer 1952), p. 535

[50] J. de Galembert, Les administrations et les services publics indochinois, deuxième édition revue et augmentée par F. Frard (Hanoi: Gouvernement Général de l'Indochine, 1931), pp. 704-705.

51 Joanne Marie Coyle, "Indochinese Administration and Education: French Policy and Practice, 1917-1945," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University (1963), p. 54.

52 Ibid., pp. 177-178.

53 This figure and all subsequent figures on number of degree holders is for all of Indochina. Total figures for Viet Nam are not readily available. However, Viet Nam represented 85 percent of the population of Indochina in 1931. These figures are based on unaggregated statistics presented in the Appendix, pp. 179-185, of ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid. The number of university students is based on an average of 120 graduates over the 25 years from 1918-19 to 1943-44. This is admittedly a rough estimate but it does indicate an order of magnitude.

56 Ibid. This is the educated elite for all of Indochina. The estimate for the college educated is again based on the average of 120 a year for the 12 years, 1918-19 to 1930-31. This is a rough estimate.

57 Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, 1923-1924, p. 247; Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, 1936-1937, p. 241.

58 Ibid.

59 Coyle, "Indochinese Administration and Education," p. 122.

60 Ibid., p. 126.

61 Roy Jumper and Nguyen Thi Hue, History of Viet Nam, 1802-1962, p. 96.

62 Gouvernement Général de l'Indochine, Direction des Affaires Politiques et de la Sûreté Générale, Contribution à l'histoire des mouvements politiques de l'Indochine française, Vol. I, Les émigrés de VNQDD (Hanoi: 1933), p. 6. This is part of a massive six-volume documentary treating of the initial formation of the modern political parties in Viet Nam. It is an indispensable source on the subject.

63 Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 16.

64 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 4.

65 Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 51-55.

66 Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 34-35. The party organization consisted of 42 cells in 1928, located as follows:

Central Viet Nam	
Nghe An	9
Ha Tinh	8
Thanh Hoa	7
Hue	3
Quang Ngai	
South Viet Nam	7
North Viet Nam	5

67 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 25.

68 Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 20-21.

69 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 16, also Sacks, "Marxism in Viet Nam," p. 129.

[70] Contribution à l'histoire des mouvements politiques de l'Indochine française, Vol. II, p. 4.

[71] Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, 1936-1937, p. 19. Of the 17 million people in Viet Nam in 1931, 8 million were in north Viet Nam and the majority of them were concentrated within 60 miles of Hanoi.

[72] Contribution à l'histoire des mouvements politiques de l'Indochine française, Vol. II, p. 12.

[73] Ibid., p. 51.

[74] Ibid., p. 13.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid., p. 6.

[78] Ibid., p. 12.

[79] Ibid., pp. 18-19.

[80] The New York Times, February 13, 1930, p. 6; also, Bon Mat (pseudonym, in Vietnamese means "Four Eyes"), La nuit rouge de Yen Bay (Hanoi: Imprimerie Le Van Tan, n.d.), pp. 9-28. In these accounts, there is a discrepancy in the number of persons killed or wounded.

[81] To Nguyen Dinh, Tan Pha Co Am [Destruction of Co Am] (Saigon: Tan Phat Xuat Ban, 1958), pp. 71-89. This is a short popular history of the VNQDD.

[82] Contribution à l'histoire des mouvements politiques de l'Indochine française, Vol. II, p. 20.

[83] Ibid., Vol. III, p. 17.

[84] Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 19.

[85] Ibid., p. 23.

[86] Ibid., p. 20.

[87] Ibid., pp. 22-23.

[88] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Central Committee of Propaganda of the Viet Nam Lao Dong Party and the Committee for the Study of the Party's History, Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party, Book I (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960), p. 24.

[89] Tran Huy Lieu, Les Soviets du Nghe-Tinh (de 1930-1931) au Viet Nam (Hanoi: Éditions en Langues Étrangères, 1960), p. 11.

[90] "During the period when the Nghe-An Soviets were being organized, Ho's attitude was somewhat ambiguous. While he most certainly did not approve of the action taken (a repetition of Mao's Hunan campaign which Stalin held to be anathema) he took no steps to stop it. During a Thought Reform course in 1953, it was disclosed that Ho had voted against the resolution calling for a peasant uprising, but he was in a minority of one and submitted to the will of the majority. . . . Whatever the truth there is no doubt that this was the first occasion on which Ho lost control of the movement under his charge." Hoang Van Chi, From Colonialism to Communism: A Case History of North Viet Nam (New York and London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), p. 52.

[91] Tran Huy Lieu, Les Soviets du Nghe-Tinh, p. 19.

[92] Contribution à l'histoire des mouvements politiques de l'Indochine française, Vol. IV, pp. 124-139. These data are unaggregated in the document.

[93] Ibid., p. 31.

[94] Tran Huy Lieu. Les Soviets du Nghe-Tinh, pp. 25-26.

[95] Contribution à l'histoire des mouvements politiques de l'Indochine française, Vol. IV, op. cit., pp. 124-139, from unaggregated data in the document.

[96] Tran Huy Lieu, Les Soviets du Nghe-Tinh, p. 26.

[97] Ibid., map at end of book. This compares favorably with the seventeen cells of the Tan Viet which formerly existed in these two provinces.

[98] "Parallel hierarchies" is a phrase indicating the vertical integration of geographically dispersed Communist organizations for popular participation. This technique allows the centralization of power with a flexibility in executing commands through dispersed units. See Col. Charles Lacheroy, Une arme du Viet Minh: Les hierarchies parallèles (Paris: 1953), p. 21.

[99] Tran Huy Lieu, Les Soviets du Nghe-Tinh, pp. 26-28, 33-34.

[100] Contribution à l'histoire de mouvements politiques de l'Indochine française, Vol. IV, p. 35.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Tran Huy Lieu, Les Soviets du Nghe-Tinh, pp. 33-34.

[103] Contribution à l'histoire des mouvements politiques de l'Indochine française, Vol. IV, pp. 4-5.

[104] Tran Huy Lieu, Les Soviets du Nghe-Tinh, p. 44.

[105] Roger Levy, "Indo-China in 1931-1932," Pacific Affairs, Vol. V, No. 3 (March 1932), p. 210.

[106] Nguyen Kien Giang, Les grandes dates du parti de la classe ouvrière du Viet Nam (Hanoi: Éditions en Langues Étrangères, 1960), pp. 20-22, contains a résumé of the "Theses."

[107] Tran Huy Lieu, Les Soviets du Nghe-Tinh, p. 51.

[108] Jean Dorsenne, Faudra-t-il évacuer l'Indochine (Paris: La Nouvelle Société d'Édition, 1932), as quoted in Roger Levy, "Indo-China in 1931-1932," p. 209.

[109] Chalmers Johnson has described the national myth as a doctrine which "will provide an ideological framework within which the mobilized people may understand and express their behavior as a nation," and he sees this myth drawn "from doctrines that are independently respected in society and reinterpret[ed] . . . so that they will tend to mobilize popular imagination in support of a national government," in Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1962), p. 27.

[110] In broad form, this is the "plural society" expressed by J. S. Furnivall in his Colonial Policy and Practice (New York: New York University Press, 1956), pp. 303-312. A more recent critique of the concept of pluralism is contained in Manning Nash, "Southeast Asian Society: Dual or Multiple," The Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. XXIII, No. 3 (May 1964), pp. 417-424, and also in Benjamin Higgins, "Southeast Asian Society: Dual or Multiple," ibid., pp. 425-428, and in Lucian W. Pye, "Perspective Requires Two Points of Vision," ibid., pp. 429-432.

[111] ". . . Nationality, then, means an alignment of large numbers of individuals from the middle and lower classes linked to regional centers and leading social groups by channels of social communication and economic intercourse, both indirectly from link to link and directly with the center." Karl W. Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1953), p. 75; also, Karl W. Deutsch, "The Growth of Nations," World Politics, Vol. V (January 1953), pp. 182-183.

[112] Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, 1936-1937, pp. 25, 241. By contrast, there were about 200,000 French troops and 225,000 troops of the Associated States of Indochina in the spring of 1953 fighting approximately 125,000 Viet Minh regulars, 75,000 territorials, and 150,000 local guerrilla troops Lancaster, The Emancipation of French Indochina, p. 265.

[113] Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, 1936-1937, p. 25.

[114] Anh Van and Jacqueline Roussel, Mouvements nationaux et lutte de classes au Viet Nam (Paris: Publications de la IVe Internationale, 1947), pp. 54-58.

[115] U.S., Department of State, Office of Intelligence and Research, Political Alignments of Vietnamese Nationalists, OIR Report #3708 (Washington, D.C.: 1949), pp. 39-40.

[116] Ibid., p. 41.

[117] Ibid., p. 45; Contribution à l'histoire des mouvements politiques de l'Indochine française, Vol. IV, pp. 124-139.

[118] Contribution à l'histoire des mouvements politiques de l'Indochine française, Vol. VI, p. 83; Gabriel Gobron, Histoire et philosophie du caodaisme (Paris: Derby, 1949).

[119] Adm. Jean Decoux, À la barre de l'Indochine (Paris: Plon, 1949), pp. 353-464.

[120] Maurice Ducoroy, Ma trahison en Indochine (Paris: Les Éditions Internationales, 1949), p. 103. About 86,000 persons were regular participants in the sports program.

[121] Ibid., in Preface by Adm. Jean Decoux.

[122] Nguyen Kien Giang, Les grandes dates du parti, pp. 42-43.

[123] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Viet Nam News Agency, Ten Years of Fighting and Building of the Vietnamese People's Army (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1955), pp. 11-15.

CHAPTER 3. THE WARTIME CATALYST OF REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS: THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION OF INDOCHINA, 1940-45

[1] The lack of American support is discussed in General Catroux, Deux actes du drame indochinois (Paris: Plon, 1959), pp. 54-58.

[2] Royal Institute of International Affairs, Survey of International Affairs, 1939-1946: The Far East, 1942-1946, by F. C. Jones, Hugh Borton, B. R. Pearn (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 26.

[3] Allan B. Cole, Conflict in Indo-China and International Repercussions: A Documentary History, 1945-1955 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1956), p. 48.

[4] Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), Vol. II, p. 1597.

[5] Adm. Jean Decoux, À la barre de l'Indochine (Paris: Plon, 1949), p. 315.

[6] Ibid., pp. 315-318.

[7] Gen. G. Sabattier, Le destin de l'Indochine (Paris: Plon, 1952), pp. 138-139.

[8] Willard H. Elsbree, Japan's Role in Southeast Asian Nationalist Movements, 1940 to 1945 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), pp. 25-26. Decision #6 is Exhibit #661 of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East.

[9] Sabattier, Le destin de l'Indochine, p. 80.

[10] Ibid., p. 455.

[11] Paul Mus, Problèmes de l'Indochine contemporaine — La formation des partis annamites (Paris: Collège Libre des Sciences Sociales et Économiques, n.d.), P. M. 5, p. 3.

[12] Decoux, À la barre de l'Indochine, pp. 103-112.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Central Committee of Propaganda of the Viet Nam Lao Dong Party and the Committee for the Study of the Party's History, Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party; Book I (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960), p. 66.

[15] Elsbree, Japan's Role, pp. 23-24.

[16] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Thirty Years of Struggle, pp. 66-67.

[17] Ibid., p. 70.

[18] Ibid., pp. 72-73.

[19] Ibid., p. 73.

[20] Le Thanh Khoi, Le Viet Nam: Histoire et civilisation, le milieu et l'histoire (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1955), p. 250.

[21] Gerald C. Hickey, "Social Systems of Northern Viet Nam," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago (1958), p. 33.

[22] Ibid., p. 198.

[23] Ibid., p. 169.

[24] Ibid., p. 106.

[25] D. G. E. Hall, A History of South East Asia (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1955), pp. 144-158.

[26] Haut Commissariat de France en indochine, Affaires Économiques, Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, 1943-1946, p. 28.

[27] Pierre Gourou, The Peasants of the Tonkin Delta: A Study of Human Geography (New Haven, Conn.: Human Relations File, 1955), Vol. I, p. 2, a translation of Les paysans du delta tonkinois: Étude de la géographie humaine (Paris: Éditions d'Art et d'Histoire, 1936), by Richard R. Miller.

[28] Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, 1943-1946, p. 28.

[29] Great Britain, Admiralty, Naval Intelligence Division, Geographical Handbook Series, B.R. 510, Indo-China (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1943), pp. 14-16.

[30] This attitude is discussed in R. Bauchar, "Fleuve Rouge-Rivière Noire," Tropiques: Revue des Troupes Coloniales (juin 1947, numéro 289), pp. 17-31, and Lieutenant Colonel Thermite, "Les opérations 'Bénédictine' et 'Geneviève,' " Tropiques: Revue des Troupes Coloniales (juin 1948, numéro 300), pp. 27-31.

[31] The assault on the delta is discussed in Gen. Jean Marchand, Le drame indochinois (Paris: J. Peyronnet, 1953), pp. 143-171.

[32] See L. H. G. Lyautey, Lettres du Tonkin et du Madagascar, 1893-1899 (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1920), deux tomes.

[33] Decoux, À la barre de l'Indochine, pp. 123-147.

[34] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Thirty Years of Struggle, p. 67.

[35] Ibid., p. 68.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Mus, Problèmes de l'Indochine contemporaine, P.M. I, p. 12.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Thirty Years of Struggle, pp. 69-70.

[42] Ibid., p. 64.

[43] Gouvernement Général de l'Indochine, Directions des Services Économiques, Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine 1936-1937, p. 25.

[44] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Thirty Years of Struggle, p. 70.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] The editor's note on the inside cover of publication states: " 'Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party' was written in commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the Indochinese Communist Party, now the Viet Nam Lao Dong Party".

[48] Philippe Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, 1940 à 1952 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952), pp. 100-101.

[49] Col. Charles Lacheroy, Une arme Viet Minh: Les hierarchies parallèles (Paris: 1953), pp. 11-12.

[50] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Thirty Years of Struggle, p. 71.

[51] Hoang Van Chi, From Colonialism to Communism: A Case History of North Vietnam (New York and London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), p. 202; J. Price Gittinger, Studies on Land Tenure in Viet Nam (Saigon: U.S. Operations Mission to Viet Nam, December 1959), pp. 16-29.

[52] P. J. Honey, "The Position of the DRV Leadership and the Succession to Ho Chi Minh," The China Quarterly, No. 9 (January-March 1962), p. 27.

[53] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Thirty Years of Struggle, p. 76.

[54] Ibid., p. 71.

[55] Pierre Dabezies, "Forces politiques au Viet Nam," thèse pour le doctorat, Université de Bordeaux (1955), p. 144.

[56] Ibid., pp. 142-143.

[57] Ibid., p. 144.

[58] André Gaudel, L'Indochine en face du Japon (Paris: J. Susse, 1947), p. 143.

[59] Mus, Problèmes de l'Indochine contemporaine, P.M. I, p. 15.

[60] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Thirty Years of Struggle, p. 75.

[61] An interview with Chang is reported in King Chen, "China and the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, 1945-1954," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University (September 1962), pp. 40-41.

[62] Dabezies, Forces politiques, p. 144.

[63] I. Milton Sacks, "Marxism in Viet Nam," in Frank N. Trager (ed.), Marxism in Southeast Asia (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1960), p. 149.

[64] Mus, Problèmes de l'Indochine contemporaine, P.M. I, p. 15

[65] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Viet Nam News Agency, Ten Years of Fighting and Building of the Vietnamese People's Army (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1955), p. 12.

[66] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Ten Years of Fighting, p. 14.

[67] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Breaking Our Chains: Documents of the Vietnamese Revolution of August 1945 (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960), pp. 8-9.

[68] Ibid., p. 28.

[69] André Volait, La vie économique et sociale du Viet Nam du 9 mars 1945 au 19 décembre 1946 (Paris: École Nationale de la France d'Outre-Mer, Section Afrique-Noire, 1948), p. 7.

[70] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Breaking Our Chains, p. 13.

[71] Ibid., p. 15.

[72] Ibid., p. 16.

[73] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Thirty Years of Struggle, p. 88.

[74] Ibid., p. 34.

[75] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Breaking Our Chains, p. 36.

[76] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Thirty Years of Struggle, p. 91.

[77] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Breaking Our Chains, pp. 52-57.

[78] Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, 1943-1946, p. 28.

[79] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Breaking Our Chains, p. 28.

[80] Jean Sainteny, Histoire d'une paix manquée: Indochine 1945-1947 (Paris: Amiot-Dumont, 1953), pp. 57-58.

[81] A comparable experience of arming a psychologically indoctrinated but militarily untutored guerrilla force for anti-Japanese purposes occurred in Malaya. See Lucian Pye, Guerrilla Communism in Malaya (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1956), pp. 68-69.

[82] The New York Times, interview on January 21, 1947, printed January 23, 1947, p. 16.

[83] Text of remarks in Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, p. 125.

[84] Mus, Problèmes de l'Indochine contemporaine, P.M. 5, pp. 5-6.

[85] Elsbree, Japan's Role, p. 97.

[86] Dabezies, Forces politiques, p. 140.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Composition of cabinet in Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, p. 128. Tran Van Chuong, a close confidant of Ngo Dinh Diem, was Ambassador to the United States from 1954 to 1963, and is the father of Diem's sister-in-law, the widely known Mme. Ngo Dinh Nhu.

[89] Ibid., p. 129.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, 1943-1946, pp. 273-274, and Decoux, À la barre de l'Indochine, p. 403.

[92] Maurice Ducoroy, Ma trahison en Indochine (Paris: Les Éditions Internationales, 1949), p. 103.

[93] Decoux, À la barre de l'Indochine, p. 401.

[94] U.S., Department of State, Office of Intelligence and Research, Research and Analysis Branch, Programs of Japan in Indochina, OIR Report #3369, August 10, 1945. This contains monitored broadcasts of Radio Saigon which, on November 8, 1943, said that the total membership of Movement of Sports and Youth was 800,000 (p. 331); December 7, 1943, the figure of 690,000 was used (p. 356); and on August 8, 1944, the figure of 240,000 (p. 339).

[95] In Preface to Ducoroy, Ma trahison en Indochine, p. 16.

[96] Dabezies, Forces politiques, p. 141.

[97] Decoux, À la barre de l'Indochine, pp. 397-398.

[98] Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, p. 137.

CHAPTER 4. THE BID FOR REVOLUTIONARY POWER: THE AUGUST REVOLUTION

[1] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Breaking Our Chains: Documents of the Vietnamese Revolution of August 1945 (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960), p. 86.

[2] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Central Committee of Propaganda of the Viet Nam Lao Dong Party and the Committee for the Study of the Party's History, Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party, Book I (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960), p. 95.

[3] Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Breaking Our Chains, p. 82.

[4] Ibid., p. 83.

[5] Ibid., p. 84.

[6] Social mobilization is here used in the sense "of people moving away from a life of local isolation, traditionalism, and political apathy, and moving into a different or broader and deeper involvement in the vast complexities of modern life, including potential and actual involvement in mass politics." Karl W. Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development," The American Political Science Review, Vol. LV, No. 3 (September 1961), p. 494. The concept of a socially mobilized population is introduced to distinguish between persons having opportunities beyond those available to urban dwellers, those exposed to some influences of urban life, and the approximately 80 percent of the population of Viet Nam who continued to live in

peasant villages. At the time of the August Revolution, Hanoi had a population of 119,000 and Saigon, with its adjoining Chinese community of Cholon, had 492,000 persons, while Viet Nam as a whole had about 24 million. The next largest town, Haiphong, was half the size of Hanoi. It had 65,400 persons. Haut Commissariat de France en Indochine, Affaires Économiques, Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, 1943-1946 (Saigon, 1949), pp. 27-28

[7]The university student population increased by 20 percent over prewar levels to more than 1,200 in 1943-44. Admiral Decoux, the Vichy Governor-General of Indochina, for example, had created a school of architecture at the university with the same quality of degree rating as in France and he had a Cité Universitaire constructed. The local employees of the colonial administration increased by approximately 15 percent to 28,000 in 1943-44. Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, 1943-1946, pp. 45, 303; also Adm. Jean Decoux, À la barre de l'Indochine (Paris: Plon, 1949), pp. 395-403.

[8]André Volait, La vie économique et sociale du Vietnam du 9 mars 1945 au décembre 1946 (Paris: École Nationale de la France d'Outre-Mer, Section Afrique-Noire, 1948), p. 7.

[9]Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Breaking Our Chains, p. 86.

[10]As printed in the newspaper Viet Nam Tan Bao, Hue, August 20, 1945, cited in Philippe Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, 1940 à 1952 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952), p. 138.

[11]Ibid., p. 137.

[12]See ibid. for text of resolution.

[13]Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Thirty Years of Struggle, p. 95.

[14]Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, Documents, n.p., n.d.

[15]Ellen Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1954), p. 104.

[16]Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Documents.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Primarily the French statement of March 24, 1945; for text, see Allan B. Cole, Conflict in Indo-China and International Repercussions: A Documentary History, 1945-1955 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1956), pp. 5-7.

[19]For statement of Catholic bishops, see Commonweal, January 17, 1947, p. 15; for statistics on Catholics and indigenous priests, see "L'église catholique en Indochine," Revue des Troupes Coloniales (février 1947, numéro 285), pp. 39-46. For further verification of the initial enthusiasm of the Catholics for the Viet Minh, see Bernard B. Fall, "Political Development of Viet Nam: V-J Day to the Geneva Cease-Fire," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Political Science, Syracuse University (October 1954), pp. 136-137.

[20]Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, p. 186.

[21]Nguyen Manh Ha in particular and Catholics in north Viet Nam in general broke with the Viet Minh after December 1946, when the fighting against the French began. In their domain in the extreme south of the Red River Delta the Catholics fiercely guarded their autonomy until circumstances made it necessary for them to rally to the side of France and Bao Dai in the autumn of 1949. Ibid., p. 447. Two of the top negotiators for the Bao Dai government at Geneva were Nguyen Quoc Dinh and Nguyen Dac Khe, who had been political advisers to Ho Chi Minh in 1945-46. Bernard B. Fall, "The Political Development of Viet Nam: V-J Day to the Geneva Cease-Fire," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University (October 1954), p. 250.

[22]Ho Chi Minh, "Our Party Has Struggled Very Heroically and Won Glorious Victories," in A Heroic People: Memoirs From the Revolution (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960), p. 12.

[23]Survey of International Affairs, 1939-1946: The Far East, 1942-1946, p. 260.

[24]Ibid.

[25]This included the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, Trotskyites, Phuc Quoc, Thanh Nien Tien Phong, and the Independence Party of Ho Van Nga. Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, p. 140.

[26]Lt. Gen. Numata Takazo, Chief of Staff to Count Terauchi, the Japanese Commander, conceded that arms had been supplied to the Vietnamese after the capitulation, without specifying which group. It seems clear from subsequent events that it was not the Trotskyites or imperial government. The New York Times, September 29, 1945, p. 5.

[27]Truong Chinh, The August Revolution (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1958), p. 15, says that there were a million people on parade in Saigon-Cholon, but this is not substantiated elsewhere. This source says that the manifestation took place on the 23rd, but the 25th seems more likely. Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina, p. 107.

[28]Tran Van Giau was president and chief of military affairs; Dr. Pham Ngoc Thach; Nguyen Van Tao, who had been beaten by the Trotskyites in the Saigon elections of 1939; Huynh Van Tieng; Duong Bach Mai; and Nguyen Van Tay were the six. Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, p. 142.

[29]The New York Times, September 9, 1945, p. 10. For the aspects of the manipulation, see Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina, p. 109.

[30]Although this included the spiritual leader of the Hoa Hao, a Cao Dai, and a Trotskyite, it was not a distinguished coalition. Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, p. 156.

[31]Ibid., p. 159.

[32]Survey of International Affairs, 1939-1946, p. 261.

[33]Some 300 Vietnamese political activists were arrested on September 25 by the French with Gracey's approval. The New York Times, September 26, 1945, p. 15.

[34]Ibid., September 29, 1945, p. 5.

[35]Jean-Michel Hertrich, Doc-Lap: L'indépendence ou la mort (Paris: Jean Vigneau, 1946), p. 112.

[36]Donald Lancaster, The Emancipation of Indochina (London: Oxford University Press, 1961, issued under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs), p. 134.

[37]The New York Times, September 26, 1945, p. 15.

[38]Truong Chinh, The August Revolution, p. 35.

CHAPTER 5. THE REVOLUTIONARY OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CHINESE OCCUPATION OF NORTH VIET NAM, SEPTEMBER 1945-MARCH 1946

[1]The New York Times, October 14, 1945, p. 12. Statement was reported to have been made on August 24, 1945.

[2]Jean Sainteny, Histoire d'une paix manquée: Indochine 1945-1947 (Paris: Amiot-Dumont, 1953), pp. 98-99.

[3]Ibid., p. 226.

[4]Haut Commissariat de France en Indochine, Affaires Économiques, Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, 1945-1946 (Saigon, 1949), pp. 27-28.

[5]Pierre Dabezies, "Forces politiques au Viet Nam," thèse pour le doctorat, Université de Bordeaux (1955), p. 154.

[6]Paul Mus, Viet Nam: Sociologie d'une guerre (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952), p. 30.

[7]Ibid.

[8]A comparison between the August Revolution and the October Revolution has been drawn by George Modelski, "The Viet Minh Complex," in Cyril E. Black and Thomas P. Thornton (eds.), Communism and Revolution: The Strategic Uses of Political Violence (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 206.

[9]André Volait, La vie économique et sociale du Viet Nam du 9 mars 1945 au 19 décembre 1946 (Paris: École Nationale de la France d'Outre-Mer Section Afrique-Noire, 1948), pp. 16-17.

[10]Philippe Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, 1940 à 1952 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952), p. 193.

[11]Sainteny, Histoire d'une paix manquée, p. 149.

[12]Chu Chi, Yueh-nan shou-hsiang jih-chi, pp. 25, 43, 63, as cited in King Chen, "China and the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, 1945-1954," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University (September 1962), p. 89.

[13]Sainteny, Histoire d'une paix manquée, p. 148.

[14]Davy Henderson McCall, "The Effects of Independence on the Economy of Viet Nam," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Economics, Harvard University (1961), p. 7.

[15]Ibid., p. 73.

[16]Dabezies, Forces politiques, p. 155.

[17]Gen. Jean Marchand, Le drame indochinois (Paris: J. Peyronnet, 1953), p. 75, notes that weapons were purchased through the Chinese.

[18]The New York Times, April 1, 1947, p. 15.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Volait, La vie économique et sociale, p. 30.

[21]Truong Chinh, The August Revolution (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1958), p. 37.

[22]Volait, La vie économique et sociale, p. 33.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Truong Chinh, The August Revolution, p. 27.

[26]Paul Mus, Les problèmes de l'Indochine contemporaine: La formation des partis annamites (Paris: Collège Libre des Sciences Sociales et Économiques, n.d.), P.M. 5, pp. 18-19.

[27]Volait, La vie économique et sociale, p. 9.

[28]Ibid., p. 7; Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, p. 131, says that "nearly a million people died."

[29]Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, 1943-1946, p. 28. The population of Tonkin was 9,851,200.

[30]Volait, La vie économique et sociale, p. 18.

[31]Truong Chinh, The August Revolution, pp. 24-25.

[32]Mus, Les problèmes de l'Indochine contemporaine, P. M. I., p. 3.

[33]F. Luro, Le pays d'Annam (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1878), p. 145.

[34]This religious tradition is discussed in Kenneth P. Landon, "Annamese Folkways Under Chinese Influence," in Landon, Southeast Asia: Crossroads of Religion (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 57, passim. The rituals involved are described in Gerald C. Hickey, Village in Viet Nam (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 55-81.

[35]Pierre Huard and Maurice Durand, Connaissance du Viet Nam (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1954), p. 91.

[36]Paul Mus, "Viet Nam: A Nation Off Balance," The Yale Review, Vol. XLI (Summer 1952), p. 531.

[37]Joanne Marie Coyle, "Indochinese Administration and Education: French Policy and Practice, 1917-1945," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University (1963), p. 54.

[38]Mus, "A Nation Off Balance," p. 530.

[39]Mus, Viet Nam, p. 24.

[40]Mus, "A Nation Off Balance," p. 527.

[41]Mus, Viet Nam, p. 26.

[42]Mus, "A Nation Off Balance," pp. 530-531.

[43]Paul Mus, "Foreword," in Hickey, Village in Viet Nam, p. xix.

[44]Volait, La vie économique et sociale, p. 15.

[45]Mus, Viet Nam, p. 26.

[46]Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, p. 179.

[47]Hickey, Village in Viet Nam, pp. 8-9.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid., p. 181.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[52]Truong Chinh, The August Revolution, p. 71

[53]Ibid., p. 73.

[54]Ibid.

CHAPTER 6. THE FRENCH RESPONSE TO THE VIETNAMESE REVOLUTION: POLITICAL COMMUNITY VERSUS MILITARY REOCCUPATION, MARCH-DECEMBER 1946

[1]Jean Sainteny, Histoire d'une paix manquée: Indochine 1945-1947 (Paris: Amiot-Dumont, 1953), p. 172.

[2]Philippe Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, 1940 à 1952 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952), p. 212.

[3]Allan B. Cole, Conflict in Indo-China and International Repercussions: A Documentary History, 1945-1955 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1956), p. 5.

[4]Ibid., p. 6.

[5]La conférence africaine française, Brazzaville, 30 janvier 1944-8 février 1944, Algers, Commissariat aux Colonies, 1944, p. 35, as cited by Donald Lancaster, The Emancipation of Indochina (London: Oxford University Press, 1961, issued under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs), pp. 122-123.

[6]This idea was expressed in a dispatch from Paris in The New York Times, March 24, 1945, p. 9.

[7]Samuel I. Rosenman, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt: Victory and the Threshold of Peace (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1950), pp. 562-563, as quoted in Cole, Conflict in Indo-China, p. 48.

[8]Bernard B. Fall has called d'Argenlieu's selection France's "major postwar blunder in southeast Asia." The Two Viet-Nams (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), p. 72.

[9]Sainteny, Histoire d'une paix manquée, pp. 47-48.

[10]Truong Chinh, The August Revolution (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1958), p. 39.

[11]See Sainteny, Histoire d'une paix manquée, p. 57, for text. (Emphasis added.)

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid., pp. 167-169.

[14]Ibid., p. 223.

[15]Ibid., p. 175.

[16]Ibid., p. 181.

[17]Ibid., p. 245.

[18]Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, p. 212.

[19]Sainteny, Histoire d'une paix manquée, p. 175.

[20]Ibid., p. 168.

[21]Quoted in Jean Lacouture, Cinq hommes et la France (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1961), p. 57.

[22]Ibid., p. 176.

[23]Ibid., p. 167.

[24]The text of the agreement is found in Cole, Conflict in Indo-China, pp. 40-42.

[25]Adrien Dansette, Leclerc (Paris: Flammarion, 1952), pp. 209-210, p. 199 as cited in Ellen Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1954), pp. 152, 155.

[26]Text is from Quyet Chien of Hue, March 6, 1946 (daily newspaper), as quoted in Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, p. 229.

[27]Ibid., p. 231.

[28]Ibid., p. 242.

[29]Ibid., pp. 248-251.

[30]Sainteny, Histoire d'une paix manquée, p. 197, for text.

[31]Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, p. 269.

[32]Ibid., p. 270.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Gouvernement Général de l'Indochine, Directions des Services Économiques, Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, 1936-1937, p. 23; Haut Commissariat de France en Indochine, Affaires Économiques, Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, 1943-1946, p. 29.

[35]Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, p. 295.

[36]Ibid., p. 300.

[37]The New York Times, August 6, 1946, p. 12.

[38]Text of modus vivendi in Cole, Conflict in Indo-China, pp. 43-45.

[39]Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, p. 305.

[40]Sainteny, Histoire d'une paix manquée, p. 209.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ibid., p. 210.

[43]Ibid., p. 214.

[44]Cole, Conflict in Indo-China, p. 44.

[45]Sainteny, Histoire d'une paix manquée, p. 215.

[46]Ibid., pp. 217-219.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Robert Trumbull, in The New York Times, December 18, 1946, p. 20.

[49]Ibid.

[50]The New York Times, December 15, 1946, p. 5.

[51]Ibid., November 30, 1946, p. 6.

[52]Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, p. 345, contains the text of the directive which was confirmed as authentic in the version published by the Viet Minh.

[53]Ibid., p. 346.

[54]As quoted in Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina, p. 186.

[55]Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, pp. 348-352. Text of Ho's message on p. 352.

[56]This was contained in Ho's Christmas Day broadcast on Viet Minh radio as reported in The New York Times, December 28, 1946, p. 1.

[57]Text of letter is found in Devillers, Histoire du Viet Nam, p. 354.

[58]Ibid.

[59]Sainteny, Histoire d'une paix manquée, p. 224. An hour-by-hour account of the street fighting in Hanoi is found in Rear-Adm. Robert Kilian, Les fusiliers marins en Indochine (Paris: Éditions Berger-Levrault), pp. 149-162.

[60]The New York Times, February 20, 1947, p. 19.

[61]Ibid., January 10, 1947, p. 4.

[62]Ibid., February 7, 1947, p. 10.

[63]Ibid., December 22, 1946, p. 1, and March 13, 1947, p. 14.

[64]Ibid., February 8, 1947, p. 6.

[65]Ibid., January 5, 1947, p. 1.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION: THE ORIGINS OF REVOLUTION

[1]For statistics on casualties in the first Indochina War, see Bernard B. Fall, Street Without Joy: Indochina at War, 1946-54 (Harrisburg, Pa.: The Stackpole Company, 1961), Appendix II, p. 313.

[2]Paul Mus, Viet Nam: Sociologie d'une guerre (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952), pp. 314-316. See also Robert Shaplen, The Lost Revolution (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 49-54.

[3]The problems of employment, mobility, and economic growth are discussed by Davy Henderson McCall, "The Effects of Independence on the Economy of Viet Nam," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Economics, Harvard University (1961), pp. 31-32, 50.

[4]There were 5,926 Vietnamese with French citizenship in 1948 out of an estimated population of 22.7 million. This represented more than a twofold increase from 1937 when there were 2,555 "neutralized" French citizens in Viet Nam. See Haut Commissariat de France en Indochine, Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, douzième volume, 1947-48 (Saigon, 1949), pp. 19, 23.

[5]Daniel Lerner, "The Coercive Ideologists in Perspective," in Harold Lasswell and Daniel Lerner (eds.) World Revolutionary Elites: Studies in Coercive Ideological Movements (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1965), pp. 463-464.

[6]Ibid., p. 459.

[7]Ibid., pp. 460-461.

[8]Ibid., p. 461.

[9]Ibid., p. 466.

[10]Ibid.; George K. Schueller, The Politburo (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1952), pp. 97-178; and Robert C. North and Ithiel de Sola Pool, Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Elites (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1952), pp. 319-455.

[11]George Pettee, The Process of Revolution (New York. Harper and Bros., 1938), p. 33.

[12]Chalmers Johnson. Revolution and the Social System (Stanford. Calif.: The Hoover Institution, 1964), pp. 5, 10.

[13]Mus, "Viet Nam: A Nation Off Balance," The Yale Review, Vol. XLI (Summer 1952), pp. 524-533.

[14]Harry Eckstein, "On the Etiology of Internal War," History and Theory, Vol. IV, No. 2 (1965), p. 149.

[15]James C. Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution," American Sociological Review, Vol. XXVII, No. 1 (February 1962), p. 6.

[16]Ibid. See also James C. Davies, "The Circumstances and Causes of Revolution," The Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol. XI, No. 2 (June 1967), pp. 247-257.

[17]The Politics of Aristotle, edited and translated by Ernest Barker (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 207.

[18]Ho Chi Minh, "Our Party Has Struggled Very Heroically and Won Glorious Victories," A Heroic People: Memoirs From the Revolution (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960).

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[1]The unexcelled study of the Geneva Conference by an impressive French team of scholar and journalist is that of Jean Lacouture and Philippe Devillers, La fin d'une guerre: Indochine 1954 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1960), pp. 111-288. Also see "The Geneva Conference," in Cora Bell, Survey of International Affairs (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 42-72. For a useful but polemical study, see Victor Bator, Viet Nam: A Diplomatic Tragedy (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1965).

[2]See the text of the Final Declaration in B. S. N. Murti, Vietnam Divided: The Unfinished Struggle (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1964), pp. 220-222.

[3]Ibid., pp. 16-17

[4]For text of cease-fire agreement, see ibid., pp. 205-219.

[5]The most outstanding study of the Diem era is Robert Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963); see, especially, "The Limited Revolution," pp. 62-68. An impressive journalistic account is Denis Warner, The Last Confucian (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963).

[6]See William Henderson, "South Viet Nam Finds Itself," Foreign Affairs, Vol. XXXV (October 1956), pp. 283-294, and Wesley R. Fishel, "Free Vietnam Since Geneva," The Yale Review, Vol. XLIX (September 1959), pp. 68-78.

[7]Donald Lancaster, The Emancipation of French Indo-China (London: Oxford University Press, 1961, issued under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs), pp. 348-354.

[8]Roy Jumper, "Sects and Communism in South Vietnam," Orbis, Vol. III (Spring 1959), pp. 85-96.

[9]For a discussion of Diem's attempts at ideology, see "National Renovation Campaigns in Viet Nam," by John C. Donnell, Pacific Affairs (April 1959), pp. 73-88.

[10]Bernard Fall has perceptively analyzed the renewal of conflict in Viet Nam in his "The Birth of Insurgency," in Viet-Nam Witness (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), pp. 169-189. Also see his "The Second Indochina War," International Affairs, Vol. XLI, No. 1 (January 1965), pp. 59-73.

[11]When the author was adviser to the River Force of the Vietnamese Navy in the Mekong Delta, 1959-61, while on active duty in the U.S. Navy, the unit had four different commanding officers, none of whom held command for more than nine months. Rotation in other units was oftentimes much faster.

[12]For an inside view of Diem's political attitudes, see Nguyen Thai, Is South Vietnam Viable? (Manila: Carmelo and Bauermann, Inc., 1962). Mr. Thai was a close associate of Diem before breaking with him in 1962. A major scholarly source is Roy Jumper, "Vietnam," in George McT. Kahin, Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia (2nd ed.; Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1964), pp. 406-459.

[13]The story of the 1960 abortive coup d'état is found in Stanley Karnow, "Diem Defeats His Own Best Troops," The Reporter, Vol. XXIV (January 19, 1961), pp. 24-29.

[14]The best account of the attitude of the Kennedy Administration toward Diem's handling of the Buddhist crisis is contained in Roger Hilsman, To Move a Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967), pp. 413-537.

[15]See Robert Shaplen, "The Untold Story of the 1963 Coup," in The Lost Revolution (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 188-212, and David Halberstam, The Making of a Quagmire (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 244-299.

[16]See George Carver, "The Real Revolution in South Viet Nam," Foreign Affairs, Vol. XLIII, No. 3 (April 1965), pp. 387-408, and Edward G. Lansdale, "Viet Nam: Do We Understand Revolution?" Foreign Affairs, Vol. XLIII, No. 1 (October 1964), pp. 75-86.

[17]Beverly Deepe, "U.S. Role in Vietnam Pivots on Elections," Christian Science Monitor, July 31, 1967.

[18]In 1949 a ranking French Army officer advocated abandonment of the concepts of "pacification" because political consciousness of peasant villagers had made this tactic a relic of the colonial era. See Colonel Marchand, "Pacification en Indochine," Tropiques: Revue des troupes coloniales (janvier 1949), pp. 3-12.

[19]On August 3,1967, President Johnson announced that there would be 525,000 U.S. troops in Viet Nam by June 30, 1968. See The New York Times, August 4, 1967. The maximum strength of U.S. troops in Korea reached 328,000. See Fall, Viet-Nam Witness, p. 309.

[20]R. R. Palmer, The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800, Vol. 1, The Challenge (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 21.

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13. ABSTRACT

At the heart of the continuing controversy in Viet Nam is a revolutionary struggle for political order and unity which remains incomplete and has consumed the vitality of the Vietnamese for more than two decades. The fundamental changes in the structure of politics which have developed in Viet Nam over the past forty years are the essence of revolution. How and why this revolution occurred and the significance of the Vietnamese experience is germane to a more perceptive understanding of revolution in general. The historical analysis is carried only through the final years of World War II.

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